

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 3 February 1935

Psalm 130 v 4

"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou
mayest be feared"

The only thing to be afraid of, to flee from, to hate, is sin. Trouble - very bitter, heavy, and sad it may be - is nothing compared for bitterness, and for its consequences. Sin - O, what it has done for us. Marred our bodies, created disease, misery, war, hatred, infidelity, atheism, lust, pride, and vanity. Sin - it is exceedingly sinful. God hates it necessarily, and necessarily He punishes it. Think of that - necessarily, from His very nature, God must punish sin, and He does punish it, and He will punish it. He has punished it in His Son for the men His Father gave to Him, and He will punish it in those who die in it. O, the bitterness of sin. It makes the saint forget God, and hurries him into the commission of some evil; hardens his heart against the fear of God; turns his eyes from the Saviour; puts his affections on things on the earth, and not on things in heaven. It is the woe of the saints; it is the scourge of the saints; it is the bitterness of the saints; it is the heaviest burden of the saints. It is a curse to them in their feelings often. Sin - O monster. Sin in the heart, in the thoughts, in the wish. Sin, hindering prayer, mocking the Throne of Grace, despising the Saviour. O, what a bitter, bitter thing, sin is; the cause of all woe, the source of all misery, bringing judgement upon individuals, families, and communities, and nations; filling hell with men, and women. My friends, do you feel sin? Is it bitter to you? Does it keep you awake sometimes? Does it make you weep before God sometimes? Does it sometimes make you question your religion? Does it set up a bar between you, and your God, separating between you, and Him, and you cannot get that bar away? He must do it. Ah, the sweetest thing you can sometimes have, and entertain in your heart, is this, that the day is coming when you will be far from a world of grief and sin; when the body of sin and death will be taken away from you; when you will be with that holy, and therefore happy, company

that no man can number. Listen to the Scripture, sinner listen to the Scripture. If God should mark your iniquities, could you stand? If He should set them on your conscience, could you be happy? Could you feel light in your spirit? No. The greatest mercy at this point is to be convinced of sin. Do you pray for it? Hart does

Convince us of our sin

Happy religionists think it a most gloomy thing. Yes, it is gloomy, but hell will be more so to those who fall into it. Gloomy, yes, but a brightness, and a sweetness, and a blessedness will come where the blood of Christ is. Sin plunges the people of God into depths, out of which, by the grace of God, they cry, as Jonah did; out of the belly of hell, when he was at the bottom of the mountains, and the weeds were wrapped about his head. The Lord showed him the evil of his sin; the Holy Spirit made Jonah justify God in his extremity; when he fainted, he remembered the Lord. His cry was a confession - 'Sin had brought him there; rebellion brought him there; the devil held him there for a time', but grace went to him. Yes, he had run from God, but grace went after him, and he said, I cried unto God, and his cry entered into the ear of God, and he was delivered. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD." And well may a man do this, who realises what sin is. I wish that some of you might get this trouble, might sink into this depth, might find your life spoiled, and your meat spoiled, and your pleasures driven away, by conviction of sin. Why do I say this? Why am I constantly talking about sin? There are two reasons which I will just name. The first is, that I have so much of it myself, and I am troubled with it, I am plagued with it, I am burdened with it; and the other is, the Scripture - and this is for you to notice; my experience is only mine - the Scripture dwells on it; the Scripture exposes it; the Scripture speaks of it, and it speaks of damnation that shall come upon men, and women, who live in sin, and die in sin. The Scripture sets it forth thus - "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". O, you people who are not troubled, what a hell awaits you if you die as you are living. You say, it is gloomy. Nothing compared with hell; nothing. I am hoping to get away from it soon. I have been saying to the Lord this afternoon, O, hasten the day when I shall be free from this that hurts me so, that wounds, that

weakens, that distracts, and confuses me, and brings guilt to me. Hasten the day when I shall be free from it. And you would like to keep it; that is to say, you think it is gloomy to hear about it. No, it ought not to be, it should not be, it will not be, if God has a purpose of love to you. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice" - you may not speak a word, yet there is a voice in the groan, in the breathing - "let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Not one in this congregation. No, not one in all the world. "Who shall stand" is who shall bear the judgement, the scrutiny of God? Who shall bear the light which will dart into his soul, and conscience, and into the heart which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? O, it is delightful to think that one day you will be free from it. "If Thou, Lord" - not, if my neighbour comes and charges me with what may be false, or even with what may be true, but - "If Thou, Lord shouldest mark iniquities - my iniquities, mine, yours. O, if He should come and mark them, write them in His book, who should stand in the judgement of God? Who should stand in the day of judgement? Ah, sinner, there is a judgement to come, and God will be the Judge, and you will be the culprit if you be in your nature's state there.

"But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared". Forgiveness is, first of all, in God, with Him in its origination. It was not necessary that God should forgive sin. It is necessary that He should punish it, but it is not necessary to His nature to forgive it. He could not be God, and not punish sin, but He could be God and not save a sinner. But it is with Him. If it originated in any, save Himself, then He would not be glorified. No, something would be done outside Himself, which would take away His eternal Being. It originated with Himself in the Council of Peace, when the Covenant of Grace was entered into by the Three Persons in the Godhead, and there God decreed to save some sinners. You can never praise God enough for that. O, He is exalted in His decrees of salvation. He is exalted in this, His glorious nature, for it is - though it is not necessary to His nature to save a sinner - it is glorious to His nature that He does save a sinner. It is voluntary in Himself to save anyone; it is glorious in Himself to save anyone. And He said, by Jeremiah that it shall be to Him a name of joy, and of

praise when He forgives the iniquities which His people have committed against Him; when He forgives the sins whereby they have sinned against Him. (Jeremiah 33 v 8 and 9). Think of it - O, I remember the first time that that struck me - A Name of joy, and of praise to God to forgive sins. He is full of joy in Himself; sufficient in Himself is Jehovah; but now He stoops infinitely; He stoops infinitely, and He says, These men whom I have given to My Son to redeem shall be forgiven, and when I forgive them, that forgiveness shall be to Me a name of joy, and of praise. You think, perhaps, some of you, it would be a name of glory to God to damn you. I used to feel that when I was a youth and He dealt with my conscience; I felt He could only glorify Himself in my damnation. Then to read, and then for the Scripture to come to you, that God says He delights to show mercy; He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin to thousands. It is with Him in the origination of it; it is with Him in devising the means to accomplish it. What means? He spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us. Think of it - "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son" into the world. Herein is love - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The means - that the only begotten Son should descend to the lower parts of the earth and take into union with His Divine Person the sacred humanity begotten of the Holy Ghost in the virgin. The means - the only way, because, as I have said, to punish sin is necessary to God. If He could pass sin unpunished, what is to be the consequence to Himself? It would be the destruction of the Being of God, for He is too good, too holy, to pass sin unpunished. The means - that this God-Man should be a poor Man; that His tender heart should be broken by wicked men; that, when the appointed time came, He should be delivered into the hands of wicked men who, according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, should take Him, and by wicked hands crucify, and slay Him. The means - Look at Christ on the cross; there are the means. Christ crucified; Christ dead, and buried. Christ rising from the dead, conquering sin, removing, making an end of it; conquering and destroying the devil. With God in these things is forgiveness. That is doctrine, and I hope you love it. I hope the Holy Ghost will make each child of His increasingly love that doctrine. If it is so, you will tremble, you will fear, you will worship, you will

rejoice, and be glad, that such a revelation is made of God, with regard to conversion and forgiveness of sin.

Next, the application of this. This is the work of the Third Person in the Trinity, the Spirit, given to Christ without measure that He should constantly witness to the Person of the Son of God in His humiliation. He did so as he lay in the manger, bearing witness to His Blessed Person and work in the heart of the shepherds, and wise men, while the angels of God worshipped Him. So as He grew in wisdom, and stature, the Holy Spirit constantly witnessed to His impeccable nature and obedience. Likewise, when He was baptised, He descended like a Dove and abode upon Him, while the Father declared - "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Thereafter in His public ministry, the Lord Jesus was no less dependent for - said He - "the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do". The Holy Spirit, therefore, as the Spirit of Wisdom and understanding, ever dwelt in Him, and rested upon Him, because He, as none other, spake the words of God. (John 3 v 34). God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him. Each Person in the Godhead is necessary for salvation, and heaven. If you have a heavenly nature, you have that in you that will make sin very bitter, and when the Holy Ghost sends some word, brings some truth, brings some view of God to you, you will tremble at that word, and you will realise what your sin has done; brought you into ruin, utter ruin, and you will be put among those of whom Christ speaks. I am sent to seek and to save that which was lost, Everybody is lost, you will say. Yes, most true; but only some are lost in the sense in which Christ speaks. "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost". How does He do it? By sending His Spirit. And when the Spirit opens to faith's view the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, then this word is entered into - "There is forgiveness". Though I am searched - as if the Psalmist should say, though Lord I realise that if I am searched by Thyself; if what Thy omniscient eye sees in me of iniquity, and if I am marked, and dealt with according to that - I am utterly ruined; I could not stand. But there is something says, Hope in God, and tremblingly, the believing, the convinced, the weak, the ruined sinner, looks to this forgiveness. "There is forgiveness with Thee". With God - as I have endeavoured, very briefly, and feebly, I know, to set before you. There is forgiveness with God. Let us look at it in

the application of it, for every divine truth revealed in holy Scripture has an application. The truth of divine punishment, as in the Scriptures stated, has an application. Do you realise that? Have you felt the law of God in any measure applied to you. That is what I mean - application. Has the gospel been brought to you? That is application. Philpot truly says, If he were asked to describe true religion, he would say, application, application, application. That is what it is.

To see good bread and wine
Is not to eat and drink

A poor hungry man, may look at the window of a provision shop and see plenty, but he may inly say, I have no money to buy any of it with. You say, I am very poor; I have no good deeds, no good tempers, no consistency at all in my heart. I am just a sinner, an inconsistent sinner. As Berridge says

Sure the plague is in my heart

A mass of inconsistency. And this makes a man tremble. He looks, in the light of the Spirit, to his innumerable sins; how he has departed from God; how He has despised the Saviour. I could hardly bear to look at it this afternoon. Despised Him, despised the Saviour. You say, I have done it. O, how guilty you feel. Now the Spirit comes, and, as it were, whispers, Look another way, to Jesus and His blood. This is the beginning of application, when despair is stopped, when living hope rises, when fervent cries ascend to God - "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord, for it is great". The hairs of your head will be few, if you could count them, in your own view, compared with your sins. Nothing can number them. Nobody can count them. The conscience feels them, and there comes in a contest - "Who would set the briers and thorns against Me in battle?" (Isaiah 27 v 4) Who would set the sins that he has done, the sins that are in his wicked heart, against God, like so many briers and thorns through which He could not come? You have done it; I have done it. O, the times some of us have thought the Lord could not put away these things. He says - "I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or, let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace

with me." And where are your briars and thorns? where are your sins? where are your fears? where is your guilt? where is your trembling. Gone, cast into the depths of the sea.

Forgiveness! 'tis a joyful sound

To malefactors doomed to die;

And this should be our concern, will be our concern, if we have grace, to have forgiveness sealed on our hearts. Who can do it? The Holy Ghost, none else. God uses means but He has reserved to Himself the powerful application of this precious blood of Christ. A very notable word you have in Peter respecting this matter. He says - "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ" O, great word, is it not? Great word; and it puts salvation with God. Not corruptible things, not men, not other witness, not other encouragements, but with God. "It shall be" - let me repeat that wonderful word - "It shall be to Me - God - a name of joy, and praise". Here is a trembling sinner; he has been doing evil, and he owns it, he is sorry for it. David, this blessed saint of God, comes into a deep place, and he said what a case I am in. I am in the depths, but I will cry unto God. This should be a concern with you who feel sin. I will cry unto God out of the depths wherein I am, and am fixed there in regard to myself, and in regard to power to move and get out. Out of these depths of conviction, of sorrow, of grief, of woe, in my own conscience, I cried unto God. And you wait for Him. "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope"; cannot avoid hoping. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." The dark, cold winter night, the watchman is on his watchtower the whole night. You can think how he would crane his neck toward the East to catch the first beam of the sun rising, and O, how glad he would be to see that beam from the East bending toward the West. And you say, like that I wait for the Lord. I am anxious, I am concerned, I want to know if I am right; and how can I know that? By the application of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

With God salvation is. There comes a moment, a sweet moment, when a poor sinner, crying out of the depths unto God, hears God

speaking to him. This is a grand point. He hears God speaking to him. Then God gets his attention, and what God says is this - "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions" - you cannot number them, but I have blotted them out as a thick cloud - "and as a cloud thy sins"; not belittled, but magnified in your view by grace. And

O, how this melts the soul; what sweet contrition is felt; what humility fills the heart; what praises rise up from the heart to God, because sin is forgiven. Are you afraid? Go to God with your fear. Are you more deeply convinced of sin? Confess it to Him. Remember what is written in John's first epistle - "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins". And I am disposed to say this to you, that the more you feel the forgiveness of God, the more you will confess your sins, and unworthiness, and the more you will hate yourself, while you rise up in happiness, and thankfulness, and praise to Him. O, said the Psalmist - "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me". Why such extacy? why such a triumphant word? Because He healeth all thy diseases; He forgiveth all thine iniquities. He has sent His word and healed me. Now I will bless Him, I will praise Him. Perhaps some here are saying, I am a great deal too high for them. I think I am low, I am in the depths with you, as it were, and I say out of that depth as you cry to God, your cry enters into His ear. He listens to the voice of your supplications, and the day is coming - O, may it soon come, even now, if it were His will - when He will say, Thy sins are all forgiven. The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin.

Yield not then to unbelief
Courage soul, there yet is room,
Though of sinners, thou art chief,
Come, thou burdened sinner, come

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ..." O, what a blow this is to men. No money! Take nothing to God! Buy nothing! No. If you go with a good feeling to buy something, He wont let you have that good feeling, perhaps not another minute. If you go with religion to buy something, He will

take the religion away from you. But if you can go with poverty, destitution, you will find that right - "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." What human tongue, yea what angelic tongue, could set forth adequately the greatness, the freeness, the infiniteness of God's love and mercy in forgiving sin? I cannot, I do not know how to, express it. Mrs Gilpin said the word "freely" filled heaven and earth, so great, so wonderful was it. "Freely". "I will love them freely". The holy God embracing a polluted creature. A just God forgiving a sinner, an unjust person. The great God who has been contemned and despised, and rebelled against by a sinner, comes to that sinner, and says to his servants, This is my son; bring forth the best robe and put it on him; give him the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace; bring the ring of assurance and put it on his hand, and let the fatted calf be brought, and let us have a heavenly merry-making. This is the name of joy, my friends, this is the name of joy that God has when He forgives sins. There is forgiveness in God. O, I would impress it on you, if I could; forgiveness with God. You cannot forgive yourself, and you never will, and the more you are forgiven the more you will hate yourself, but there is nothing too hard for God. This case is not too hard for Him. And when you are forgiven, then you will be happy, because forgiveness brings holiness. Forgiveness cleanses; forgiveness makes the person meet for heaven. Forgiveness is greater than the sins forgiven. Sin is infinite in its desert, but forgiveness is infinite in all its beautiful effects, humbling the trembling sinner, cleansing his guilty, polluted conscience, melting his obdurate heart of unbelief, taking away all his objections to Jesus Christ, and all his prejudice against God. I know what I am saying, for I had all those things in my own heart, and have them still. "There is forgiveness". Come, church of God in this place now, come to His table, come to take that bread which represents His broken body. Drink that cup which represents His precious blood. We have great reason to come to His table. We have solemn reason to partake of this. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" A sinner, brought to proper nothingness, says, Lord, may I come? Is there room for me? And the servants are commanded to say to their

master, we have brought all we could get, and still there is room. And one might say, come poor trembling church to the table. Some of you may be saying, we wish we could; we wish we had enough. What is enough? If thou believest that Jesus is the Son of God, thou mayest be baptised. Come, I say, trembling people, church, come to this beautiful table, that is the ordinance of Jesus Christ, who said - "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come". That is, you exhibit it. There will be visitors here, and we shall do this, as God helps us, in faith; we shall set forth, and show what Christ is, what He did; how He died, and why He died, and what is the effect of His death. "There is forgiveness". That forgiveness, when spoken on the heart, will take a sinner from the gates of hell into heaven. He may long have to wait, but it will take him into heaven. No forgiven sinner will be shut out. O, the freeness of it, the greatness of it, the reality of it, the weight of it, the glory of it. Forgiveness. It is, if one might say so, the very essence, the quintessence, of the gospel. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin", all manner of sin. Ah, sinner, you are not bad enough perhaps. When I was a young man, under the burden of sin, one day I was walking out in the country, and I lent on a gate, and looked into a field, and envied the cattle that I saw grazing, and I began to say, if my sins were ordinary sins, then I might hope God would forgive them, but they are not ordinary. O, I was a sinner, and I am. What then? Did I despair? I should have done, but for this. "All manner of sin and blasphemy" Think of it. Have you sinned in any, and all manner of, sin? Have you blasphemed the God of heaven, and are you convinced of it? Do you fear what is coming? hell, which you deserve. O, may the Lord drop it upon your spirit, into your hearts - "All manner of sin". Atheism, devilism, every kind of evil; all manner; forgiven. May the Lord give this to us. May the Holy Spirit enable those who are seeking it, to wait for it, for Him, "more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning." Go home, my friends, who have not had it, and beg of God to give it you, for you need to consider this - you are dying. O, what can make a dying bed sweet, but forgiveness, including all the blessings that God will give to His people here, and embracing all that they desire in heaven.