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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 22 March 1925

Psalm 73 v 25

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there
is none upon earth that I desire
beside Thee"

We noticed this morning that this text expresses a very great claim, a very great profession, a matter which, as we may be enabled rightly to regard it may produce searching of heart, for it is a sinner who makes this claim. It is the "I AM THAT I AM" who is claimed, and the infinite disparity between these two, as in any measure apprehended, will cause a sinner to pause and ask himself has he any ground, proper, solid ground, on which to stand making this claim, making this profession. Have you, have I? It is not a matter to settle by reasoning. All saving knowledge is a matter of divine impartation, not human acquisition. Think then, beloved friends, have you ground, good ground to stand on, while you make so great, so wondrous a claim, so bold a profession? And yet it pleases God to enable His people to make this profession, this claim. Worms of earth approach Him and He smiles on them, and out of the power that His smiles give to the soul, faith says, "The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him". Value His smiles; indeed, when you get them you will. Sometimes it is as if He comes in a wave of goodness, a divine wind passing over the soul, - perhaps in Scripture - but a sweet, singular, indisputable, and for the moment, indubitable influence, a wind passing over the soul, and the sinner says, this is the voice of my beloved. I said it more than once under that influence. "The voice of my beloved! behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." (S of S 2 v 8). Watch all influences under which you come; watch them, try them, see if they are of God. Do they lead you to Christ? Then thank God for them. Do they puff you up and make you somebody in your own estimation? Then flee from them. Do they make you independent? Then flee from them. Do they bring you to lean on the beloved? Then follow them and thank God. "Beloved, try the spirits". The God claimed here is our

incarnate Friend, the Brother born for adversity, Jesus Christ. An absolute God never can be claimed as the portion of a sinner, as I have frequently named to you Luther's prayer which, when I was quite young in the ways of God, I met, and it was a wonderful prayer to me. O Lord, said Luther, keep me out of God, out of a God out of Christ. Keep me away from Him. God in Christ is attractive. Out of Christ, as on Mount Sinai, O how repellant is His glory, how unbearable His glory. How unbearable are the thunders and the lightnings and the flashes and the voices; but in Christ, how attractive. Do you feel the attractions of Christ sometimes? Do you feel as if you run after Him, as if He becomes so suitable, so excellent, so glorious in your eyes that you say inly, O if He were but mine, O if He would come, if He would but speak, if He would be my God and my Saviour I should wish for nothing else. Follow that up as well as you can.

I dwelt a little on His Priesthood this morning; it is very attractive to me; His Priesthood. You will never get to God without it; you will never know that He is propitious without it; you will never get a smile without it; but with it, in it, O you will never know half the goodness of God here, never. And there were two or three aspects of the Priesthood I brought before your notice this morning. First was His sacrifice, the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The second was that in His High Priestly garments the Priest had the Urim and the Thummim, light and perfection, and that all the communications which God would make and will make and does make to His people are by our great High Priest. All light is in Him. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass". "... 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." (John 17 v 8). He is God's wisdom, God's love, God's light, God's grace in the highest perfection and expression. So when He speaks, He reveals His Father, He reveals Himself, He reveals His Spirit. There is another aspect of the Priesthood which I would just bring to your notice. That loathsome disease, leprosy, separated the subject of it from all society. If one were coming toward him unawares of his presence, the poor leper must cry this person off, saying, "Unclean, unclean". It was an

incurable disease. You find in the description of it which God gives, no mention of a remedy that the earth produced. The man was pronounced unclean and therefore his dwelling must be alone. But there was one person he must go to. Any change in the disease he must go to the priest with, and this shows how that the saints of the Most High who are troubled with the loathsome disease of sin must continually take the case to the great High Priest and as an encouragement afforded to them in the Scripture is this great, this beautiful fact, that when on earth Jesus Christ permitted, and secretly drew to Himself, lepers. The first - I think you will find the first - miracle of healing that the Lord Jesus performed was the healing of the leper. It is recorded in the 8 Matthew: "And there came a leper unto Him". And if that were so, it would seem to say, as by a wonderful voice, I am come to save and heal sinners. Are you a leper, O sinner, a leper in your own sense and suffering. A person loathsome to yourself, loathsome to God, whose disease is spreading? Well then, though you must, you do, feel unfit for any society of Israel; no Jew can you think of consorting with, because of your disease, there is One Person to whom you may go, you must go; go to this Priest. Whom have you but Christ? To whom else can you go? He is the Physician, He is the Priest; His is the judgement, and "He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes". He shall judge with righteousness the poor of His people, and pronounce a righteous judgement, and one day when you are worse, and perhaps come to the very last, He will say, you are clean. Go to the Priest. Leprous soul, quite throughout infected, press through the crowd, call on the Good Pyhsician. There is balm in this Gilead, there is a Good Physician there, and He will recover the health of the daughter of His people and bring them to realise the power of His precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. And there is one other aspect of this Priestly work and office of our Saviour that I will name to you, and then pass on, namely this, all the praises of Israel must go this way. That is, meat offering, thank offering, all must go this way. All the meal, all the oil, all the cakes, all the things you must take for a thank offering, must go in and by the Priest. And what a wonderful mercy that is. Though we cannot rise to the high praises of God, as we would, yet when we offer the praise and sacrifice of thanksgiving, the fruit of our lips, by Jesus Christ, that is acceptable. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me, and to him that ordereth his

conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Have you no praises? You have a good many complaints, no doubt; complaints which you are permitted and enabled to take to the Lord. Have you nothing to thank Him for? I wish I were more thankful, but sometimes I am thankful, thankful for Jesus Christ, thankful to be allowed to approach a holy God in and through Him. Well now, in all these things, may not you say, say to Him "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" Thou great High Priest of my profession, in all these respects whom have I to go to? By whom am I to pray? By whom am I to praise? In whom have I to hope? to whose merit look? Whose powerful blood am I to plead? "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" This is very exclusive. You wont build on religion; you will build on Christ if you build rightly. You will not even build on a good state if you feel to be in a good state, but on Him who puts you into that good state.

Now I would go to another point, this, namely, "Whom have I in heaven", for a satisfying, abiding, blessed, inalienable lot and portion? "but Thee?" Whatever we have here is like a loan; it may be called in, it will. Our days on earth are that, for we have forfeited our natural life by sin. We live, if I may so say, we live from our cradle to our grave on borrowed days and borrowed mercy. Nothing of right, because we have forfeited everything by sin. Do you believe it? Can you receive it? Do you acknowledge it to God? Do you thank Him sometimes with a feeling heart when you sit down to your table spread with bounties? Do you say out of your heart, Lord I do not deserve a crumb? When you breathe without pain do you sometimes think, O what a good God I have that I am not tormented and racked with pain of body? Everything, everything here we have of God's goodness and longsuffering. We deserve nothing; nothing belongs to us of right in respect of God, whatever we may have here in respect of our own possessions, and our relationships. But all these things are passing away; our days are like the swift ships of desire (Job 9 v 26), our foundation is in the dust; we soon shall pass away. Tiptaft used to say that after 70 years you lived on borrowed days. That is true as it is true of all other days before 70. Some loans are without date, called in at will. Our natural lives are just of that character; no date. You may say, teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom, but you do not mean, tell me Lord when I am going to die. You only mean in spirit, Lord do cause me to remember my

mortality; cause me to remember that I am hastening to the grave; cause me to remember that I must needs die and be as water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. So teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart unto wisdom, which is Jesus Christ. Well then, if this be so, if we have not a portion on which we can rely, a day which we can call our own, for one single minute in an absolute sense; if this be so, in this world, what of the next world? And what of experience here? Have I a God whom I may call my own? Have I a Saviour whom I have embraced by faith? Have I One who will never disown me? Never say to me "I never knew you" Have you such a Friend, such a Saviour, and Brother born for adversity? What say you? Does faith spring up in some of you and do you remember times when Christ has drawn near, when you have drawn near to Him, when you have said, O Lord, I love Thy Name, Thy powerful blood is my hope, by Thee I come to the Father. Have you found Him approaching you? Have you said inly: "The voice of my beloved; behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills" and heard Him say, Come with Me My sister, My spouse, look to Me, come from the lions' dens, come from the mountains of the leopards. (S of S 4 v 8). Come with Me, let us go into the villages, let us lodge there. Let us rise early in the morning and go to the vineyard. (S of S 7 v 11/12). Well, if you have ever had the Lord Jesus coming to you then you have said, He is my God, He is my God, my God. And in Him you have the Father as said He to His disciples, sending a message to His disciples - Go, tell them I ascend unto My God and your God, to My Father and your Father". "Whom have I in heaven" then as the satisfying, abiding, inalienable, unloseable portion, "but Thee". Once yours; always yours. You once His, always His, a mutual property and a mutual enjoyment. Is that too much for me to say? No. But does God enjoy a sinner? Yes, if angels rejoice over a repenting sinner, what of God who gives repentance, who loves repenting sinners, who hears them with pleasure. O what joy the Lord has. He sees, when He sees a sinner coming to Him, He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. You will never shed a tear of repentance that did not give the Lord Jesus satisfaction. You never will. Ah and when your faith goes out to Him, when you say, "Lord save or I perish"; when you approach Him with that blessed faith that rises above the sins, and the discouragements, and the guilt, and the temptations, and the weakness, and fears that you feel; that faith that says, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief"; He sees there

in you of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. enjoys His people. "I am come into My garden", He said spouse" (S of S 5 v 1) You invited Me when you said: come into His garden" (s of S 4 v 16). Now He says "I am in My garden My sister, My spouse". I have eaten My pleasant fruit. That is His enjoyment of His people and blessed be His Name, He has this enjoyment in some of us. I am glad when I can repent; I have so much to repent of. O I am so glad when my hard heart relents and in secret I can mourn over my sins and my barrenness and unprofitableness and I am sure you will have the same favour and perhaps much more of it than I have. It is with me a sweet thing. Repentance is not so gloomy as tis by some men named. Often is this my petition, a double prayer, give me a daily repentance and a daily pardon. If you belong to Him He belongs to you. He belongs to you; that is a wonderful thing. Now this satisfaction, look at it, the satisfaction of a sinner. If you gad and wander about half as much as I do, you will be glad when the Lord settles you at any time, for any length of time. O you will be glad when you can say: "My heart is fixed, O God my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise". And then when the arms, to use Flavel's word, when the little arms of your faith open to embrace the Saviour, then you say, "The Lord is my portion saith my soul". And this I can tell you, and you know it is true, that at that moment there is no creature that you want to join with Him. I have said it to Him, I want no creature Lord. Faith embraces the Saviour, faith says, He is my portion, He is my All. It is a great thing when you can sing from your heart, the hymn you sang this morning

Less than Thyself will not suffice
 My comfort to restore
 More than Thyself I cannot crave
 And Thou canst give no more (940)

O brethren, what a portion. It is satisfying at the present. It is satisfying in the joy of it, in the peace of it, in the liberty of it, in the humbling power of it, in the sweetness of it, in the fullness of it. O it does satisfy. If you had wisdom to, as it were, look distinctly and separately at every faculty of your soul when you had the Lord with you, you could say, every faculty of my soul is satisfied with the Lord Jesus. Do you look at your conscience? How

His powerful blood satisfies that, and brings the peace of God into your heart which passeth all understanding. If you look at your heart, how satisfied that is with His love, His Kingly love, His Kingly power, His Kingly authority, His Kingly protection. Your heart is at the throne and He is there upon it. If you look at your will, is there any will but His that you would now walk in as a rule? Any will but His in providence that you would walk by and have? No. And I will add this. Take your intelligence or your intellect. Is there not enough in incarnate Deity, in infinite love, infinite mercy, infinite goodness, to fill your own mind? Is there any science, any knowledge, in the whole of the world that could take up one little bit of your attention for the time being? Is He not everything? I believe this will run through eternity. We shall not lose our creatureship, we shall not lose our faculties, but they will all be filled. "The Lord is my portion" "Whom have I in heaven" for a portion, a satisfying portion? Then also there is satisfaction in prospect. Ah tis a prospect. Oh how good has my prospect sometimes been. The darkness and the repellant nature of the grave have departed sometimes from view. What a portion you have in prospect. Paul said "For me to live is Christ". He knew His Redeemer, he walked with Him. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain". (Philippians 1 v 21). How could he gain since he already had Christ? He could gain in the measure of his possession, in the measure of his joy, in the uninterrupted nature of his joy. He could gain that way. He could not gain a greater Saviour but he could gain a greater knowledge of the Saviour. He could not have a greater High Priest, a greater King, a greater God, but he could know more of that blessed One, and so to him to die would be gain, was gain. So it will be with the people of God. "Whom have I in heaven" as a portion? Well brethren you are not poor. Very poor you may be in your circumstances, very poor in your feelings for the most part, very distant, very bound at times in your feelings, very troubled by indwelling sin. You are not poor. How can you be poor with this portion? Says Toplady

I'm rich to all the intents of bliss
If Thou O God art mine

Yes dear friends, we are rich. We must die to know how rich we are. We

apprehend it a little, but we shall know it fully when we are no more here. O think of our departed brother, Mr Bentall, now in heaven. Recently, just a few hours since, he was here in his poor, aged body, 94 or 95 years old, and now he is in heaven; his happy soul is there. He mingled with us until his age prevented it; prayer and praise; and now he is with the spirits of just men made perfect. He has gained; a great gain. "Absent from the body present with the Lord". That is what some of us here are hoping for. I am looking for it sometimes, even have been looking for it with great desire, believing that to die would be gain to me. "Whom have I in heaven" as a portion?

Well, let us look at another point. I cannot expect to say much, but let us look at this point. "Whom have I in heaven" as a Protector, "but Thee". Do you need protection? Is there anything about that anybody would rob you of? Do you possess that which anyone envies? Yes, if you possess grace the devil hates you, envies you, pursues, tempts, tries to rob and kill you. Can you not take care of yourself? Let the proud Pharisee say, yes; let the proud religionist say, yes; let the worldling say, yes; the saint says, no. Lord take care of me. Have you gracious feelings sometimes? Can you keep them? Do you not rather say, Lord take care of them? Have you a gracious experience of Christ with you sometimes? Do you not say, "Abide with me". Keep me from provoking Thee, from sinning Thy presence away. You cannot sin away your interest but you can sin your experience away. You can sin godly feelings away; you can. You go to your business and look at things with all the intentness of your mind and forget God, forget Him to whom you prayed before you went to your business; forget Him whose presence you asked; forget Him whose love you craved to feel, and you go on and on, living without prayer for the day, perhaps swallowed up, and at the evening when you begin to reckon - if you go to Huntington's corner and kneel down on the cushion in the corner and begin to cast up accounts with respect to the day - what have you got? Pain, conviction, sorrow, confusion, an absent Saviour. If you mentally say, and perhaps confess, Lord this morning I wanted Thee, and I asked Thy presence, and I thought my heart was tender, I thought my conscience was lively, and I felt as if I could not live without Thee, and now I have gone through the day without Thee; you need protection my friends. We need protection. Perhaps your conscience

is tender ere you rise and your spirit is prayerful and y
Lord to be with you, and you go downstairs and you open your
and O, something irritates you. You want protection.
somebody and you get provoked, and goodness flies away like the
morning cloud or early dew. You need protection. You have trouble,
perhaps in your house, perhaps in your person, and you say, do enable
me to submit to Thee. Take this will of mine, bend it, kindly suppl
it by Thy mercy that I may say: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on
earth as it is in heaven", and ere long you begin to pity yourself.
You need protection. And who is the Protector? Who can keep you? Who
can keep you in trouble? Who can enable you to say: "God is our refuge
and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we
fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be
carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and
be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof"
(Psalm 46) Who can enable us so to speak? This Divine Protector.
"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and
glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly"
(Psalm 84 v 11) Therefore we well may say "Save Thy people, and bless
Thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever" (Psalm
28 v 9). You cannot take care of yourselves. You may let an idol in
and then you will smart for it. You cannot turn it out. You may
defile your conscience; God only can wash it. I have been glad
sometimes of a word of James Bourne in one of his letters. He says,
the rule of the house is not that the children's hands shall never be
dirty, but that when they are dirty they shall be washed. It is a good
word - "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father". "....
these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin we
have an Advocate with the Father....." (1 John 2 v 1) We have the
blood of Jesus Christ. We need protecting, need keeping. "He that
hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job 17 v 9)
Therefore may the Lord hold us up, protect us, cover us in the day of
battle, fight our battles for us. Whom have we to look to then for our
defence but that great God, the Eternal God who rides upon the heavens
in our help, and who has said, I will never leave thee, I will never
forsake thee.

One word in conclusion. "Whom have I in heaven" as a Guide, but
Thee? You do not know which way to go perhaps, how to turn, what to

do. Said the Psalmist in one place - the Lord to him rather - "I will guide thee with Mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule". (Psalm 32 v 8/9). Do not rush madly forward; do not stubbornly stick where you are. What then? "I will guide thee with Mine eye". Yea, and the confidence is felt as expressed in one place: Thou wilt receive me to glory. Shall you get safely through, safely through these meshes of temptation, these entanglements in providence, and these bars and gates of brass in your own wicked nature? Will you get through them? Do you expect to do so? Why, a child of God sometimes says, yes I do, and when he says it, how humble he is; how little in his own eyes, how feeble, how unable, how incapable in himself. But he says, the Lord is my strength. The Lord strengthens him with strength in the inner man. He strengthens him with might by His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3 v 16). He strengthens him "unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Colossians 1 v 11). And so he is guided, he is guided into truth. Now this doctrine nourishes him, now that doctrine. Now the incarnation of Christ, now the cross, now the resurrection, now the everlasting Covenant sealed with blood. These doctrines, he is led into them, and they nourish his faith. Nourished up he is in the words of faith and good doctrine. He is guided in regard of his providential matters; does not know how to manage them. He has lost, perhaps, in his own conscience, his ounce of commonsense. He feels foolish, does not know what to do. Then the Lord suggests things to him and the Spirit guides him. And this is the best of guidance when the Spirit enables him to pray; "praying in the Holy Ghost". "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37 v 5). Then the sinner walks in humble obedience to his dear Saviour. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" God on His throne, the Lamb in the midst of this throne, and the seven Spirits which are before the throne. This Three One God, manifested in the Man Christ Jesus. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and He will be our Guide even unto death"

And so he comes down, as it were, in a moment from heaven. His gaze has been fixed on the Lamb, on the throne, on the Holy Ghost, on the Covenant. His heart has been there, his affections have been there, and now he comes down to the earth. And he looks round about on the earth. He comes into his house and he looks on his dear ones

there. You do, of course you do. And as, when your eye was in heaven you had no eye at all for the bright angels, for the spirits of just men made perfect; the seraphim held not your gaze for a moment; only one Object, the throne, the holy Ancient of Days on the throne; so when you come to earth, there are your dear ones, there is your joy in your home, in your family; there is your business and you delight in it; there are your various friends, godly, kind, indulgent friends, and you love them and then you come to say, now which of them can I lean on? Faith says, not one. What am I to do? Leave them all; What, leave them all? If a man love father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, houses or land, more than Me, he is not worthy of Me. A very close word to some of us, for we are not without natural affection. Grace will never kill your natural love; grace will not make a stoic of you. Grace will not take the love of your dear ones out of your heart, so you may sometimes find it hard to say - "And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". What, not a creature? "Compared with Christ in all beside" - Can you say it? 'Tis a great thing to say; it can never be said but by faith, that is truly, for how can a man shut his eyes to what is beautiful here and lovely to him? But when faith gets a glimpse of Jesus Christ, when she sees the Covenant of Grace, when she sees the Trinity in salvation, and when that blessed One comes into the soul and says: "This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell for I have desired it", then humbly this faith says "There is none upon earth that I desire" in comparison of Thee. These my friends, these my family, have their own proper place, but God is first, God is first. Well beloved, look narrowly into this important, this wonderful claim, this great profession. I have said very little about it, but may the Lord say what there is to be said to you, and if any word I have said may be made of use, the praise must be His. May He be pleased to grant that blessing which maketh rich, and to which He addeth no sorrow, for His Name's sake.

AMEN.