

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 6 May 1927

PSALM 80 v 17

"Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right-hand,
upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong
for Thyself"

What would you do sinner if there were no Mediator between a holy God and your soul? How could you bear those everlasting burnings which are in the nature of God and express and shoot themselves forth from His holy law which we all have broken? This beautiful Word expresses what God has done, what He will do, and what He teaches His people to pray that He would do. It sets before us the Lord Jesus and the connection is instructive. It is shaming, it is encouraging, it is instructive, telling us that a favoured church may become very degenerate; that a vine, planted wholly a noble and right vine, may become a strange plant to God. It is shaming, shaming to some of us who, as we have hoped, and still hope, God has planted wholly a right seed, should bring forth grapes of Sodom. It is encouraging because, in the pitiful, desolate and apparently hopeless condition into which the church of Israel was brought by sin, they still had courage put into their faith to ask Him, against whom they had done such evil things, to forgive them, to turn them again and to deal with them, not immediately - O woe to us if He were to deal so with us - but mediately, by Him, the Son of Man, whom He had appointed for this very thing. Our Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty God. By Him God made the worlds by the Word of His power. Christ holds up the worlds which He created. He took on Him our nature. This, if salvation is to be known, is necessary. Sameness of nature in the Surety must be. The defaulter being a man, the sinner being a man, the Saviour, the Surety, must also be a man. Therefore it is written "the children, being partakers of flesh and blood He also likewise took part of the same that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." O, the wisdom of God in this; the love of God in this, that that absolutely necessary

condition of salvation, that the Saviour should be of the same nature with the saved, is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. O, behold the God-Man. O, my fellow sinners, see the goodness of God in forming the human nature of the Lord Jesus. And more, He was made under the law. That is a second condition most necessary as the sin of man can only be imputed to a man, so the sin committed under the law must be borne in its penalty and punishment by One who was under the law. Jesus was under the law. In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law. And yet a third condition may be mentioned, namely that it was necessary for Him who was to be the Surety for His people and their Redeemer should enter into a covenant to do this, to be this. There must be a covenant between the Persons in the Trinity in this particular. And if, O, if one may say, in demonstration, if these three things are found in the Lord Jesus, then faith, seeing them in Him, will find some courage to pray to God in Him. They are in Him. A Man there is, a real Man; a Man who was made under the law, and a Man who was in the covenant, to whom His Father said "I will give Thee for a covenant of the people", and who, Himself, said to His Father "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering and offerings for sin Thou didst not desire. Then said I, Lo I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, to do Thy will O God". And that will, presented to the Lord Jesus in the cup of sorrow that was given to Him to drink when He was in the garden of Gethsemane, that will was that Christ should lay down His life. Now my brethren, if I have rightly expressed this matter as to the constitution of the Person of this Man of our text, it behoves us all, as God may give us faith, very narrowly to regard and consider this Person, so constituted, so suitable to us. Consider Him. Consider Him in His Person. Consider Him in His great office. Consider Him in His solemn and smarting condition as a Surety. Consider Him as having sin imputed to Him by His Father. Consider Him in His loving willingness to be a smarting Surety. Consider Him in the vicarious nature of His Person and of all that He did and said and prayed and sweat. Consider Him in all these things. The more we are led into the mystery of Christ, the more we shall find our ignorance, and the more we shall find that a suitable prayer to us "That which I see not teach Thou me". The two mysteries which the saints of the Most High have to consider as long as they live here are the mystery of sin in their nature, in their lives, in their thoughts, in their

affections. O the shame of this, the pain of this. The Lord knows what tears it costs our hearts if not many tears trickle down our faces, and He knows the shame of this that some of us feel. He knows the defeats we have suffered at the hand of our enemy, shameful defeats, many innumerable defeats; who can count his sins; they are more than the hairs of our head. Who can count them up and reckon them in order unto God. The mystery of godliness, this is the second mystery which will out-weight, out-do and undo and remove for ever and ever that terrible iniquity of sin from the very being of the saints. O, I am glad that sin is separable from a sinner. It makes one's heart ready to dance with joy to think that the day is coming when, not only will there be the forgiveness of all sin, but there will be no sin left in the being. A sinner and his sins are separable and they are separated. Christ separated them when He said, on the cross, "It is finished", when He finished transgression and brought in everlasting righteousness, but for the fulness of that we have to wait and for the sweetness of that we must know something of the bitterness of sin and for the victory of that we must know something of the defeat of sin. If the Lord will help me just to lead you in your thoughts a little into this petition I shall be, I hope, truly thankful and I am sure it will be a very high honour conferred on me.

The mystery and the mercy, the greatness and the glory of the Lord Jesus as in the text will be greatly enhanced in our view if we enter experimentally and shamefully into the context. It is not wise to separate Scriptures. 'Tis good to notice contexts and the context of this text is a very solemn one; a once flourishing vineyard, typical of a church, now reduced to ruin, desolation. Once hedged in, fenced, stones taken out, all the care that God could bestow on the vine, bestowed on it, and when He looked for fruit, grapes of Sodom only could be found. He was provoked. He sent boar and beast out of the wood and the forest to trample down this degenerated vineyard, break her hedges, and all the trailing boughs that once had luxurious grapes, trampled under foot. What a sight, what a state. In his prayer, at the dedication of the temple which he built, Solomon prayed for many things, supposed many conditions in the future of Israel; blasting, mildew, caterpillar, locust, palmerworm, famine and various evils, and among them, this, when Thy people are smitten down by the enemy because they have sinned against Thee. Who would

have thought it? And looking at Israel at that time under the prosperous reign of Solomon, who would have imagined, when that nation, that then rejoiced in obedience and brought the ordained sacrifices to God, would sacrifice to idols and provoke the Lord to raise up adversaries to them? But even Solomon was a type of what the nation would do in that particular for outlandish women turned his heart away from God. He provoked the Lord greatly, though he was beloved of his God, and God raised up adversaries to him. Now do you know what this means? Can you transfer this to a man of whom you know, a woman whom you know? Did you ever know a person planted by the Lord in Christ, blessed with grace, with divine favour, who washed his steps in butter, on whom the candle of the Lord shined, to whom the Lord was pleased to speak gracious things and comforting things? Did you know a person of that kind who answers to that? Alas, I know one. You say, perhaps have said, how is it that I have got into this state? When Israel shall be smitten down by the enemy because they have sinned against Thee. Is that a key to your case? You may say, how is it God has permitted this hedge to be broken down and these vile beasts to come and trample under foot every tender thing? Because they have sinned against Thee. I have done it; I should not think there is a gracious person here who could lift up his face to God and say, Lord, I have not done it. Then, if we be guilty, if we look at our sad case, if we say O what a change, how is the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed and, if so looking and so speaking and bemoaning our condition, it should please the Eternal Spirit to turn our eyes another way to Jesus and His blood, if we should be given to see the Mediator, O what a sight. Then I think you will say now to me, you will say, do try to lift Him up; our hope, our ground, our way to God, the reason of our asking, the ground of our hoping for a restoration, all, all in Him. Well my friends, we need a great deal of faith here. As it seems to me, I need a great strength of faith. This church evidently had that strength of faith, for her condition did not keep her from praying. Does your condition shut your mouth to God? Then, so far, the working is evil. So far, sin and the enemy have prevailed and are prevailing. Take notice of it, dear friends. Watch the operation of convictions on your minds. See how you are affected by conviction of a bad condition. See again the direction of your spirit. In that case when Ephraim saw his wound he went to king Jareb. They returned, but not to the Most High. See how things work

in you. In the church here they worked well. O, they said, we are in a bad case but there is a good God. He ordered the tabernacle to be made; He commanded Moses to make an Ark and to put into the Ark the covenant, the tables of stone. Then He said cover it with a Mercy Seat. There will I dwell; there I will commune with you; there I will tell you about Myself and about what I will do with you. And faith, instructed in this mystery and this mercy, goes to the Lord and says, O, thou Shepherd of Israel that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. The glories of God's pure, eternal nature, are darkness to us. We cannot penetrate, we cannot bear, that wondrous glory of the eternal God. But there is a glory we can bear, there is a shining forth of this great God we can bear, and faith, seeing this in type, and then seeing it in the ante-type, says, O, Shepherd of Israel, thou that dwellest between the cherubims, Thou who dost ordain to show Thyself in Christ and speak through Him, shine forth on us and speak to us. This seems to give the strength of this petition and the beauty of this petition. The badness sets out the goodness and Christ takes the badness of His people away and gives them of His goodness. Does it suit you? I cannot tell you how it suits me. O, it does fit a bad case; a good God in Christ. People dislike the mention of the malady today, but depend on it, you will never know the remedy till you are sick. You will never know salvation till you know what ruin is and you will never enjoy forgiveness till you have guilt and when this, alas, becomes to be repeated, I mean our sin and our guilt, then again and again we must see our condition and feel it and confess it. Then there will be this prayer. Faith is a strong grace, a prying grace, prying into the mysteries of Him who is the only hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble. Now this prayer is addressed to God, the Father. Faith looks to Him but only through the Mediator. You will never look on an absolute God. The rays of eternal Deity would smite us all into destruction, for we are sinners. Faith looks to God, the Father, through God the Son, incarnate. Look at that point, notice how you pray. Saying prayers seems to constitute much of the religion of people. See how you pray. To whom do you address some of your petitions? These people said Lord God, Thou hast a Son; Thou gavest Him; He is a Man and Thou madest Him a Man; Thou madest His human nature; Thou madest Him in the Covenant and didst make Him strong in the covenant and strong in the grace that was given to Him without measure, and strong in Thy purposes, to

accomplish them. Look on us in Him. Deal with us in Him. I understand this petition - "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right-hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself - to mean Lord, deal with us in Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Is it so? Will He do so? O, yes. He declared to Moses - "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty". In no other way than that. Well, dear brethren, what hand is it you need and pray to have on you? The hand of God in Jesus Christ. I have thought this might be said - Let the hand of justice be on Him. Could you bear the touch of infinite justice, sinner? Could you bear to think of being touched by the naked hand of justice? Everyone under a sense of conviction of sin, of having sinned, will say, Lord, if Thou art strict to mark iniquity, O Lord, I could not stand, so deal in justice with Him. And will He? Did He? Yes. Listen, sinner; O, may the Spirit make you know that it was for you God said - "Awake O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts". Smite the Shepherd; Justice, smite the Shepherd. Think of it, the great God, dealing in His great justice with His great Son incarnate. A flaming sword bathed in the holy soul of the Lord Jesus. Let that hand be on Jesus Christ.

Let the hand of love be on Him. It was eternally; it was when He sent Him into the world. God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into it; gave Him. He spared not His own Son. Love was in it. "In this was the love of God manifested toward us in that He sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him." Will that do? The nature of God is love; the channel in which that love flows is Jesus Christ. The objects that that love is to reach are poor, guilty people.

Let the hand of Thy divine purposes be on Him. It is a little thing for Thee, said the Father to His Son, that Thou shouldest raise up the tribes of Israel, that is, bring them all back, but I will give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, a covenant for the people. "Thou art My salvation unto the ends of the earth". Dear friends, God's purposes are in Him. Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world; blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly

places; predestinated to the adoption of children unto Himself by Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will. All divine purposes are there for the lifting up of His people out of the dust and off the dunghill.

Let Thy promises, Thy gracious promises be in Him. Let the hand of a promising God be on Him and this is expressed by Isaiah where the covenant term is - This is My covenant with Thee; My Spirit which I have put upon Thee and My words which I have put in Thy mouth shall not depart out of Thy mouth nor out of the mouth of Thy seed nor out of the mouth of Thy seed's seed henceforth and for ever.

And let Thy hand in dealing with us, let Thy hand be mediately on Him; teach us by Him; draw us to Thyself by Him; convince us of sin by Him, who sends His Spirit for that purpose. As Thou hast exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, speak so, speak thus, speak by Him, these mercies into our souls.

Now if God has given me right words and enabled me to speak of this Man as He should be spoken of - I do not mean adequately, but in substance - then what a mercy it will be for us to have faith raised up into exercise on Him. Who is worth a thought, when salvation matters are before us, but Christ and God in Him. Who is able to lift you off the dunghill of your sins and out of the dust of your shame and shameful condition, but God in Christ. Who is able to justify you and to put you in a state that you never were in in the Adam creation but God in Christ. And who is able to put you, a poor alien and an enemy, among the children and give you a goodly heritage, a pleasant land? Only God, in Christ. And again, who can restore you, who can restore me, from time to time from the bad states we get into, from the shameful defeats we sustain at the hands of our enemies and from the willingness that, alas, is in us, the willingness to sin? Who, I say, can restore us, but God, putting His hand of mercy and of love and of justice and of goodness on His dear Son, the Man of His right-hand, the Son of Man whom He made strong for Himself.

Now I want to say one more word. Do you want, are you seeking, union with God? How can you have union with everlasting burnings?

But you may have union with God in Christ. As, of the love of God, Christ says that the love wherewith Thou lovest Me may be in them, so He speaks of union; Thou art in Me. O, I would be in Thee. Union is a close thing, intimate, and in this case, indissoluble. What a mercy to be after union with God, God in Christ. "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right-hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself".

One other word, a question. Would you be fruitful in the knowledge of God? Would you bear fruit to the praise and glory of God? An honest Christian man says, the Lord knows I would be. I ask Him to make me fruitful. Now it can only be in one way - Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. The prophecy of Hosea concludes very beautifully. At the beginning of the last chapter the prophet says - the church speaking - "Asshur shall not save us". She has had enough of Asshur. "We will not ride upon horses"; they have only rushed madly with us into sin and trouble. What then? "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself". I feel sure that some of you must say, have again and again said, Lord, we have done that; we have destroyed ourselves. Then a tempting accuser says the case is hopeless. No, says a good God. "Take with you words". O dumb sinner, O sinner whose guilt has shut and sealed up your lips to God - "Take with you words". Says the man, I do not know what words to take. Why, says the Lord, take these words with you and return to the Lord and say unto Him take away all iniquity, all my iniquity. One says, I could say it better about my sins of unregeneracy than I can think of saying it now; I have so provoked Him. Israel was in that case, but to Israel thus says God "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: and say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." Does that fit you? Have you faith to go to God like that? Have you a case, and have you that faith, that strong faith, that is not overcome by unbelief and the sight and sense of your sins? Do you feel the worst person in this chapel? Do you feel as if you were not fit to be here? Do you feel it difficult to kneel and address God because you are such a sinner? Well, says the Lord, take this word with you "Take away all iniquity". God can do more than we are able to ask Him, till He teaches us how to ask Him. Christ's blood can do more than we can imagine until we have faith to

see the infinite value and efficacy of that blood. And then, because a person may say, O, but what of the future; I cannot be trusted, I cannot trust myself - and the Lord won't let you - but this is what He says. "I am like a green fir tree. From Me is thy fruit found". Using another typical figure, Christ said "I am the vine, ye are the branches". So the Man of God's right-hand answers our needs. Needs for the moment, needs for the future. "Let Thy hand be on the Man of Thy right-hand". Now this is encouraging doctrine, beautiful doctrine; full of glory indeed it is, as it is called the glorious gospel of Christ, the gospel of the ever blessed God. It needs a great deal more wisdom and grace than I have to preach this gospel well, but O, my lispings I believe do not offend the Lord, and I know they wont offend you. The little that can be said here about Him may encourage people who feel they have very little grace and very little knowledge. This is the Man, this is the Man, my friends, Jesus Christ, of whom we sometimes sing

What object's this which meets my eyes
Without Jerusalem's gate
Which fills my mind with such surprise
As wonder to create?

Is this the Man? can this be He
The prophets have foretold
Should with transgressors numbered be,
And for their crimes be sold?

Now if we have faith to continue that hymn and say

Yes, now I know 'tis He, 'tis He!
'Tis Jesus, God's dear Son,
Wrapt in humanity to die
For crimes that I had done! (950)

well, that will make us happy; that will make us happy. Then even a desolate condition that may succeed that happiness, a broken down state that may come, will not put this faith out altogether but it will be drawn forth again and again and we shall be able to say, in that faith, to God, Lord deal with us mediately; do not mark our

iniquities; deal not with us after our sins; deal with us in Jesus Christ; speak to us by Him and let Thy hand be on us in Him.

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AMEN.