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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 12 February 1928

Text: Song of Solomon IV verse 16

"Awake O north wind and come thou south
blow upon My garden that the spices thereof may
flow out. Let my beloved come into His garden and eat His
pleasant fruits"

This solemn and beautiful word belongs to the church of the living God. Christ does not call upon the wind north and south to blow on the world with so beneficent a purpose as we have here. In His providence He rules. All things and all men are in His hand, under His control. He sends the rain of His strength, whether for correction, or for mercy. He sends His word into the world that thereby, first of all, He may gather out His own election of grace and then, secondly, that His holy will concerning men should be known, that they should have no excuse. But His eye of love and grace is ever fixed on one spot, one city, one place, the city of the living God, whose name in the last chapter of Ezekiel is called Jehovah-shammah, which is, "The Lord is there". He does take care of them. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear Him". He keeps them as the apple of His eye, He watches over them as His jewels, as His children, and deals with them just as they belong to Him. Now we have this great truth in the text - "My garden".

This morning feebly I spoke of the first part of the text. "Awake O north wind and come thou south blow upon My garden", with the great purpose that here He speaks of, "that the spices thereof may flow out", intimating that, only as the wind blows, is there anything arising from the garden that can give Him pleasure, delight. You know that for yourselves as many of you as are under the teaching of the Spirit. Oh the masses of sin, oh the miasma, the wickedness, the corruptions that arise constantly from our depraved nature, and nothing can blow them

away, remove them as to their influence and their prevalence, but the wind of the Holy Ghost. His teaching, His grace alone can make us pleasant to God. Mind this my friends, if you are never pleasant to God in this world with respect to grace in you, you will never be pleasant to Him in eternity. Not only are the saints justified by the imputation to them of Christ's righteousness, not only are they sanctified by the blood of Christ, but also there is in them, all of them, from time to time, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the believing of the truth whereby they are brought to be pleasant, to be the very delight of God. And the church here gains confidence and boldness from the blowing of the wind upon her so that she is enabled to say what, at other times, she could hardly have dared to say to Him "Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His pleasant fruits."

First, a few words about the garden. Probably exceptions arise in the minds of some of you at once. You may be mentally saying, whoever is of this garden, answers to the word garden, I certainly cannot think I am. Some of you may perceive, and be now perceiving and feeling the awfulness of your nature, the extreme wickedness of it, the intense untowardness of your heart to Him and with that feeling, you may be saying how can I think, or dare I think, that I am a part of this garden. This garden is God's choice; it is surrounded, enclosed, barred as the marginal reading is. Cut off from all other places, cut off from the whole world. One of the greatest condemnations of the religion of today is this, that it brings the whole world in in its aim, obliterating the distinction which the Lord has made. I suppose, if they were bold enough, the people who thus speak, would cut out from the Gospel of John that one solemn, awful word, "I pray not for the world" Oh poor world. I have a very godly friend in Scotland who, when he was young, was reading to his mother the seventeenth chapter of John, and when he came to that word "I pray not for the world", his mother sighed a deep sigh and said - Oh poor world, and it sank into his heart and was the means of bringing him to the throne of God's heavenly grace. Think of it. Think of this town in which we live, think of your family, your surroundings, your companions in labour, and how solemnly this

may belong to some of them. I pray not for them. Then you may say, does He, the Lord of life and glory, pray for me? This garden did not make itself a garden, could not. It was made. Said the Lord by Moses to Israel - you are chosen, not because you are the greatest and the most numerous of all nations, for ye are the fewest. The Lord loved you. Why? Because He would love you. Is that true of you, of me, which the Apostle Paul speaks of to the Corinthians "Ye are God's husbandry". Did He ever take you in hand? Did He ever dig, did He ever use the mattock? The garden is a made garden, it is particular. There are, in our beloved land, many commons and in certain cities there are commons with commoners' rights, that the commons are open for walking. Nothing particular as to that, but a garden belongs to some person, it is a particular property. And also, the special care, water is needed, labour is needed, difficulties come, seasons change. The garden is there, but it needs care. So, says the Apostle to the Corinthians "ye are God's husbandry", He took care of you. By Joel, the Lord said to the mountains of Israel - The Lord is for you, ye shall be tilled and sown. Fear not O land for the Lord will do great things for you, ye shall be tilled and sown. I bring these things before you as relating to the garden that you may examine yourselves and see whether you have got anything like this, whether the Husbandman is your Husbandman, whether He cares for you, surrounds you, digs, prunes, cuts, wounds, burns, for all these operations belong to the garden, all are in the garden, and if we miss them, if we miss them, woe be to us. I would bless the Lord that He has taken trouble with me. He has digged, and digged and digged. O how necessary has the digging been. This garden is spoken of by Moses thus in a figure and we may well apply it to the church of the living God. Said Moses to Israel - you are going to the land of promise. The land of promise you are going to is a goodly land, large, plenty of room in it for you, and it is not like Egypt. Egypt is a garden of herbs watered by the foot, irrigated. The Fellahheen (husbandman) goes to the Nile about the time the Nile is to overflow its banks. He treads, and by treading, makes channels to his field. A garden of herbs, watered by the foot. You are not like that. Human industry never cultivates the garden of the Lord. The land you are going

to, said Moses, is a land of hills and of valleys, a land that drinketh in the rain of heaven, a land open to the eyes of the Lord from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Do you understand it? Have you found it so? Can the heavens give showers? Can any of the vanities of the Gentiles cause rain? Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of mountains. Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel" (Jeremiah 3 v 23)

Now brethren, this is the garden. There are trees in it, the trees of the Lord. They are full of sap. United to the Lord Jesus, they are full of sap. They are called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He might be glorified. They are said to be planted in the house of the Lord and to flourish in the courts of the Lord to show that He is upright and that there is no unrighteousness in Him. Here you get the dealings of God.

Now look at the invitation "Let my Beloved" Who is your Beloved, who is my Beloved? Whose presence do we seek above all else, whose smile would make our hearts glad? "Let my Beloved". "What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved?" The question was asked the church. What is He? You make a great ado about Him, what is He? Oh, she said, I will do my best to describe Him to you. "What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved O thou fairest among women? What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved that thou dost so charge us? My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, His locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: His lips like lillies dropping sweet smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Would you like to creep by the side of this Person and say to Him - let me see Thee, let me

hear Thee, let me feel Thee, let me know Thee as my own? Come, poor sinner, come away My beloved. What a winter. And she speaks to Him thus - "Let my Beloved come into His garden" intimating a sense of absence. A sense of absence is only possible to those who have felt His presence. Distance is realised by those who have been near to Him. Do you feel He is absent? And if you say, yes, can you trace the reason of it? Can you find out a cause? Every exercised person more or less distinctly, when there is absence, searches for the cause of absence. As you are rightly led by the Spirit, you will not say, well salvation is of grace and a settled work, He will come again, and so rest. No! No! You will say, I have sinned. You will say I have sinned, I have grieved Him. Let my Beloved come, let Him come. Oh but there are mountains now betwixt that blessed one and myself, hills I cannot climb, They will lessen poor sinner one day. O may it be now. One day you will be moved in your heart beyond all expression and find yourself saying "The voice of my Beloved, behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills," and or ever you are aware of it, you are at His blessed feet and He is in your garden. "Let Him eat His pleasant fruits," the spices which He Himself said He would have flowing out. Let Him come and eat these. Yes, and He said to her "I am come into My garden My sister, My spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk:" Then He becomes, from being her guest, He becomes her host and says "Eat O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." What are these fruits, these blessed spices? The fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. The work of the Spirit, His own immediate production. First of all then there is the motion, the uprising of faith. I am never able to express to myself or to anybody else what I conceive to be the pleasure of the Lord God in a sinner who believes in Him. To one who asked the question - "What shall I do to work the works of God?" He said "this is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He hath sent". Drawing the man's attention away from all things that he may do, He said, the one thing that will please God in you is believing in Him whom He hath sent. Now faith rises at the motion of the Holy Spirit in the heart and goes out to the

Lord Jesus and lays hold of Him as the Apostle says to Timothy "Lay hold on eternal life" - ah believer, lay hold on eternal life - "whereunto thou art also called". O what a thing that is, how pleasant it is to the Lord Jesus when, not blind to your sins, not dead to your corruptions, no, but more and more deeply sensible of your vileness, your untowardness and everything in you, working in you, claiming attention, everything, you are enabled to say, I believe in the efficacy of that blood that cleanseth from all sin and to find your soul taking, humbly taking, refuge in the atonement of the Lord Jesus. O He will be magnified here, He is magnified here. Sinner, you cannot exaggerate your sins, but the devil tries to abuse your sense of your sins by magnifying them to your unbelieving heart as being above the Lord Jesus Christ. O the times the enemy has had me here and held me fast. These sins, these sins, your sins. My beloved friends, you will sink lower and lower and yet lower until the wind blows upon your soul, the operation of the Holy Spirit and works the work of faith with power, and then you will believe, then you will enter into what Hart says

The blood of Christ, a precious blood
Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not
And reconciles the soul to God
From every folly, every fault.

Now that pleases Christ, that pleases Christ. A good frame, you might strut about and give Him only grief. A bad heart and the faith of the operation of God, moved by the Spirit in you, going out to the blood of Christ, that will be a spice, a fruit, and out of this comes another fruit, namely confession of sin and sorrow for it. How misjudged are the Lord's people by the world. They charge us with saying "Let us do evil that good may come." They charge us with saying that of course, as we believe in this faith and full and free forgiveness, let us sin as we like. It is just the opposite. The more you feel forgiven, the deeper will be your repentance. The confessions will be more honest, contrition will be pure and gospel-like, you will feel you cannot fall low enough before Him. This pleases Him. "God be merciful to me a sinner" must have had a very sweet savour to Him, and the thief

on the cross praying must have prayed a most blessed, acceptable prayer, when he said "Lord remember me". Go on confessing but with confession may faith be in exercise on the blood of the everlasting covenant. And now, there is another thing, and perhaps in saying this I shall pass some of you. It is the song, the song of justification. "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory". And that is a grand song. "They looked unto Him and were lightened and their faces were not ashamed". What excludes boasting? Justification by the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus. O what a heavenly sound it is, what a glorious song "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Well, some of us have sung this song, bless His Name, felt all sin removed, guilt washed away. Justification in the conscience, what a fruit this is. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah". What song is it? Why the Lord's goodness. I will sing and I will give praise. What for? Because He hath clothed me with the robe of righteousness, He hath covered me with salvation. What shall I render to Him? I will take the cup of salvation and praise the Name of the Lord. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear thereof and be glad. Ah this is a song waiting for some of you. I verily believe that some of you have got to sing this yet. Go on sighing as well as you can and praying and mourning and confessing and seeking and the day will come when you will say I passed by the watchmen and not long after I found Him whom my soul loveth and I held Him and would not let Him go. You will never forget it. When you have this, you have got that which you will not forget. "Sure never till my latest day" sings good John Newton, "shall I forget that look". Never will you forget. You may often question it, but you will never really forget it. The day when you passed from under the rod into the bond of the covenant. And then you will praise Him.

"Let my Beloved eat His pleasant fruits." Pleasant to Him. Why surely this is part of Christ's heaven, the praises of a justified person. It is part of His satisfaction, the

satisfaction flowing from His vicarious death. Here is a person born in sin and shapen in iniquity. He lived in sin so many years before he was washed in the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. He lived under condemnation for so long and now the day came when the Lord said "live", covered Him with His own robe, enriched Him with His own grace, and says this man "I will praise Him." Lord we have waited for Thee, we have waited for Thee, we will be glad and rejoice in Thee. My dear friends, you who sigh, when you have had the sweet south wind blowing on you and the righteousness of the Saviour brought to you, then you will say I am clothed with the righteousness of the Saviour, now I will sing His high praises. This song shall be sung in the land of Judah, salvation we have for walls and bulwarks. God is our salvation. It is the song of a righteous man, the song and praises of a justified man, of a sanctified man, of a reconciled man, between whom and God is, for the moment, no controversy. I hope some of you find now your souls panting for this. Perhaps the mention of this may be the means of stirring up your pure minds to seek more fervently that you may come to this point and say salvation is come to my house, and I will praise the Lord.

It is the fruit, the pleasant fruit of a recovered person, recovered from his declining, his backsliding, recovered from the distance which indulged sin brought between God and his soul. It is a grand song this, that the Lord has come. "He", said the Psalmist, "He restoreth my soul." It is wonderful to get that. "He restoreth my soul" I went away from Him, or, to speak as in the next chapter, "I sleep but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled for My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night". And she said, she who had sought Him once and found Him, who had delighted in Him, in whom He Himself had delighted, between whom, these two lovers, there had been sweet communion, she said to Him "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" I wish I did not know what this means, but I do. O but to be restored. If your backsliding has been long and persistent, your sorrow has equalled it one may say, and perhaps

the Lord has gone on time after time even month after month reproving and rebuking you and you have gone on in the dark night of desertion, facing dangers that you might find your beloved. At last He let you get hold of Him, He reconciled you, He restored your soul, He gave you grace, He steadied your heart, He spiritualised your mind again and you can say - now I won't let Him go. Here is the song of a sinner "He restoreth my soul". And you have in the last chapter of Hosea the sweetness of all this. God give you grace to go to Him, taking the words which He dictated to your heart, saying - take away all iniquity, receive us graciously. And then He answered, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely. And so you have come again to this blessed one - Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat this, His pleasant fruit, the praises of a restored soul. What must those godly Galatians have felt after having been beguiled and having lost sight of Him who had been, as it were, crucified among them, when again Christ was born in them, formed again, the hope of glory. O how they would hate themselves for their wanderings, that solemn and terrible deflection. Now they praised Him and here was the pleasant fruit and they could say - Let our beloved come into this, His poor garden, again and eat His pleasant fruit. The praises of a deliverance, perhaps in some wonderful way in providence or some deliverance from temptation, temptation by which you do not fall, but temptation that pained you beyond measure. Paul did not fall when he had the thorn in the flesh, but he was pained, grieved. We may not be always able to make such a distinction, but it exists. You may fall by a temptation, have done, perhaps, but you may be tempted without a fall. In his pain and trouble, the Apostle said I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. Then the blessed blowing came, the south wind blew upon his garden, and said in his heart "My grace is sufficient for thee". O the pleasant fruit that came out of that. He said "most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "When I am weak then am I strong". It was a pleasant thing to the Saviour to hear that from an afflicted saint, glorying in his infirmity, preferring to be pained, that Christ's medicine might remove not the pain, only he must carry that, but the mortification. The praises of this

blessed man of God under the affliction, in the affliction, yea by means of the affliction, the praises grew. I will glory in my infirmity because the power of Christ thereby rests upon me. Let my Beloved come, let Him come near, let us together enjoy each other's society. There is a reverence in all this as well as unspeakable and sweet familiarity, intimacy. The two go well together as everybody knows who experiences them. Wonderful it is that the Lord Jesus should say, in a gracious, condescending response "I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse". I have come to it, as you have invited Me. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk My wine with My milk. Did you ever provide this entertainment for the Lord Jesus? It is a great thing and then, if that has been the case, you have found Him saying, now I will be your host, I am going to entertain you. I have brought provision with Me. His train filled the temple when Isaiah saw Him, and His provision is always with Him when He comes. Eat O friends. Drink, yea drink abundantly of My love, and My mercy and My truth and My salvation.

Now we are a little church here. How we stand God knows. I believe that He has granted us many of His mercies and some tokens for good. May He keep us from declining in this evil day and when we do decline in any way, in any particular, in any measure, may He say "Awake O north wind" come Thou My Spirit upon this church, this garden, nip and kill the rank growth of sin here and there. "Come thou south" and blow the sweet gale of grace, love, mercy, and pardon that we may say to Him "Let my Beloved come into His garden". Now may the Lord help us. I have spoken a few things which I believe to be solemnly true respecting the family of the living God under the figure of a garden. May it please the Holy Ghost graciously to set home on our hearts with His own authority this blessed word and the praise shall be His for ever and ever.

AMEN.