

58177
13569
La 812

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 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"

Dear people, do not look on this Book, this Song, with a carnal eye. It is not meant for such an eye, it is one of the profoundest books in the Word of God. It expresses love in its highest degree, in its lowest stoop, in bringing an innumerable company of sinners into the ineffable union of a wife, the Lamb's bride. It expresses the goodness, the greatness and the glory of Christ in His intimate love, in His sweet assurances, in His heavenly visits, in the high encomiums He condescends to bestow on His wife. It exhibits her knowledge of Him, her intimacy with Him, her cruel treatment of Him. It shows the strength of grace bringing again and again, one so evil, yet so beloved, so redeemed, to His footstool, giving her, again and again, such energy of faith as to pull her off from her bed of idleness and fleshly contentment, seeking Him in the dark night, in the city, braving the watchmen who, as it would seem readily tore off her veil. It sets all these things forth. A variety of figures the Lord uses to express these grand truths. Let it be ours, by the Spirit of God, to seek an acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, an understanding in experience of the intimacy that, again and again, He grants the church to have with Himself. Seek that He may say to you, to me, My love, My spouse, My sister, there is no spot in thee, thou art all fair. Seek to have grace and assurance by the Spirit to say "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine". And if we have Him not now, may we have grace to say I rose from my bed, I sought Him whom my soul loveth. It is a beautiful book rightly read, rightly understood and entered into by the Spirit. O to know this Lover, this Husband. O to be a member of His body, His bride. We are very easily drawn aside,

distracted, deflected. It does not need much to turn your eyes away from Him on whom you look sometimes, and when looking, think O what foolishness, what wickedness it is to turn away from Him, and yet the next minute away we are flying to some vanity. Well may we unite, God give us grace to do it, with Job in saying "Behold I am vile". We are vile my friends, we have to prove it, not only in the beginning but yet more and more deeply, painfully do we prove it as we journey on. The church is likened in this chapter to a flock of goats, to a flock of sheep that are shorn which have come up from the washing, whereof every one bear twins. Come up from the blessing, washing of grace and Spirit and being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. Mind your standing. You must, if you belong to Christ, you must one day come up from the washing and be filled with the fruits of righteousness. Vital religion is not only a knowledge of self and of sin, but more especially a knowledge of the Son of God and of union with Him. Not what we think, is right. What God gives us, is right. Not what we think, will stand. The faith which He works stands in His power. The church in this chapter had such an eye to look on Him and such a pearl on her neck that He said to her "Thou hast ravished Mine heart, thou hast overcome Me." Jacob did; he had power over the angel and prevailed. Did you ever get power with Christ and overcome? The eye of faith ravishes Christ. It was that eye in the publican that did it. It was that eye in the dying thief that did it. If you can look on Him by faith, He wont resist you. "Thou hast ravished My heart" He said. "My sister, My spouse thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes with one chain of thy neck. A humble mind, the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, living faith, will always affect the Lord Jesus. He wont resist you, He wont keep far from you if you have got that eye, if you wear that chain. There is an intimacy. I know it a little. In the last week or so I have proved how little grace I have for I found that sharp suffering was enough to distract the mind if the grace of the Spirit was not prevailing, and all a poor man could do was to beg for patience to bear it. But sometimes intimacy is granted. O the blessedness of being near the Lord. Without any particular word once or twice it seemed as if the Lord would pervade my mind

with a sense of being near to Him and accepted in Him and as sure as ever you get that in your soul you will look on Him and with the eye of faith ravish His heart. That is to say, you will delight in Him. And here it is that He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. It pleases Him above all creation. A publican worshipping at His feet, a sinner gazing on His Person, blood and righteousness, will give Him more delight than the whole work of creation and providence. In the work of creation He sees the effect of divine power and wisdom. In the work of providence He sees the effect of divine wisdom and control of men, men's hearts, men's actions, and turning them all to one end according to the purpose of His own heart and will. But in the eye of faith fixed on Himself, He sees the effect of His agony, ignominy, shame, death, resurrection, righteousness, ascension into heaven. See if you can ravish Him, dear believer, the Lord give grace and power to do it. How fair is thy love, My sister, My spouse. Then He compares her to a garden barred. "A garden inclosed is My sister, My spouse, a spring shut up a fountain sealed." A garden barred. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about them that fear Him." If you get any other protection you are exposed to your enemy. If you have this protection, you will be tempted, but not overcome. She acknowledges Him to be the fountain of all goodness, the fountain of gardens, a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon. Whatever good you have, whatever grace you possess, whatever faith you have in exercise, whatever love you have for Him, all proceeds from Himself, a fountain of gardens. All fruitfulness is here.

The text "Awake O north wind and come thou south and blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out" tells us of a commanding, directing voice, calling to the wind. Clearly then this must be another than the church. It is not the church that is here speaking, "Awake O north wind". It is her Lover, her Husband, it is that great one who has the fulness of the Spirit and who says O Spirit awake, north wind awake. The work of the Spirit is, as you know, likened to the wind. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof and canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." This is the blessed

work of the Spirit.

Here, in the first place it is the north wind, the wind that bloweth away rain and mist, the north wind. "Fair weather cometh out of the north". And it signifies the operation of the Holy Ghost in nipping and killing the various things which from time to time alas, and very quickly, grow up in the natural mind of the child of God, of the church of God. It may include the work of providence, God sending affliction to you in some way, some form. Where is the man of God who, being in the way for any time, has not experienced this north wind. I would bring before you several scripture evidences or proofs of what this north wind means. You take that good man, Eli, the priest. It was a north wind that God sent to him by Samuel and by another solemnly reproving him for indulging his wicked sons, not properly restraining them. A wind that told him of the destruction of that branch of the house of Levi; there should never again be an old man in that house. It was a north wind indeed to him, a cutting wind that said in one day your two wicked sons shall die. It was a north wind that God sent to David by Nathan. "Thou art the man" and telling him of a sword that should never depart from his house, that, whereas his wickedness had been done in secret, God would blow openly upon him. It was a north wind that blew on Hezekiah, when Isaiah went to him and said "Set thy house in order for thou shalt die and not live," cutting off his life as a weaver's shuttle and causing him to feel that his days on earth now were but few. You will find through the scripture other proofs of this north wind caused to awake and blow by the Lord.

But now let us come to ourselves. Scripture is very beautiful, very instructive, and full of authority but the great mercy is when God brings it to our own souls. None of you, fearing God, will dispute one thing that I am to say. Nature has a strong, very strong rank growth that quickly shows itself in some form. Self-confidence, built on perhaps a foundation of a good experience; spiritual pride, that rampant beast Hart speaks of; or a wordly disposition indulged; self confidence felt. And, in the measure of the growth of these things will be the measure of our carnality prevailing over spirituality; of our

independence prevailing over a life of dependence on the Son of God; of our prayerlessness prevailing against the spirit of prayer. It is according to that word in the Galatians, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit". This growth may make conscience speak to you, perhaps only in a whisper, at the first. You are wrong, this must displease your Lord. But that is not enough. I will go, said the persistent backslider, I will go after my lovers. We go after the flesh. Solemnly every child of God in some measure, in some things, sooner or later, comes to acknowledge this to have been very true. Painfully he feels it, shamefully he acknowledges it, that it is so. He is ashamed of having done such and such things. But though his conscience has some testimony against him, sin has more strength and will beat down conscience for the time. What does God do? Why it is as if He should say I love this child too well to let him destroy himself, therefore "awake O north wind". He sends some evil tidings, He sends some convictions that are living and effectual, He sends a solemn frown, He reads the sinner's sins out to him. I will declare unto thee thy work and thy righteousness that they shall not profit thee. Now what does the man do? He just withers. He is withered. What have I been doing? Where have I been? I have been on my bed. The Lord knocked and I said I am in bed, I do not want to be disturbed. I have got a good state, I am in a good state. I did believe I was going to heaven and I do not want to be disturbed. But the wind blows and the man dies. In some way he dies. Woe is me, he says, woe is me. If any of you now here find that this is very feebly a true description of your case, even your present case, do not resist the conviction. God give you grace to say David-like "I have sinned". "Awake O north wind". It may be that joined with this will be some outward affliction, some blight, some restraining, some removal of some thing or things from you that will say into your heart convincingly "This is not your rest", that may say you have forgotten your resting place. You rested here, you rested there. Ah it is very solemn to look on a blighted thing and say I wanted to make a nest of that and I did so. The wind has come, it has blown the mist of sin away from my eyes and I see what I have done and have been doing for a long time. Affliction does not speak of itself. Affliction of itself can never properly be

taken as a token of God's favour. But, united with grace and working by grace, it becomes a token for good. It is taken out of the ordinary category of human suffering and put into the blessed category of divine chastising, and it becomes wonderful to think that God should have taken the pains to come to you in some providence and speak to you and say I am your rest, I am your portion. This that you made your rest is not your rest. This that you thought was your portion is nothing but wind, nothing but vanity. And so the north wind of affliction does its work in that gracious way. Observe, as well as God helps you, not only your afflictions but what He does by them, if He speaks by them to your consciences. "Awake O north wind". This garden needs it, so the owner of it says to the wind come and blow, this north wind, blow on this garden, nip that growth, that rank growth, kill as a frost that weed. We think a lot of rank growth and of weeds because we are carnal.

But then He says "and come thou south". It is not all bitterness, winter does not last the whole year, troubles are not alone and only with us. Love that says to the north wind, come, also speaks to the south and says "come thou south". Thou south wind. From the east comes a plague, a wind never to fan nor to cleanse. From the west comes rain. From the north the fair weather comes, a cleansing. And from the south, a soft, fructifying wind. "Come thou south and blow upon My garden". It must have been a very sweet soft wind that blew across the soul of Eli when it was said to him after the threat concerning his own house - and the Lord will raise up unto Him a faithful priest. Jesus was prophesied, the faithful priest who should do all the will of God and when you have had a north nipping wind, a rebuke in your conscience, and the south wind has been called upon to blow, it has brought good news from a far country. If you have faith you can perhaps follow that blessed word to Eli - and a faithful priest will God raise up unto Himself. He shall do my will, He will speak My words. This is that priest of whom we read this morning, who offered Himself a sweet smelling sacrifice and when you get that in your conscience, the atonement of the Lord Jesus, it is the soft wind of His Holy Spirit as a revealer and glorifier of Christ, blowing upon your soul, and it

makes a change, it makes a change. O the gospel does make a change. It fills the soul with living hope, warm love, and sweet humility. It brings the sinner near to God, taking away all the guilt that was between him and the Lord.

"Come thou south wind, blow upon my garden". Now again, come to David. What a south wind that was that blew when Nathan said to him "Thou shalt not die. The Lord hath put away thy sin." You can scarcely bear the sight of your sin. Sometimes I can hardly bear the sight of my sin. All I have been saying once or twice for a day or two lately has been "Behold I am vile". Oh it is a sight, a wicked nature, and a mis-spent life. If the disciples were to say, by divine inspiration they were to say, when they had done all, they were told to add "we are unprofitable servants," what must we say who have done all the Lord by His holy word and Spirit has told us to do, what must I say in my long life of profession? "Behold I am vile" said Job. The wind blows, the gospel comes, the sweet gospel, the full gospel, the gospel of pardon, the gospel of pardon, the gospel that shows the way from hell to heaven, from pollution to holiness, from rags to a righteousness divine, that shows the way from mortality to immortality, mortality bought by sin, immortality brought to light by the gospel. What a gospel, O what a gospel. My brethren this is the south wind that the Lord Jesus says now come and blow. He speaks to it, He sends His good Spirit with good news from a far country and it blows, O it blows so sweetly, so softly. Just as now in nature we have got through this wearisome winter and the south wind blows, its influence will be felt on every leaf of every tree in your gardens and in all nature. It will warm the earth and make it fruitful. Your eyes will be gladdened when you see your trees breaking into leaf and into bud, into blossom and then formed into fruit, and so when the gospel blows upon our souls and the Lord says - Come with Me My sister, the winter is past and gone, the rain is over, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, come with Me, come from Lebanon, come from the mountain of leopards, come from the lions' den, come from all those high places and those dangers, come with Me into the fields and let us lodge in the villages, you leave the world. Its highest place is

Lebanon. The most fruitful, beautiful parts, come with Me from them, and away you fly from them. Blow thou south wind. The influence is felt better than it can ever be described. It is felt. The goodness of God is felt. O the tears that makes you shed, not bitter, but sweet. O the shame and the pain and the joy, how they mingle in your spirit and you feel a little of that word "The joy of the Lord is your strength".

Now it says blow upon my garden. There is an end to this. The reason is that the spices thereof may flow out, that the graces which have been dormant, that the winter which has shut them all up and kept them from acting, that faith may be vigorous, hope lively, love warm, humility and tenderness real, that these spices may flow out. Have you got any spices? Go into your garden now. Every tree, if you have got an unpractised eye, will look to you as a dead thing, but the spring is coming. Your trees will know it, the spring is coming, the sap will move, and then you will see a formation, a growth, a swelling bud. A little longer there will be the leaf and the blossom and then the fruit formed. So, with grace. A poor, dormant thing, you may feel yourself to be now. Ah, you may say I wish I were as in the months that are past, I wish I had that tenderness and that zeal, that faith, that love I once had. I wish I were as simple hearted as I used to be. I wish I could trust the Lord as I used to trust Him and I wish I could pour out my heart before Him as I used to pour it out. Let the spices flow out, and they will when you go to Him again and say I will be sorry for my sin and He says the Lord hath put away thy sin. Thou shalt not die.

And there is another cleansing and another operation and instead of reading out to you as He has done your sins, perhaps one by one, till you could scarcely bear to hear or look at them, He says "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". "Thou art all fair". "Thy walls are continually before Me". "I will never forget thee". This is as the waters of Noah unto Me that like as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee nor rebuke thee. The spices flow out. Have you got them? They will flow if you have got them. Grace is grace and grace will come

out. Grace is grace and grace will come right to the top one day and overcome sin and perhaps the spices will rise to heaven in humble, holy anticipations of one day being absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Now this little church needs all this mercy. Individually each child of God will say I need this mercy. If conscience turns on you and says, well you are in a bad state, do not beat that down. That is no sign of grace. If it says, you have gone wrong here, the Lord give you grace to acknowledge it and thank Him for the north wind. Thank Him for it. As sure as His word is true, you will prove the next "Come thou south, blow upon My garden". Ah one would say I wish He would call me His. You ask Him to do it, you ask Him to do it. He is too fully of pity and goodness and love to let you pray in vain. If you have got a living desire for this and can go to Him with it and say tell me, tell me, the vilest person on earth, tell me that I am Thine, He will answer you. He hears prayer. "Blow upon My garden." It is a very solemn thing that the whole world is as nothing to Christ compared with this one spot, My garden. A place cared for, selected, barred, dug, cultivated, trees of the Lord's right-hand planting in it, trees full of sap that shall be planted in the courts of the Lord's house, grow, flourish, to show that the Lord is upright in the covenant and that there is no unrighteousness with Him.

Then this garden has a voice, has a voice. The church is speaking now. He, her Lord and Saviour and Husband, has spoken and now she speaks and has courage to do this great thing. "Let my beloved come into His garden". Can you say it? Have you courage to ask Him to come? When you look at your heart, overgrown with weeds and briars, look at your life, a poor, barren, unprofitable life, can you say to Him, come? Can you ask Him, in this great word "let my beloved come"? The Lord give us courage to say it. I must leave this. If the Lord will, we shall have the ordinance this evening as we had it not last Lord's Day because I was not able to be here and also I would just say this you are all aware I have no doubt of the existence of the Trinitarian Bible Society, a Society that circulates the

Authorised Version without the polluted Romish version in which penance and other errors are found. This Trinitarian Bible Society is small comparatively. It needs support and the deacons and myself have felt it would be right for us next Lord's Day just to have a collection for that.