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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 20 September 1908

JOHN 7 v 37

"In the last day, that great day of the feast,
Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man
thirst let him come unto Me and drink"

The Feast here spoken of is the Feast of Tabernacles of which we were just now reading; the Feast of Tabernacles to remind the Israelites of their sojourn in the wilderness, and that they had no continuing city; and in that Feast, as you would notice, there were large offerings, day by day, to show them that without shedding of blood there is no remission, and that their abiding in tabernacles, which would soon end, would only end most woefully for them without blood. That conspicuous blood day by day shed and poured out was a type of the blood of the everlasting covenant, the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin, that speaks the sweet peace of God, that purifies the conscience, purging it from dead works, that gives access to God and nearness, that proclaims the goodness of God, that blood that affords the guiltiest a plea which the Lord will not - and one may say, cannot - disregard, and that therefore invites the poorest, the unworthiest, the weakest, to come unto God for all things. Jesus here inviting people to come to Him, tells us in this invitation that apart from Him they must die accursed; that is to say, that there is no love, and no goodness, no satisfaction for a soul outside Christ Himself. And you who think you get satisfied from yourselves, from the things you have in yourselves in this world, the pursuits of your minds, you are under the most woeful delusion that your own hearts and the devil can impose upon you, and if you die in your present state there is no place in heaven for you. Listen to God's Word. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them", and remember this, that that word, "everyone", embraces you. You cannot get outside it, and should it be that you die in your shortcomings, your guiltiness, you will find no access to the river of pleasures which is at God's right hand for evermore. But should it

be with any of us that even now we can say we are dissatisfied with self, with everything that emanates from self; all we think, and all we do, that we find nothing but guiltiness in all, warp and woof of nature is alike wholly wrong, then the thirst of our souls is such as that this word will be a kind - O may it be a powerful - invitation in us. "Let him come". There is no bar in God, no bar in the Father who sent His Son, no bar in the Son who died for His people when they were without strength, no bar in the Spirit whose rising beams have given the eyesight that had so much been the soul's need; and whatever a legal heart may say to the contrary, and however unable some of you may be at this time to receive it, I will say there is no real bar in all the sin that is felt, in all the guilt that depresses, in all the sense of unworthiness, and all the real unworthiness that attaches to you. O that the Holy Spirit would give our straightened hearts room to receive this word, "Let him come". Sin, Satan, unbelief, all enemies, stand aside, let this thirsty creature come to this full river, this everlasting love of God, this precious, sufficient atonement of Christ, "Let him come and drink"

If you know the gospel as Toplady knew it, you would sing as Toplady sang

"The gospel, I love it
Tis perfectly free"

and you will say that it is no trite remark when it is said that God will not have this way taxed, that it is a free way, that He Himself has cast it up, and that He has said the fool who is in it may read the precious truth even while he runs, the truth that him that cometh to Christ shall in no wise be cast out. One of the greatest stumblingblocks of the Lord's people I believe is that subtle spirit of legality, that working by unbelief, and assuming a garb of humility, and often talking as if it were a proper regard for God's honour that the person has, would often keep the soul from coming to the Lord Jesus, as if He were going to have His mercy purchased by some worthiness that one would fain possess. Do you believe that forests, rivers of oil, could not atone for the sin of the soul? Do you believe in the justice of God, in the spotless holiness of God? Do you believe that He has devised a way of escape from the wrath to

come, in which way His justice, and His holiness in the law, and in the threatenings, and in the curses of it, are perfectly honoured, satisfied, magnified, and that now in God, as I have said, there is no bar? O bring no money, price or aught; Mercy never can be brought; God's grace is free. If we only half believed it we should pray more. O, it is a great thing to be bad enough for mercy, but it is hard when you feel sinful to pray for mercy, yet this is God's way, and the needy know it must be so. How kind of Jesus to speak this great word "If any man thirst", by which we may see all men do not thirst. yet He looks upon those who do. How gracious of Him; did He ever pass by a needy person? "His heart is made of tenderness, His bowels melt with love". You are not lost in the crowd to Him. Whoever may be saying now inwardly "I have sinned and perverted that which was right and it profited me not" I say you are not lost to Him in the crowd. "He looketh upon men". What a look that is, different from His omniscience from which nothing is hid. "He looketh upon men" kindly, graciously, pitifully, and with love and with an intention too. "He looketh upon men and if there be any that say I have sinned" - He knows some of us have said it many times, He knows we have to say it daily in spirit, He knows that we feel we have come short of His glory times without number, and it has never profited us; O the dead works we have got burdening our consciences sometimes, the vain thoughts which, in the guilt of them, bring a death to us; No, our sins will not profit us - "and it profited me not". Confession, though hard to a proud man, is pleasing to a good God. If you can confess He has an ear to hear you, He has a condescending heart to regard you. If you can confess, do. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity". "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". Who is this Lord that has passed into the heavens? He is God, He is Man; how suitable. "Such an High Priest became us". O that the blessings of His High Priesthood may be poured upon you, and upon me. He "became us" for He is "holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens". He was ordained by God, and He was ordained for men to offer in things pertaining to God, pertaining to His holiness, to His justice, to His law. He offered them when He offered Himself, once in the end of the world, appearing to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. What a beautiful word that is in the Hebrews "For 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". What is this death that men fear, good men? It is separation from God. What does the Lord Jesus say here? "Let him come unto Me"; by and in whom is union with God. Do you fear separation? Ah, some of us say, we deserve it. I have been saying it for many years now, and I have often feared it, yet in my heart I, at times, do not believe I shall experience it. What is separation from God? It is hell, it is everlasting darkness, it is banishment from the presence of His glory. And what is union, but being in the Lord Jesus, "bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, and members of His body in particular". And He says to those who are afraid of this separation - Let them come to Me and drink of My love. What a Person Christ is. My friends, the sun is darkness itself compared with Christ. One sang, and O, it is good to sing with him

Compared with Christ in all beside
No comeliness I see

If you can say that with some understanding of what you say, you must have been in the light. O, the beauty of Christ, O the effect of looking on Him is very great, and the beauties of Christ have their foundation in the constitution of His Person, God and Man, "Immanuel, God with us"; and they rise from this, His Person, into the greatness that He will have His people see in Him, in His perfect work, in His justifying righteousness, in His presence in heaven, and prevalent intercession there. And He stood despised of men, hated of the officers of the Pharisees, and the rulers were there present to take Him, but His hour had not come. The people were then rising up against Him, and, as I say, those officers were there to take Him. He in the midst of His enemies, His eye to poor people, His heart on them, says "If any man thirst let him come unto Me". This last day of the Feast was a day, a great day when the tradition was that they drew water from Solomon's Pool, and poured it out on the altar and drank of it also, and our gracious Lord looks down upon people and says, Now if you thirst, the pool of Solomon will not quench that thirst; you can come to Me and I will give you water. In the last part of the Scriptures, we are told that "The Spirit and the bride say, Come", and

also we are told this "Let him that is athirst, come, and whosoever will" - every single person, every single individual who will - "let him take of the water of life freely" "Without money", as the word by the prophet Isaiah is. "Ho everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." What is there to bring? Let me try first to speak of that before speaking of the coming to drink. What is there to bring? What saith the Scripture? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell". What, all fullness? The fullness of divine love, the fullness of infinite goodness, the fullness of infinite merit, the fullness of everlasting righteousness, the fountain open for sin and uncleanness, pardons multiplied, salvations more than the hairs of the head, the faithful God, full of promises, has spoken, everlasting mercies, everlasting faithfulness. O what a fountain, what fountains of waters, what streams, what rivers, what supplies of broad rivers and streams, the eternal God has in Jesus Christ. O what infatuation sin is in us. Only think that such fools it makes of us as to turn us aside to broken cisterns to draw water and refreshment out of them. And is there a greater fool than a child of God who knows where living water is and yet often turns aside committing the two evils that the Israelites were charged with by the Lord Himself. "My people have committed two evils, they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water". And I believe one day we shall bless God that they were broken cisterns, if we have not already done so, for if He had not broken them, they would not have been broken, but He does break them, He has broken mine many times; and one would think if one did not know better, that nobody would a second time be guilty of such a grievous folly, but so it is. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child" and therefore he goes thinking as a child, behaving as a child, yea a weaned child. Over and over and over again he hews out to himself cisterns; every time he hews one out, God breaks it, and he will look upon the shivers one day and thank God that He took the trouble to break them. You would think He would get tired of such people. O what love is His, what patience is His; He says, Come to Me and drink. Well we need to drink of continual pardons; He multiplies them. Yea, many a time forgave He their iniquity. Many a time He has forgiven His people and not stirred up all His wrath. "I have blotted out as a

thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins". What a good God. "Go yet", He said to the prophet "love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel....." (Hosea 3 v 1) Who would think that this should honour Him, but it is the way He honours Himself, it is the way He does make that word good - It shall be to Him a name of praise and honour in the earth; I will forgive their sins whereby they have sinned against Me. This will never encourage a man to sin. If anything will break the power and destroy the love of sin, it is the free pardon of it. If anything will lay the sinner in the dust, and make him love holiness, it is the working of the Spirit of Christ in bringing the blood of the everlasting covenant and thereby, and therewith purging his conscience from dead works. I have loved holiness more than once in my life, and have distinctly loved it at times with a sense of forgiveness, and knowing that I should never be banished for those sins that I had committed. A slavish fear will make you abstain from some sins from which you have a natural power to abstain; but love, love divine, and that blood that cleanseth from all sin will make you choose to live a life of godliness and love, and holiness, and bring you into a conformity to that Scripture "O give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness".

They are to drink into the righteousness of Christ, which is, in the language of Paul "submitting themselves to it" which the Jews did not. The Gentiles did, they did it through faith as led by the Spirit. O the beautiful righteousness of Jesus Christ, the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. If you tire of hearing it, I hope God wont allow me to be tired of preaching it, living on it, or trying to live on it.

Righteousness to full perfection
Must be brought
Lacking nought
Fearless of rejection

O it is a great thing to realise that

Bold shall I stand in that great day

How can you be bold in the presence of infinite purity and justice without the righteousness of Jesus Christ? How can you look God in the face without the righteousness of Christ? How can heaven be heaven to you without the righteousness of Christ? No condemnation where this is, no sense of wrath where this is. Spotless and innocent people stand in the blood and righteousness of Christ; and people are to drink into it, and they are to drink into this Spirit too. The Spirit in His fullness Jesus has; He received not the Spirit by measure. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His". And the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of life, the law of life in Christ Jesus, and the law of liberty comes by the Spirit of Christ, and a knowledge of Christ, and power to say He is the Lord, and to look into the perfect law of liberty and continue therein. Power to plead, power to hope, power to humble yourself, power to lay hold upon Christ, and to take refuge in Him; all this power is from the Spirit of Christ. And there is such a mercy known to men as drinking into the Spirit of Christ, it is a great thing. Sinner, you will never be joined to Christ experimentally till you have the Spirit of Christ. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit", and he has the one Spirit as he is in Christ and partakes of the Spirit of Christ. Also if you drink into the Spirit of Christ you will drink into the power of Christ by which you can stand in the evil day and by which you can bear all things and submit to the will of God in trouble and go to Him in the hour of trial, and come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. He is to drink also from the comforts of love. Love divine has comforts; O what comforts; you will be wrapped up sometimes in comfort, surrounded by comfort. With discomfort it may very well be in providence, yet in comfort as to your soul, as to a present sense of God's goodness to you, and comfort in prospect for eternity; and drinking into this, your soul is satisfied. Ah men can be very easily discontented. It does not take much to make some of us full of discontent and fretfulness; but men can be very wonderfully satisfied, and sweetly contented with their lot when they drink into the comforts of love. For, if you believe and know that God loves you, what is there wrong in your state? What have you to find fault with in providence? The only person you will at all grumble at and about will be yourself. Then second causes and all discomforts, and troubles, and trials in providence take their proper place, which is, so to speak, a kind of

nothingness in your spirit when you drink into the comforts of love. And my friends the people of God are to drink into the spirit of assurance, the sweet assurance of their standing in Christ, when they know whom they have believed and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed unto Him against that day. And it is one of the most solemn, most humbling and powerful sensations that can be in the heart of a child of God when he can say, does say - "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day". And in this there is a drinking into a blessed sense of being "accepted in the Beloved", that God has not cast you out, and will not. If any man thirst for these mercies he wont find them in himself, he wont find them in any creature, he wont find them in any cistern he can hew out to himself, no. "Let him come unto Me".

4 This coming is for us now, as helped, to look at. This coming is the same thing as believing, it is the act of faith. If you profess faith, and that faith does not come I will tell you one solemn truth about that faith - it is dead, and you are dead too. If you have the faith that God gives His people, called "the faith of God's elect", it is an active principle, and as it cannot live upon the creature, and as it must live, and must have nourishment, it goes to Christ; "Lo blest Lamb to Thee I come" O but what bars, what hindrances, what difficulties, are met with in the coming - a roaring lion, a tempting devil, a deceiving, deceitful heart, an evil spirit, much ignorance of God, and a foolish way, to which we are all addicted, of looking and raking into a wicked nature for some good things to warrant us to go upon. These are hindrances, and difficulties that stand in the way. It is a great faith that can believe the Lord will accept a great sinner. It is a great faith that can make a venture without a single mark or sign or evidence. It is a great faith that can say

Marks of grace I cannot show
All polluted is my breast

yet I venture. "Lo blest Lamb to Thee I come". You may think it is not half a faith; I believe it is a great faith that can make such a venture as this. You may say, I would go if I were bidden. Who has told you you are not bidden? I will tell you One who has not; the Lord

has not. I will tell you One who says it; the devil says it. You do not half believe that Christ came to save the lost; nobody does except at those sweet moments when faith is strengthened to make a venture, to make a great venture, feeling, as Hart expresses it

Soul and all's at stake

Ah if somebody should come to you and talk to you about certain experiences, and he might put twenty experiences before you such as the saints have, and you might say, Yes, I have got them all; well he might say to you, Then you are a Christian. But there is a spot yet, you might say, you have not touched. There is a black place in my soul, there is hypocrisy, there is every sort of evil and you have not touched any of those things and therefore you would put me on ground I do not feel safe upon; it wont bear me. But I say this, if you have one of the twenty evidences, if you have nothing but sin, and have sighed ready to break your heart sometimes because of your grievous lacks in grace, and lacks in experience, deeply groaning in respect of your prayerlessness and excessive wickedness, because of the obdurate hardness of your heart, the clamour of your inveterate sins, yet if there should be to you a sight not to be described, a sight of a full Christ, a good Christ, an atoning Christ, a great High Priest in heaven with His conspicuous blood, there pleading and saying "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out", no one of your lacks, nor all of them put together, would have power enough on your spirit to keep you away from the Lord. "Lo blest Lamb to Thee I come". Let him come as he is; he is a thirsty man, let him come. He is a poor man, let him come. Why the Lord would have His people always do that - Regard the poor - and will He preach what He does not practise? Does He not regard the poor? Yes, He does. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Let this man come. Law, conscience, Satan, let this thirsty man come and drink.

This drinking is a receiving. It is providing the refreshing water - that is provided - but it is a receiving of it as you read "having received the atonement". If you think you can provide the water you think one of the proudest and most foolish, and abominable thoughts that can occupy the mind of a man; but if you see this water provided and you feel a thirst in your soul for it, says the Lord, let

that man come. God sent His Son. Here is the place of broad rivers and streams. Let the man come. Ah, but what a trouble is here to a sinner when he comes and there is no water springing, when he seeks it and finds none. Then it seems to him as if he must die of thirst, his tongue fails, his life is going out, and he is ready to perish, yet the Lord says, Let that man come. Now when that person has come, where has he come to? Why he has come to Him who has called him; and what does He say? I have built My house, I have hewn My seven pillars, I have killed My sacrifice, I have mingled My wine; now O ye simple turn in hither. This is the greatest stumblingblock to a proud heart that can be; You would do ever so much if He would let you, and you had the power, at least you think so. You will never have a greater stumblingblock than free grace. One would think that as people get older, at least with oneself, that this would not be so much a stumblingblock, but it is in one's own experience still a stumblingblock especially when one regards the wicked backslidings, and the unprovoked unfaithfulness of one's heart to a good God. It is as if you have not courage to lift your head up so high as to look to the Lord and ask Him to bless you again. We shall have to come to it, yes, we must be in debt my friends.

Yet would I glory in the thought
That I shall owe Him most

You must be in debt. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power". You must be willing to be in debt to free grace.

This drinking means satisfaction. Satisfaction, you say, I cannot be satisfied while I am what I am. Yes, you can. People talk very unwisely in some things. One says, I could never be satisfied, but he does not speak at all wisely. You can be satisfied about many things. For instance, you can be satisfied, and would, if you were to drink into pardon, that your sins were cast behind God's back. And O, is there any refreshment we can possibly have naturally that can express the refreshment at all adequately that the soul experiences when it drinks into the pardon of all sin? The deepest humility, with the sweetest confidence, that not a sin is left, the Lord brings to pass in the souls of His people. I have pardoned. "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die". If you were to drink into this

tonight you would put your heads on your pillows as the happiest of all people. I do not know anything, nor do I wish to know anything, that is sweeter than the smile of God when He forgives the sins of a sinner. That smile in Christ is a sun, it is life, it is peace, it is happiness, and you are to drink of this my friends. O thirsty soul come and drink, and drink your sorrow away.

They are to drink into the righteousness of Christ as I said, and when they come to Christ He gives this. Now listen to what He says "Drop down ye heavens, and let the skies pour down righteousness". But you know when He rains there is a place for the rain to fall into. God's people's hearts are that earth that opens to receive this righteousness. The earth is receptive, so the souls of God's people are made, and when He pours down this, His righteousness, they drink into it; they can say then, they are just, justified; freely, fully justified, and delivered from all sins.

Now Christ says, let the man who is athirst come, and let him who will come, and take of this righteousness. Paul said the Jews went about to establish their own righteousness. May we be saved from such fruitless efforts, for the wall is broken down, and you can never patch it up, or, if you do, the first storm shall break it down again. But he says the Gentiles, who did not follow after the law of righteousness, they attained unto righteousness, and he tells us how that came to pass - that the Jews sought by their own works to establish their own righteousness, while the Gentiles were brought to submit themselves unto God's righteousness. Then he tells us again what Christ is - "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth". Therefore if you by faith receive this, you will drink this righteousness to your soul's satisfaction. And if you drink into the Spirit of Jesus you will drink the love of God, for He sheds it abroad in the heart. You will drink into the goodness of God, into the kindness of God your Saviour that has appeared in Christ, and you will drink so as to be satisfied. And you will drink into peace. I like peace; who does not naturally like it? It is difficult to imagine anything worse than a lack of peace in a house. It is not easier to think of anything sweeter than domestic peace. Now what a great thing peace with God is. If you understand what it is for God to have a controversy with you, then when peace comes you will be

able to appreciate it. I have had the controversy in my soul, I have had rebukes - so have some of you - and we, together, have found no peace, no peace in circumstances, so long as there is a frown on God's face, and you apprehend that in your soul. No, it would not matter whatever your circumstances of happiness might be, there is no happiness to you so long as God has anything to say against you. But O, when He says, He has ended the quarrel, and that you have received at His hand double for all your sins, and Jesus has breathed upon you and said - "Receive ye the Holy Ghost", and said "My peace I give unto you, My peace I leave with you", then if you had trouble, every sort of temporal trouble, you would have peace in your conscience. I do not know anything sweeter; it is very sweet, it supple your spirit, it melts you into contrition, and love, it gathers you up into happiness inexpressible; you are at peace in the Lord. "This Man is the peace". Think of it sinner, this Man, the Man Jesus, this Man whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for our sins, is the peace. This God-Man Mediator, He is the peace. The blessings of His Priesthood are fallen upon the soul, and the peace of God is felt. Come to Me, He says, poor sinner, come to Me and drink.

Let not conscience make you linger
Nor of fitness fondly dream
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him

and this He gives you. As long as unbelief is a bar between you and God you will find this, there is no peace. The moment that that bar is broken, that yoke is taken off your neck, faith goes out to Christ, the water will flow in, the sweet river will give of its supply to your soul, and you will find the peace of God passing all understanding in your heart, keeping it as a man is kept in a garrison, impregnable, and you will find that trouble ceases to be trouble, and difficulties cease to be what they were because, not of any change perhaps in them, but through the change that you have undergone through the sweet transplanting of your soul into the kingdom of grace, into Jesus Christ. "Let him come". I say again, God will not have this way taxed. It is a free way, and one of the highest acts of rebellion that we can be guilty of is to take a penny to buy grace with. You think it is not so, you may not be at all able

to receive what I say now, but it is so. One day, when the grace has flowed in, you will say, he did not half exalt the grace of God, and I shall agree with you, you wont offend me, I know I do not exalt it as it ought to be exalted, but I try to do so as helped.

"Let him come". A begging man, begging grace in his difficulties, in his business, in his family, begging help everywhere, "Let him come". O, if our poverty would make us good beggars we ought to be good beggars, but we need something beside poverty to make us good beggars, and that is a firm conviction of faith in our souls that we, though vile, are welcome to the throne of grace the Saviour's blood to plead. Now my friends, may the Lord help you, and help me, to believe this word. It is a welcome, it is an invitation, and it says to the man who is saying "I have sinned and perverted that which is right and it profited me not", it says to him, Now come, come to the Forgiver of sins, come to the Saviour of sinners; come to the Mediator O doomed sinner; come to the Mighty God, O weak sinner; come to the fountain of merit, O polluted sinner; come to the table Wisdom has spread O hungry sinner. Come to the fountain of love that wisdom and goodness have provided O thirsty sinner, and come to heaven O man who is feeling that he deserves hell. "Let him drink".

Now I will close with one word. How long are people to drink? Till they are satisfied. When will they be satisfied? Not while they live here. And when they get to heaven will they not drink? Yes, they will drink there. Does the Scripture teach that? Yes. What does it say? "And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and they shall not thirst any more". Why shall they not thirst? Because they will be always drinking, always wishing more, always receiving more, and more, and yet more satisfaction. You will never lose your creatureship. O, saint of God, you will never lose your creatureship; therefore you will never lose your dependence; No, not in heaven. O, but a sense of dependence wont destroy the happiness in heaven, No. And we shall never lose our appetite there as we sometimes lose it here, but there will be the appetite, and with the appetite will always be the living fountains of waters, and there will be no thirst, and no failing tongue there. May we reach that place. AMEN.