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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 29 December 1918

Deuteronomy 33 v 27

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath
are the everlasting arms: and He shall
thrust out the enemy from before thee; and
shall say, Destroy them"

We shall never be able to thank God sufficiently for any saving knowledge which He may give to us of Himself. The dealings of the Spirit of God with elect sinners in giving them the new birth, opening their eyes to see God, and then sin; in making known Christ in the heart; are such mercies as we shall never be able sufficiently to bless God for. If God should deal with us, we shall deal with Him, and the Psalmist, realising this, said: "Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me I become like them that go down to the pit". He felt that the life of his soul, the exercise of his mind Godward, all depended on some communication made to him by the Lord. Do you follow that? Everything that goes from our hearts to God comes from Him first. Prayer that goes to heaven, first comes from heaven. Faith that goes to Christ, first comes from Christ. He is the giver of prayer, He is the author of faith, and the touchstone of vital religion is the possession of faith. The acting of faith upon God stands in the power of the Eternal Spirit. It is in this gracious way that the Lord's people come to know that He is their refuge. "Thou art my hiding-place" one said, "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble". Trouble may make a noise like a dog round about the city, as the Psalmist says, but it cannot enter, it cannot work destruction. Blessed be God this refuge secures all who are in it from real harm. They get many a fright, but they receive no death blow. The eternal God has designed this great mercy, to be the refuge of His children, and He calls them to come into it. "Come My people, enter thou into thy chambers". Faith brings you in; when you are in trouble, faith will take you there. You may struggle often and not get there, but faith will always be pointing out the way, in its exercise. If you notice the things that go on in your believing hearts, you will find

one direction - Godward. That is the bent of the mind, that is the trend of the spirit. The beauty the soul, by faith, sees in God draws out the necessity the soul has in itself for God, impels it to go. Faith points out the road. O what a mercy to possess faith. In the bleeding Lamb, faith finds scope and centre and satisfaction and safety. Well dear friends, it is a great thing to be at a point about a refuge, a great thing to be at a point that we need it, and a great thing to be inside. In the case of homicide without intention, without malice, God provided in Israel these cities of refuge, three on one side of Jordan, and three on the other side of it, and these cities were typical, and it would seem that their positions also were typical; that whichever way you turn, there is, facing you, so to speak, a city of refuge, and, pursued by the law, pursued by sin, faith gives, in the Spirit's power, a blessed energy to run into that city, that sure refuge and hiding-place, the Lord Jesus, the eternal God. Every case you have you will find will bring you into some necessity for this refuge, and every exercise of mind Godward will bring you into some necessity for this refuge, and blessed be God, it always answers our cases. Can you do without Jesus Christ? No. If you are taught of the Spirit, you can say, honestly, No. Nor would you wish to do. What you have been singing is true of every believing soul here.

I seek, and hope to find
A portion for my soul

and a refuge also, we may add, even the Son of God. What would you do if there were no refuge? The Apostle Paul invites poor sinners to this place. He says "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need", and this is the same thing. Of it Jeremiah speaks when he says - "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary". O happy he who gets into this sanctuary, this refuge.

The second part of the text, to which I would direct your attention, is this - "And underneath are the everlasting arms". As the Lord being "a refuge" is figurative, so the expression - "the arm of the Lord" is figurative. It is much used in the Scripture, and Moses in this book, this fifth book of his, constantly refers to it

when he tells the Israelites that they came out of Egypt by a mighty power and an outstretched arm. As if he would cry constantly weakness, witherndess, and death, on the arm of Israel, and then exalt the great and wonderful power of God which is set forth under the figure of an arm, for what is intended is that the power of God is underneath a sinner, and these arms are everlasting to express the unchanging power of God, the abiding omnipotence of God, God in Christ. Look at what the arm of the Lord has done, what the power of God has effected, He did destroy the enemies of His people. What did He come to do but to destroy the works of the devil, to destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil. That was His great mission. When Christ destroyed death He put sin away. If sin had not been put away, death could not have been destroyed, for sin brought death, nothing else. "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin", and as death came by one man, by man comes also the resurrection from the dead, and the resurrection from the dead can only be when sin no longer holds the dead. If Christ had died and been buried with sin on him, He could not have risen. Just think of this, He was buried after He had put away sin, and He rose to die no more because He had no more sin to bear, and this holds good with respect to the church. Sin is removed and therefore their souls rise, and their bodies shall rise too. And all this putting away of sin was by the arm of the Lord, the outstretched arm of the Lord. Nothing less than omnipotence could have made an end of sin. Nothing but omnipotent love, and pity, and grace, could have put an end to sin, and so the saints were delivered from their bondage, all of them, when Christ said on the cross - "It is finished" and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. This is what the arm of the Lord did and I would bring it before you that, if it please God so to bless you in it, you may see what Christ's death accomplished, and then I shall try to show that the arm of the Lord, having done this, having effected such an amazing change in the state of the church, the arm of the Lord sustains her in that change, holds her up; and these two points I would just try to bring before you.

What a great thing the arm of the Lord accomplished in redemption. The Redeemer came to be a sin-bearer, came to bear the sin of His children on the cross. A mighty work suitable for God alone. You can increase your sinfulness by your conduct, but you can

never reduce it by religion. You can make yourselves worse, but you can never make yourselves better, but Christ came. "Lo" said He "I come. In the volume of the Book it is written of Me 'I delight to do Thy will O My God. Yea, Thy law is within My heart'" And you know according to the prophet Isaiah what that was that He came to do, to bear the sin of many and make intercession for the transgressors, take all the sin of the whole church away from her; and that is what the arm of the Lord did. His fury upheld Him in the great work of treading the winepress of God's wrath alone. He came from Edom, with dyed garments, and brought this great thing - "It is finished" - into the light. Finished transgression, made an end of sin, and everlasting righteousness was brought in. Now beloved friends, this work of omnipotence clears for ever and ever the church of Christ. And by that work He put her into another state, and this answers to it, that is before us - Israel's coming out of Egypt, brought into the land of promise. It answers to it in this, that when Israel came out of Egypt she came from the house of bondage, and the yoke of bondage was removed, broken, and taken away. And it answers to this, that the land of promise sets forth that condition that the Lord's people are brought into by the redeeming power of God; their state is changed. And now says Moses to the people - Underneath you, thus redeemed, brought into the goodly land, or to its border and you are about to enter into it; underneath you, to sustain you in that state, are the everlasting arms. You are to enter upon My worship and the arms of My power shall sustain you. You are to be a separate people, being separated, and My power shall preserve you. "Underneath are the everlasting arms". What Christ did on the cross bears fruit in the soul. When He said "It is finished" He left nothing to do. The application of that that He did is committed to the Holy Ghost, who fulfills His office by quickening the dead, and applying the atonement.

Then, with this before us, let us look at the second thing, that the arm of the Lord sustains His people in that state into which His gracious power on the cross brought them. It is a state that is most wonderful, and the Holy Ghost begins a gracious work and carries it on, and there are two or three points only that I would desire particularly to mention, and insist upon this evening in this word. First of all, every new born soul has faith. That is a real point in

religion. The lack of it denotes death in a person. The possession of it denotes life. But faith is a supernatural grace, the spiritual work and gift of God, and too, it has to do with supernatural things, to do with God that is; with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost. It has to do with the sinner's condition, to speak, as it were, in the heart of the sinner on behalf of God, and to tell the sinner again and again what course to take, to whom to go. This was what it did in Peter and the Apostles - "To whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life". Now if you have faith you will certainly go this way. You cannot read the Scriptures properly without seeing that the whole trend of faith is Godward; that it is in the heart like Exekiel's house, it expanded as it went upward; widened as it grew upward; and faith is just like that. It begins in little motions, it leads a sinner in confession, brings him to the throne of grace, tells him that there is a God who forgives iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and in the teaching of the Spirit it grows, and increases, as it winds round about upward. It increases sometimes in its energy. "I can no denial take". It says in the heart at times - "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me". I know not what to do, but my eyes are up unto Thee. Says a gracious man, I have enemies, I have troubles, I have difficulties. I know not what to do with them, but my eyes are up unto Thee. That is the language, that is the motion, of faith, and if you do observe, if you have it, what its workings are in your hearts, you will be sure to find this out at times within yourself, that it moves after God. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks" - it must have water or die - so faith pants after God, must have God or die. Must you have Him? Says sin in you, many things. It says, Well, but there is no such thing as true religion. It blasphemes, it ridicules, it sneers, it mocks at every solemnity. Says faith, There is a God. I have seen Him. There is a Saviour. I believe in Him. There is a fountain, I want to have a plunge into it. There is a righteousness, I would fain receive it. And these two things in a person make up his life, that is, he dies here, and he lives there. Dies in himself, to himself; dies to his wisdom, and his strength, and says - I am a poor, lost thing, I am a dead thing. But he lives to God, by His precious faith. "The just shall live by faith". He lives on the atonement. He lives at the throne of grace, lives praying, lives on begging; the trade thrives sometimes. He is a beggar by trade. An empty handed sinner goes in faith and begs, and begs, till

he gets. God sustains this faith in great energy sometimes. Underneath faith are everlasting arms and this you see in plain language in Corinthians where Paul says, speaking of faith, that it stands in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men. O what a thing it is to have faith standing in that power, and indeed, how could it stand otherwise? How can you stand up against indwelling sin, against temptation, against ignorance, against aversion to all things that are godly, if your faith were not sustained by an unseen hand, kept up by a secret prop? Underneath a sinner's faith are the everlasting arms. I understand this word to mean - underneath you is the omnipotence of God, and beneath the fainting heart of the believing child of God are the everlasting arms, keeping his faith moving, looking, longing; keeping it hankering after God. Now that is one thing, and I do beg your earnest attention to it, you who have faith, and perhaps at times feel you have a great deal more unbelief than faith, so at times you may think you have much more ignorance than knowledge, and more death than life. What keeps you at prayer? what keeps you at the Scripture? what keeps you looking to Christ? what keeps you feeling, O if He would but bless me; if He would but look on me as He does on some; if He would but reveal in me His beloved Son; all would be well. I would answer for you; it is faith in the bleeding Lamb. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

In the next place underneath an afflicted sinner are the everlasting arms of divine support, so that he does not faint, he does not give up. God does support people. There is a gracious maintenance of their standing in Christ when they are in trouble and may be feeling anything but united to Him. If you look steadily at any point of the gospel doctrine, as for instance, union with Christ, and begin to examine yourself about it, you may - if the Lord prevent it not, I believe you will - begin to question whether you have union with Him. But if you are enabled to look at it in this way - My soul cannot do without God; in this trouble I find I am after Him. Though often very dead, I cannot live without Him. I want Him to sanctify it to me, to help me to bear it properly in a Christian spirit of true submission to the will of God, and I want to be one of the people of whom we read - "They shall be fat and flourishing in the courts of the Lord to show that the Lord is upright and that there is no unrighteousness in Him" - you may find yourselves one of those who

are sustained, and it is that the Holy Ghost brings this to pass "Underneath are the everlasting arms", and He holds you up in your union with Christ, holds you up in your desires to gain by all things you pass through, and holds you up in your longings to be right with God by whatever means it may please Him to use. Underneath the Christian in trouble are the everlasting arms. The soul is sustained, kept. As long as God sustains a sinner in this matter he is well kept, "kept", as Peter speaks, "by the power of God through faith unto salvation", and no other way of keeping. O it is a great thing to be sustained in divine ways. "In the world ye shall have tribulation". That is depressing, weakening, in itself distracting. Says Christ - "In Me ye shall have peace". I will sustain your religion, I will keep your faith, I will maintain your love, I will hold you up in your understanding. "Underneath are the everlasting arms". O bless God for holding up such poor creatures as some of us find ourselves to be. Who could hold us up but God?

He sustains His people in their worship. There is no part of vital religion more solemn, more important, than worship, and when I say worship I do not mean only when we meet together, but rather more particularly, when we are alone. When you have not the sound of your own voice to help you, when you find yourself in a particular condition in secret, O when the enemy would make you turn aside, and fill you with distraction, distracting thoughts and cares, then, then to have your faith held up for a few minutes in looking to God, and your soul engaged in real worship, you must have underneath you the everlasting arms that will keep you, that will hold you up, worshipping God in spirit and in truth, worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness. In these ways and in many others, the everlasting arms are underneath the Lord's people. I might speak of other various graces, such as love, and patience, and humility, and the fear of God, and the submission to His will in affliction. In all these things we need to be as truly sustained by the power of God as our bodies must be sustained by daily bread. And this is a point that will be impressed upon every child of God more or less, that he cannot stand in one single thing that is good and godly for a minute without the Lord. You will learn it more and more as you get older, and you will believe it more firmly that you must be sustained by the power of God in every act of your soul toward Himself. O bless God then for being

sustained, kept by His power, even until now.

And in the next place - "And He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee". Literally the Canaanites were thrust out of the land which the Lord Himself had given to Abraham by promise, and Israel had to learn that they got not the land in possession by their own sword, nor by their own arm, but because God had a favour toward them, and that must be so spiritually. Just as these Hittites, and Perizzites, and Gergashites, and the many enemies that the Lord cast out, had to go before divine power, so the living family of God find that their hardness, their unbelief, their miserable wickedness, never fly before them but before the power of God alone. He shall thrust out thine enemies from before thee. The Apostle Paul makes a great promise, as inspired by the Holy Ghost; he says - "Sin shall not have dominion over you". Now you look at your experience and probably you will say sometimes, Why such and such a sin has a good deal of dominion over me. My temper has, my hard, ungrateful heart prevails over gratitude, and tenderness, and the world has a great deal of dominion over me, for I think about it and I hanker after it, in this, and in that particular. And my pride has a good deal of dominion for I am often not in the least humble before the Lord. Yes, it is too true. But now here is a gracious word - "And He shall thrust out thine enemies before thee" They shall go. Affliction is a means the Lord uses. He sends death upon this, and death upon that, and He sanctifies the death, the painful experience you have, and causes you to set your heart toward the highway, toward Himself. You cannot express how He gives you to see the awful emptiness of your nature, and the emptiness, and unsatisfying nature of the world, the world you have to do with, and that, through grace, brings you to seek Himself. That is one of the ways in which He thrusts out the enemies before His children. "He shall thrust out thine enemies from before thee" and not allow them to have that place they seek, which they often have had, and which they are most unwilling to yield. "And shall say, Destroy them". What? Yes, "Destroy them". And this sets a prospect before every child of God that their enemies are not to live and prevail for ever. The expectation of the poor shall not perish, their hope shall not be cut off, for their God is their God for ever and ever, and He will be their Guide even unto death. O what a God we have my dear friends, what a God we have, and He shall say,

Destroy them. What did Christ come to do? To destroy death, to destroy the works of the devil. Where did He do it? On the cross. Where will He next do it? In the soul. And where will He last of all do it? In the body. In the body. There shall be no trace of death in the soul or body in heaven. Nothing that defileth or maketh a lie shall enter there. He shall say, Destroy them. Well, may the Lord help us to bless His holy Name for all His great goodness in such a promise as this. Now I must leave off. I have no more strength. May the Lord make these hints useful.

AMEN.