

1397-176
LaP 812

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 15 September 1929

HEBREWS 4 V 16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of
grace, that we may obtain mercy and find
grace to help in time of need

Between the analysed and dissected creature of the 13 verse, about whom we spoke this morning, and the text, is the necessary, gracious, compassionate, glorious High Priest, Christ Jesus. Without His presence there, there could be no access; there could not have been given out this gracious invitation - Let us come boldly. Without this Person in this wondrous, necessary office, only judgement could come to sinners, but in the riches of His grace Christ came. Being sent of His Father, being called to this honourable office, having the honour given Him, He stands in this position between a sinner searched to the uttermost, searched until he could not bear alone the terrible verdict of the law, of his own conscience. But Christ forbids despair, Christ forbids despair, and if enabled I will draw your attention for a little time to this Person, the office He sustains being called to it by His Father. The Person is the Lord Jesus. Not only God - He is God; may we never be left to let that go; whatever is proper to God, Christ is; eternity, immensity, immutability, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, justice, love eternal belonging to God, are Christ's. O sinner, if you have to do with God absolutely you are ruined for ever and ever. Forget not that Christ is Almighty God; that He said in the days of His flesh here - "I AM THAT I AM". "Before Abraham was I AM". Holy Scripture is full of the Deity, the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ. When we worship Christ we worship God; when we worship God we worship Christ. This is the foundation of all revealed religion. This is the cause of a worship which the saints are called to. "Thy throne O God", said His Father to Him, in the beginning of this epistle, "is for ever and ever", and all holy angels are called upon to worship Him, and every saint is called upon and taught to worship Him, who is God. And He hath on His vesture a Name that no man knows but Himself and that Name

is The Word of God, and the Word of God given to Him means the Son of God. This you have in John's gospel - "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God". And this God made the worlds and this God holds them up by the word of His power. O Christian, if Christ covers you with this, His glorious Deity incarnate, you will understand a little of the mercy of God in giving His only begotten Son and sending Him to be the Saviour of the world. But of this God, the second Person in the Trinity, it is said - "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". A beautiful truth it is; it is essential to keep a soul out of hell and fit that soul for heaven. Emmanuel is His Name. Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, is His Name. This is the Person who in the context is called Jesus the Son of God. To a blind man, one whose eyes He had opened, the Lord Jesus, meeting him after he was excommunicated, cast out of the synagogue, said to him - "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is He Lord?" said the man, "that I might believe on Him". "Thou hast both seen Him and He it is that talketh with thee". And that fetched the man to his knees; he fell down. And it brought up worship; he worshipped Him. And that is what we must have if we are to know Him and worship Him; some discovery made of Him to our souls by Himself through His Spirit. O, might I say, behold the Man, the sinner's Friend, standing between a creature analysed, taken to pieces, as it were, and all the parts of him for the moment separated to his own pained and shamed gaze, and all his thoughts, hidden away from every other eye but God's, brought forth, pierced by the sword, brought to light by the truth, and between this sinner, this miserable sinner, this sinner who, in himself must be hopeless as well as helpless, between this sinner and a holy, holy, holy God, is Jesus. Did you ever see Him?

Behold a scene of matchless grace
Tis Jesus in the sinner's place

May honours be given to Him by us. May we be led to sing

Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head

Then we have in the next place His office. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest". He is above Aaron. I do not think that Aaron was ever called the great High Priest. He was the high priest, but this Jesus is the great High Priest, above, better than, all the priests of the Levitical tribe and His office is that that is necessary to salvation. Being a Priest He must needs have somewhat to offer. Being a Priest He was between persons whom He was to represent and for whom He was to offer for sins. How clearly is this taught us in holy Scripture. The Priest, the Mediator, a Priest who had sins to atone for, sinners to save, sinners whose sins were to be put away by Himself; He was to bear them in His Own body on the tree; and when He had accomplished that He passed into the heavens; passed through what we call the heavens, which we admire when lit up by the moon and the stars, when full of the light of the sun; through these heavens He passed into the presence, the glorious throne of God, and He is seated on the right hand of God; there He is making intercession. And there are three things just to name here, first the efficacious death, the vicarious death, the voluntary death that He died. We learn in the chapter I just now read, that He was made perfect through sufferings. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He learned obedience in fulfilling His office; it was laid on Him; that He had to obey the Father whose servant He had become, and the great act of obedience was through His whole life. It came to a point in Gethsemane, when He said - "Not as I will but as Thou wilt", and the climax was on the cross when He said "It is finished" and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. And, having done that and being raised from the dead by the glory of His Father, and having showed Himself, after His passion, alive, by many infallible proofs, He led out His disciples as far as Bethany and was taken up into heaven in their sight, and so He was glorified, so He passed into the heavens. And it is because He is there - O think of it - it is because He is there that this invitation is given out. No Christ in heaven, no invitation to approach God, no mercy to be shown, no grace to be given; whatever troubles we may have, no help in God. May this point be well set on our hearts, that because Jesus is in heaven, the great High Priest, this invitation is given. And another consideration I would just draw your attention to is this, that Jesus, having suffered, having been tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted. "He is able to succour them that are tempted, in

that He Himself suffered, being tempted"; able to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way; touched with the feeling of the infirmities of His people. He has felt sorrow; He was burdened with sin, not His own. He was tempted of the devil; He was despised of His Own nation. They took His character away, they said He had a devil and was mad. O, the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, who can estimate them? And yet these sufferings, according to Scripture, were appointed for Him to sympathise with His suffering people. He is able to succour them that are tempted in that, or because that, He Himself suffered, being tempted. By the Lord's Mediatorial work God proved He could and would sympathise with His tempted people. God has witnessed that His compassion for men is to be known alone through a suffering Saviour, who is Almighty God and very Man. Suffering in the wilderness as He did, tempted of the devil, troubled, pained, patient, praying all His way through, He is able now, being at the right hand of God, to succour all His tempted people. And a mysterious word is here - that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He said when the enemy came - "The prince of this world cometh but hath nothing in Me". When the prince of this world comes to you, a poor saint, he finds a great deal in you to work upon; a disposition which he well knows, which he has studied closely and fits temptations just according to that disposition. When he came to the pure, glorious Saviour, he found nothing in Him to work upon. What a mercy for sinners. May I here just throw in a word, namely, hold fast the impeccability of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hold fast the truth that it was not possible for Him to be overcome by any sin, by any devil, by any trouble. Failure in one point would have ruined altogether, but He failed nowhere. Now my brethren, we have such an High Priest, we have such an High Priest; O, such an High Priest. No Aaron, no descendant, not even Phineas, no descendant of Aaron - Jesus Christ of the tribe of Judah - not of the priestly tribe - called to be a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, placed in that office, the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. The true Priest is Himself, and the great sacrifice is Himself.

Now I would notice this invitation. I have tried to show you the ground of it, the only reason why God could give it out, and speak it home to a sinner. Let us look at the word "Let us therefore" - not because we have been searched but because there is a great High

Priest. Not because we are miserable, but because there is a High Priest. Not because we are destitute but because there is a great High Priest. Not because we are hopeless in ourselves, but because there is a great High Priest. This must ever be the ground of a sinner's approach to God. Poverty established no claim on God for poverty is the fruit of sin. Weakness established no claim on God for weakness is the fruit of sin. Misery is the fruit of sin. Frowns of God are the fruit of sin. There is no claim here, it is entirely in the Person and Priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Let us" - Paul puts himself among them - "Let us" who have believed and entered into rest; "Let us" who are troubled and afflicted and tempted; "Let us" who are, as we grow older, more and more searched and tried; "Let us" who learn continually that we are lost in self; "Let us come" - because of Christ - "Let us come" - in a particular manner - "boldly". This may shake some of us - "boldly". It is quite consistent - this boldness is quite consistent - with trembling at God's Word, for He speaks very kindly to people who tremble at His Word. He says - "To that man will I look, and with him will I dwell, that is of a poor and contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word." The two go together; they will grow in a person's experience. "Let us come" and use the liberty, for there is a liberty of speech here; there is liberty; it means liberty. Let us come and use the liberty that the Lord Jesus gives. We have in the Psalms that blessed word - "Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth and causeth to approach unto Thee". Every motion Godward is from God Himself.

His Spirit all the motion gives
By springs of fear and love

"Let us come". O trembling sinner, you are hindered are you not? I am. What hindrances - sin, yea sins, "sins immense as is the sea". A very solemn thing to see your sins. The Apostle Paul well knew this. 394 Though a saint, he said - I find a law in my members, the law of sin, so that when I would do good evil is present with me. "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do", and he was a wretched man. "O wretched man that I am" And he asked a question that would seem to savour of despair, though it was not really despair. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Then faith rose, being touched by the Lord and drawn out; he said - "I

thank God". He got liberty, he got to the throne; Jesus appeared, this Mediator, and he could address the Father through Jesus. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". "Let us come boldly". The devil hinders; O, he does. How he hates prayer; how he tries to choke prayer down, to hinder a sinner from coming. He puts temptations in the way, he stirs up lust in the way; he tries to harden the heart against God, and against prayer. "Let us come boldly". What a favour it is to approach God. O, it is a wonderful thing to approach God. Think of it, the infinite One - a creature of a day, crushed before the moth, approaching this glorious God who said to Moses "No man shall see Me and live". And yet He said to Moses, Come up to the mount, and He says to a sinner, come to the throne of grace, come to My throne. I have grace to dispense, favours to bestow, honours to give. Life for the dead, light to the blind, healing for the sick, justification for the guilty, mercy for the miserable, and grace for every hour and every time and every minute of need. What a blessed thing it is to pray.

Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give

Come poor sinner

Let not conscience make you linger
Nor of fitness fondly dream
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him
This He gives you
Tis His Spirit's rising beam

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The throne of grace. God has an eternal throne of justice, purity, holiness, majesty, light, unapproachable light, but He has erected this throne where all the perfections are that I have named, and more; mercy and grace He has these to give. And, pleased with the sacrifice of our great High Priest, a sacrifice which the Priest was ordained to offer, and commanded to give, the Lord says, Come now to this throne, come to this throne, and here He has wonderful blessings - "Buy wine and milk without money and without price". I love those terms; they suit me; I believe they suit some of you - "Without money and without

price" - for the searching has shown us our poverty, our destitution. We have nothing to bring but sin, nothing to name, nothing to confess, but sin. O, but there is something that God puts into the mouth of a sinner, namely the Person and merits of the Lord Jesus, and Jesus Himself said to His disciples, and He still says it at times - "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it". So sinner, there is a throne; here is liberty, here is speech, here are terms all suited to sinners. Every age, every state of experience, met in this gracious word - Come boldly to the throne of grace. Come with corruptions. I must name this, I am so painfully, shamefully acquainted with this, that I must name it. What place suitable to sinners who feel their corruptions, but the throne of grace? A holy throne, a glorious throne, and yet sinners, feeling sin; old sinners who have grown old in the ways of God and yet find that sin is not weakened, that corruptions are not lessened, that they are just in them - Come boldly. "That we may obtain mercy". Mercy for this trouble, this trouble for sin, this trouble of sin that deadens you, corrupts you, hardens you, turns you about, withers you, weakens you, confuses you. Come boldly with this. O, if God had limited His people and in the limit shut this out, what would become of us? But He has not done it. No, Christ is the Friend of sinners; an Advocate for a dumb sinner; a Priest for a guilty person, and He is before this throne to intercede. God the Father is here, and the Son, the High Priest, is here to represent them, and to plead for them and to make a way for them and to send answers of peace down to them. Mercy. O saint of God, troubled by indwelling sin, come boldly to the throne of grace. Tempted sinner, tempted sinner; temptation is frequently a test, a trial, testing faith, trying love. O, but how soon faith and love seem ready to give out, to faint and come short. Then says the Lord, come to the throne of grace, ye tempted souls. Reflect on this, that the tempter tempted the Saviour; that your pain because of your tried, tested faith and love, can lead to fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Satan's malicious accusations regarding your little faith, Christ, who was full of grace and truth, well understands: He was tempted too. His was pure suffering, so His temptations were greater than yours. Are you tempted to worldliness and worldly grandeur; you may be. Though Satan could not actually so tempt Him, He was pained and you are pained. Come with this to the throne of God's heavenly grace. And some affliction may be on you; it may be on the person; it may be

in the dear home circle; it may be on the business. In some way afflictions come. "In the world ye shall have tribulation", and affliction of itself is very heavy. Some kinds are seemingly intolerable, hardly bearable, and with this there will come many thoughts and searching of heart. An honest conscience says, why has the Lord sent this? And the question why, is not self justification, but a sincere enquiry. "Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me". Or, if conscience is sufficiently enlightened in the matter, as to say to you, pointing out the sin, you went astray there, then you fall down accused, and are dumb. Now what does God say? Come boldly, come to the throne of grace. Whom I love I rebuke, I reprove, I chasten. My sons do not escape the rod; others do. You, My sons are not to escape the rod, but come boldly to the throne of grace. Well, dear afflicted friends, what a favour to get near to God when you are in trouble, when you look around you at your own circle and see trouble; when you look at your own body and say, this poor body is troubled with a pain or with a disease, and God says, come with it. In the days of His flesh on earth they were constantly taking to the Lord Jesus lepers, sick, palsied, blind, deaf, dumb, devil-possessed people and He healed all that had need of healing. O then, with temporal afflictions, the word may well be used - God give us faith to do it - "Come boldly to the throne of grace". It is a place where business is transacted, where God and men deal with each other, if I may put it so. Where you say, Lord I am in trouble, and He says - Pour out your heart before Me. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." A place where God, in His tenderness, shows Himself. "Like as a Father pitieth His children so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him", and He reveals His intimate knowledge - "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust". "Come boldly" O does He not sometimes encourage His people? Some of you know that. You begin perhaps in a very trembling, fearful spirit to pray, and wonder what reception you will have, when shortly you find a strange change, a bold spirit, a large asking. We never reach the fullness of God however much we ask for; we never shall; we shall never reach the fullness of His love, never reach the fullness of His power, and never reach the depth of His compassion. I wish I could get there oftener. There is an open door and the Lord says to His people, "I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it". There is business done here. Sometimes the Lord causes a sinner to

lose sight of self, and of time and of time things, and in what Paul writes to the Corinthians there is some little inkling given of it. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal." We often look at the things we see, do we not? We see our troubles, we see our mortifications, we see our sins, we see our weakness, we see many failings and fallings. We see temporal things as it were made liquid and flowing away past us. But sometimes the eye is taken from these temporal things, and set on things which are not seen. God, Christ, the Holy Ghost, salvation, eternal salvation; safety on earth, peace with God, peace in your conscience, peace with affliction, peace with the stones and beasts of the field; all through grace. "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace" to obtain - dealing with God - to obtain from Him mercy, grace. Mercy to help, mercy to save, mercy to comfort, "and grace to help in time of need".

Now just in conclusion let me bring before you two or three very striking examples of coming to the throne of grace. Take Asa confronted by a mighty army, and he got access to God. He said, Lord it is little with Thee to help with many or with them that have no might, no might at all. Help us O Lord our God, for in Thy Name we go against this great company. He obtained mercy and grace to help him in that time of need. O, it was an urgent time, an anxious time, and the Lord said, as it were, in his heart, Come to Me, come to the throne of grace. Take his son, Jehoshaphat; he had a similar trouble and he said to the Lord, we know not what to do. Against this great company we have no might, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are up unto Thee. He got grace, he had access to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and he was comforted, and the Spirit, by a prophet, came and told him that God would give him the victory, and he so believed it that he did an extraordinary thing; he set trumpeters before the army and they had to go first and sing unto the Lord. They got victory before they fought, and no doubt some of you have had blessings in the hand of faith before you have had them actually. Deliverances promised, mercies promised, goodness promised, and you have said, I believe it shall be even as it was said unto me. "Grace to help".

Plenteous grace God has; it is His favour, undeserved favour, free, sovereign, tender, suitable grace, meeting cases, particular cases. Ah it is a great thing to be able to say, for this blessing in providence I prayed; for this favour in my soul I prayed; for this manifestation of the Lord Jesus to me I prayed; for this sense of forgiveness which I long for, I prayed, and now I have got the answer. I have had mercy, I have had grace. I got access; an open door was set before me and no devil, no sin, no unbelief could shut it. Well brethren, the Lord help you, and help me, to regard this. Take, O take first of all the great reason of the invitation - the presence in heaven of our great High Priest; a Priest crowned, a Priest prevailing, a Priest with His infinite merit, having passed into the heavens. A Priest who, on earth, in offering always did those things which pleased His Father; a Priest suitable for sinners. And then, seeing Him by faith, God may speak this invitation to you - here it is in Scripture - "Let us therefore" - mind the "therefore" - "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"

AMEN.