

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 30 December 1928

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

There are three things in vital religion, necessary things. First the new birth; this comes from heaven. No saint on earth or in heaven will ever say that he was first in seeking God. Vital religion descends from heaven and enters unbidden, unsought, and the sinner answers, not in his feelings, but in truth, that word where John tells us that he saw, coming down from God out of heaven, that great city, holy Jerusalem, having the glory of God. That belongs to the whole church; that is true of every member of the church. As many as are new born in this congregation answer to that word. That came down into their souls, that great thing, a new heart, a right spirit; what a favour. The heart, being new, runs to its source - God. Being spiritual, it has spiritual appetites. O it is a great mercy to be new born, to be begotten again with the word of truth, to be born of the Spirit, to have the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. But of all people in the world, the people of God, in their beginnings, are the very last to think that they are godly, because the life now in them, the light now illuminating them, makes them feel that they are sinners. They are enlightened in their understandings, and they see who God is. Why, sometimes He is so wonderful, so glorious, so full of majesty and holiness, that a child of His can scarcely name His Name without trembling or think of Him without awe; so great is God. When I can, I like to remember how this came to me sovereignly, unsought. Strange it was, but it was awful. God was awful, holy, holy, just. Ah, and I said in my heart, where that God is I shall never be. Now I do not say that; I hope to be with Him, but there is an awfulness in God that everyone to whom He reveals Himself feels; He is awful. That is the first thing, and if any here have not this, I pray God that they may have it, and if He would give it you this evening, if He would come down from heaven and give you a new

heart, a right spirit, the washing of regeneration, you would be a miracle. The riches of grace would then be just begun in you; the power of God would just then be beginning to work in you. You would wonder what was ailing you, but eventually you would know that God did it, that great thing; gave you a new heart and took away the heart of stone. But you would understand the hymn you were singing, the first hymn - 310 - "Swarms of ill thoughts their bane diffuse". You would feel "proud, envious, false, unclean" and every ransacked corner shone into by the light of life would discover some fresh sin, until you would say, "undone". And may those of us to whom this great thing came down from God out of heaven bless His holy Name for so great a mercy.

The second thing, and a consequence of the first, is that this sinner just blessed comes to God. God has come to him; now he comes to God. God has sought him; now he seeks God. How great is this. Who can ever bless God enough for a spirit of prayer, a spirit of faith to believe that God is.

And the third thing is that this person to whom God came, and who, as a consequence, comes to God, gets good things from God; gets, that is to say, what he seeks. And is not that wonderful? An earthly parent would not mock a child who asked him for bread by giving him a stone. Neither does God, the heavenly Father of His people, mock them by denying them, by giving them something that they did not ask for. These two points I would, as helped, speak about this evening in endeavouring a little further to speak about this word. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace".

Clearly in the Epistle the invitation is given to people born again and it is a great thing to distinguish here for of course people do not go to God who have no need of Him in their feelings, who see no beauty in Him so as to desire Him. No, you must see something in God that you need before you go to ask Him. You must see some beauty in Him - a sufficiency for your need, mercy to meet your case. You must see something in Christ that tongue can never express, that the heart longs to know and possess. There is a beauty in Christ, a beauty beneath the shame, the indignity of the cross; a glory in His groans, a glory in His righteousness. And there is an attraction in Him as

being the rest, the only rest of His people. This coming is not the first coming. There is a distinction I judge in the chapter, this chapter, with respect to coming, for the Apostle says: "We which have believed do enter into rest". They had already been there and had got what they went for. They ceased from their own works, their legal works, their works to make themselves better; their endeavours to mend a bad case; an impossible thing. Thus they have ceased and have by precious faith entered into Christ, and in Him they have rested. To these the Apostle addresses himself thus - "Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest". Some have not entered into it in this experimental way. Some here perhaps are saying they have not entered into it and they have, as I said this morning, they have two devils standing in the way. The devil of unbelief that will subtly work, telling them that they must mend their cases, that they must get rid of some excrescencies of spirit, if not of open life, and so they are hindered. And then that old serpent, the accuser of the brethren, he stands in the way and tempts them to believe they will never get what they want and they had better leave off seeking. To some, he says, you have sought so long, you will never find. O it is worth waiting for. Wait on God. It is worth waiting for, if you wait 40 years and longer. You will one day say with Simeon, taking the Saviour in the arms of your faith: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy Word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation". Many poor people here, now happy and rich in heaven, sought long before they found. These comers, what is it they come for? Why, for mercy, for mercy to help them every day. Mercy to regulate their spirits; mercy in the removal of sin; mercy in the subduing of iniquities; mercy in helping them to live on Christ by faith; to live a life of faith on the Son of God. Mercy in respect of their circumstances which may be full of misery naturally. And these people daily have to come, and by the High Priest and His priestly work, they do come. What a mercy to be led to the throne of God's heavenly grace when you wake up in the morning or in the night and feel your emptiness and wickedness and dread the day that is before you, feeling sin in its power. Is it not then comfortable, at least, and wonderful mercy to be enabled to go to the throne of God's heavenly grace and ask Him to be merciful to you in and through the day on which you are about to enter.

"Come boldly". This boldly coming is just opposed to the shyness of unbelief, to the wavering of an unbelieving heart. It is coming in the Name of Christ, pleading His blood, His righteousness. Looking to His intercession; mentioning in God's merciful ear the promises of the gospel. Coming thus for mercy, men obtain it. That we may have this mercy. Well, it is wonderful how it comes. Now some holy influence pervades the spirit. You can never describe it, at least not fully, but it is a holy influence, something on your spirit that attracts you and helps you, humbles you, softens you, helps you to do your duty in life and helps you to keep your eye on God. And perhaps, being urgent, you are every hour, yea and many and many a time in the hour, asking the Lord to be with you. O leave me not; give me the help I need now; give me the help I need in my family, in my business, in my afflictions. Give me the help I need. It is an influence and you are conscious of it. It is a pleasant influence, a sweet, heavenly feeling in your heart and it does not leave room for the prevalence of unbelief or any sin. Sin is there, in all its things and ways, but now, with this mercy on your spirit, it has not room for victory; it has not strength. Grace weakens sin; the elder serves the younger; the old man is brought down. He has to bend, and though he rebels he cannot have his own way. Let us come boldly, says the Apostle, for this mercy. And sometimes this mercy comes in a gracious word, a very gracious word. The Lord speaks to people. I am afraid He does not speak to us as He used to do, but He does still speak to some people. Days in the past were better, as far as I can form a judgment, than these days. Indeed I know from experience and from observation that 40 years ago things were better in the church generally speaking than they are today. But still, the Lord does speak. His word is like a medicine. "Do not My words do good like a medicine?" And some of you must say, they do. O how they supple your will, how they soften your heart, how they mould your spirit, how they draw your affections to the Lord, how they fix your heart upon Him and how He is to you the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. If we lived like this every day, what a life we should live.

"That we may obtain mercy". And sometimes this mercy is this, that He pours upon you the spirit of grace and of supplications and it may very well be that by the hour almost your heart is engaged with

God, and whatever you are doing there is just that spirit in you of prayer and supplication, that you give the Lord no rest. You go to Him, speak to Him, pour out your heart before Him, repent of sin, mourn, as it is in Zechariah, mourn apart from everyone else. And this is mercy. It has in it the remission of sin; it has in it the smile of God. It is humbling mercy, confirming mercy, enlarging mercy, establishing mercy. It is obtained at the throne of grace; it is obtained by labour; it is obtained by prayer and supplication; it is obtained by faith.

"Let us come boldly". A boldness opposed to the hesitation and the doubt and the fear and the questioning and the unbelief and the pride of our hearts. O my brethren, it is a great thing to be moved forward and to be established and to be edified on your most holy faith and to come, in some measure, to an understanding of what it is to be in the body of Christ, to be edified in love. Now that is the first thing; come for mercy; mercy that melts, sweet, solemn, holy mercy. Well may the Lord give it to us.

And then "find grace to help in time of need". To find it, is to know where it is. It is to see it in Christ. The fulness of it, the efficacy of it, the continuity of it, the victories it obtains in men and for them, faith finds in Christ. "In time of need". An affliction time is a time of need. They said of old "Thou hast laid affliction on our loins. We went through fire and water". A time of need that was. Affliction may be in three ways. It may be purely in your conscience; it may be by the desertion of God, well merited; it may be by some sore temptation; it may come through the indulgence, by you, of some sin. Affliction in these particulars will be indeed a time of need, of pressing need. There will be an urgency in your spirit - Lord, I am troubled. If it be purely in your conscience, when there is a controversy between you and God, when He finds some fault with you, when He points out some inconsistency of your spirit, perhaps of your tongue - He finds out and points out to you some inconsistency - this is a time of need. And you want grace, grace in this way, grace to remove the guilt - "The blood of Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin" - grace to break the snare, grace to subdue the iniquity, grace to enable you to fall flat before God, grace to correct you in the thing that has brought soreness to your

conscience, that you may say, in that particular, the past time of my life suffices me now to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. O but it is difficult; to go with a guilty conscience is not easy. You have to fly in the face of feeling, in the face of reasoning, in the face of the devil, in the face of a legal heart. You have to go opposing them, resisting them, in every step, when you go for grace in this time of affliction. It may be an affliction in your circumstances. There is a good deal of this about it, and it might be well - I think, I believe, it would be well - for the churches of God in a time when His hand is on members here and there, to search for the cause. The cause may be just natural as when, in this season of the year, people are more or less affected, and there is no especial reason in anybody for the dealing of God in that particular thing. But it may be that God sees something in a church moving Him to deal with that church as He dealt with the church at Corinth. Their sin, their leanness by sin, and their grave and gross irregularities in their worship, moved God to afflict them. And you will find the affliction take two forms; one in afflicting many with sickness, and the other in taking away many from this world. "For this cause many of you are sick and some sleep"; some are dead. When I look around us now here, at this congregation, and see the number of seats which are vacant because those who ordinarily occupy them are sick or are nursing the sick ones, then I say - I say it in secret, many a time - what is it? Is there some special cause? Is it just a natural thing? But it is an affliction anyhow; a time of affliction. You cannot look on your friends in their rooms, or observe their vacant places when you are here, and not be affected, at least, I hope not. Now what about grace for this? Well, grace to restore our friends, if it please God. Grace to submit to the will of God. Grace to say "Thy will be done". Grace to ask the Lord to sanctify the afflictions, to deeply sanctify them, that our brethren who are sick may be blessed in their sickness, and that we may be blessed in their blessings; that we may seek the favour of God for them and for us. Come boldly, brethren, come boldly to the throne of grace for your afflicted brethren. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with that one member. Therefore, come boldly to God to sanctify the affliction and to bless our souls.

It is a time of need when there is an affliction on a church. It is an amazing thing to belong to a church, a gospel church. I would

just like to turn aside for a minute and speak about this because it is intimately connected with the ministry. The ministry given of God is for the edifying of the body of Christ till the body of Christ shall grow to the stature of a man, a perfect man in Christ. I think now, at times - I have thought it today - what about my ministry? what about you? Do these two things meet in us? Is the preaching of the kind, to you, to be useful to your edification? It is so common to us to come to chapel; so ordinary, so customary. But then, if we are rightly exercised will not this be one question with you, Lord wilt Thou give the minister something to say to me. If I need reproof, do not withhold it. A real minister does reprove people; if when he does not know, he is doing it. Give him a word to me if I need the word of reproof. O, as I am weak, do give him a word to strengthen me. As I feel distant, O say something by him to bring me near. If you look into the Epistle to the Ephesians and read there what the ministry is, it may bring you to a point - am I exercised like this, and does the ministry answer in any measure to this great end of God in giving it? Seek grace my friends, seek grace in this time of need, this time of affliction. Affliction may be in your own particular circumstances, in your family, in your business and this is a time of need. Friends cannot help us in some things. Sympathy is sweet, but effectual help God has kept in His own hand. Seek grace to help here. When you can say, looking at your trouble, feeling your pain, "Thy will be done", that is having grace. When you can commit the matter to the Lord whatever it is and not hasten here or there to get out of the pit, that is grace. When you can bare your heart and conscience to God and entreat Him just to bring you into conformity to His will, to bring your will to lie straight with His will, in a happy unison with it, that is grace. When you can be a little child; as a little child, wanting not your own will, but just to walk as God would lead you and to be what He would have you, and to do what He would have you do, that is grace, and affliction may say to you, you need this grace. It may say to you, you have been gadding about in your spirit after quantities of things that have not profited and cannot profit you. Seek grace, grace to help in time of need.

A time of temptation may be a time of need when in a particular way - not in an ordinary way as one may say, people generally live in, - but when in some particular way you are tempted, as Bunyan tells us

in his "Grace Abounding". There came a particular temptation to him to sell Christ. "Sell Him, sell Him". Now to him that was a particular time which led to between two or three years of terrible sorrow. You may be tempted, not as much as that, not in that particular way, but there may come a time when it may be, for a few days and weeks or more, you are pursued by some strange thing. Many a child of God has found surprise in his spirit at certain things coming to him with which he had formerly no particular acquaintance. He is surprised at it, wonders why it has come, comes to fear falling by it, to be afraid of indulging it, and yet he is pressed and urged by the tempter to this and that thing. Young people who fear God may be much exposed to certain temptations, ambitions, worldliness, and if the Lord leaves them, O what sore consciences, what broken bones they will get. Now a time of temptation when the devil comes to you as he went to Christ, is a time of need. He won't easily be put off; if he is allowed to come, he won't be easily put off. Well, may we, - God give us grace to do it - follow Christ's Word: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation". "Lead us not into temptation". Bunyan, reflecting on his sore time of trouble, after he was brought out of it, thought that one reason of his getting into it as he did was that he had neglected the Lord's direction: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation". May we remember the Lord's Word: "Lead us not into temptation". "Watch and pray". There may be a time of temptation or trouble before us. It may be in the nation, and it will come to the church. Amos prophesies a solemn day. The sun is to go down in the day time; a very unusual, unnatural thing, for the sun to go down in the day. And there may come that day, even to some of you, that was prophesied by Amos, a famine, not of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the Word of God, and that word in Revelation may yet come in its fulness in your time, the sealing of the witnesses when they shall lie unburied in the streets of the city three and a half years. What a time that will be. Whoever may see it will find, I judge, that it is an awful time. Huntington somewhere says that the day would come when God's people would find their houses big enough for the services, and we do not know. We have been favoured here for many years, and if all who belong to us were here this evening the chapel would be full practically, but we do not know what is to come. Some of us are old and not far from the end, and I think sometimes what I shall see if I live a few years longer. My mind runs to this and that

person, and I think if I had to bury them then their places would be empty; what would become of us. But this will be the thing, grace to help us. Seek it. There is plenty in God; no scant supply there. Whatever may come to us in the nation, there is plenty in God. We may be very near to trouble. I hope - as we have all been praying and the nation has been praying, and the empire praying; and God does hear natural people in some things - that the king's life may be spared to us. And well we may so pray, for as I think, when he dies it is very probable that every little bit of Protestantism in the Coronation Oath will be taken away. May the Lord look upon us and help us to do what here we are bidden to do. "Come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." To help us to stick to the truth, cleave to Christ, follow after Him and the knowledge of Him. Whatever comes, whatever trouble comes, whatever difficulties come, may grace be given to us to stick to Christ, cleave to Christ, plead His blood, and hold fast the truth as the truth is in Him. Why, it is easy, some may think. O but it is not. It is not easy any day if you are really aware of what your nature is. But if it should cost us something? Do you ever ask yourselves such a question? Often have I said, now if it should cost me such and such things to believe and cleave to what I preach, shall I have grace to do it? Look at the question. If it should cost you your home; if it should cost you, as William Tiptaft used to say, a whipping in the market place tomorrow; do you think you would stand? How suitable that petition is to me and to all who fear God: "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". No other way. Now beloved friends look at this kind Word, inspired by a kind God, full of love and compassion, the High Priest of our profession. He says - you are weak; I am strong, I am strength. You are ignorant; I am wisdom, wisdom and understanding. You are foolish, sinful, have a strong disposition in you to all evil. Come, but come boldly, reminding God of His promise; boldly putting Him in mind of His covenant. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, sweet mercy, holy mercy, tender mercy, compassionate mercy, suitable, effectual mercy, and grace to help us in every time of need.

AMEN.