

Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton on Sunday morning 28/2/32.

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Isaiah Ch. 40. v 29.

"He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might, He increases strength."

The foretold captivity in the 39th chapter is quickly followed by a promise, a great promise; a promise of restoration and of double for all the sins that had been committed and this 40th chapter is full of consolation to the people who have been in captivity; and the good things promised reach the Gentiles and extend themselves to the end of time.

Holy Scripture, in the beginning of the covenant with Abraham limits all the blessings to Abraham and his seed, but under-lying that great truth, is the wondrous mercy of an infinite extension of blessings, everlasting blessings in the gospel, that shall reach Gentiles and make them one with elect Jews; one body, one church, to the praise and glory of God's grace, and wisdom, and council, and will, and this chapter encourages the Lord's people on the ground of His omnipotence, to wait on Him. It is a testimony also against idols and idolatry; setting forth the vanity of all idols and the wickedness of idolatry. It is therefore a chapter very greatly to be observed. It is for encouragement to afflicted people, people who have been in captivity but are being brought out; who have turned away from God, but who are being turned to Him again; who cry-"Turn us O God.", and when a person says- "Turn me." then he, in the beginning of the Spirit's grace is turned already to God. Nobody says "Turn me, before he is being turned by the Spirit of God. And appeals are made by Jehovah to his people. His tenderness to his flock, his goodness and his faithfulness; He turns to them and appeals to them when they may be saying - "O but what can become of us? What can bring us forth out of our present state. He says -"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and metered out heaven with a span. Who comprehended the dust of the earth in a balance, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance.

Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him. With whom took He council and who instructed Him, taught Him in the path of judgement, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding; who has directed God with respect to His management of you and of your matters; who directed Him to bring you into captivity and who directed Him to bring you into liberty; can you measure His dealings? Can you measure His mercies? Can you measure His judgements? Thus does God speak to his people who in their troubles are very apt to judge Him. We are all very apt to judge God when His ways are past finding. Solemn are His dealings and very provocative to a fallen nature to bring Him into judgement and to justify rebellion and idolatry. But He tells us that the nations are as a drop of the bucket. He can measure them. He can weigh them and He finds in measuring and in weighing, that they are just as the small dust of the balance. Not flattering to us is it? Not flattering to you when you are managing to the best of your ability and fretting because your skemes do not materialise. But, says God, these nations, these enemies, these infidals, these judges of Myself, they are all just as a drop of the bucket, as the small dust of the balance. Let every troubled person here, every child of God in affliction here, believe this Holy Scripture; believe that the matters that are afflicting, painfully perplexing, not to be understood, that they are all in His hands, and just we ourselves are as small dust in a balance, a drop in a bucket.

To whom then will ye liken God? It is very solemn for a child of God to, even unconsciously sometimes, think God to be such a one as himself, and to be saying - "He would not do this. He would not allow that." "Why", says the Lord, "To whom will ye liken Me." and if you can have any proper measurment of God and you cannot; if the creature cannot comprehend the Creator; if the subject cannot comprehend the great and glorious Creator, how then can a creature judge the ways of God. May faith come to us in the power of the Spirit and bring us to say- "The will of the Lord be done. He is right."

Now the Lord comes to His people in there judgement of His dealings with them in particular and says-

"Why sayest thou O Jacob, and speakest O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is past over from my God", that is He takes no notice of me. He leaves me to be the subject of circumstances and the creature of difficulties and perplexities. He leaves me so that I now have no judgement metered out to me, only affliction. He does not see my way, He leaves me to wander as I will, or to be driven as the devil will drive me, or as my own mind will drive me. And God reproveth this spirit. He reproveth it by a question. Why do you say so? Why do you, any of you in affliction to-day say that. Why do I say it? We say it because there is a spirit of insubmission to His Majesty. A spirit of unbelief respecting His dealings, a real bit of infidelity in us, working in the form of carnal reasoning, and making God just like ourselves. Then the Lord makes another appeal - "Hast thou not known in the past; hast thou not heard in the law; hast thou not heard in my providence, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." You faint. He does not. You are weary, He is not. "There is no searching of His understanding." All His ways are according to an eternal counsel. All His doings are after the counsel of His own will. Nothing new to God. His creation. Nothing new to Him is providence. Nothing new to Him is particular trouble that comes and there is no searching of His reason why He does this or why He permits that. My beloved friends, God is great, infinite in majesty and glory and understanding. He has wisdom, He is understanding. There is no searching of His reason why this is and why that is. His dealings with us in providence, in grace, in judgement are matter not for reason but for faith. He will have full credence given to Him by His afflicted people and faith brings a sinner to say - "We are the clay, Thou our potter." and a great thing it is to say it. We, bits of clay. pieces of sin and pieces of hell as Rutherford says. We are to come to this, and the Spirit brings us to it. We are the clay and God the Potter. Then comes the text - "He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength."

The word faint is weary. We are in trouble, unable to wrestle with it, tired out; tired of the affliction; stroke on stroke has wearied us; difficulties have wearied us; made us faint, like Gideon and his three hundred men pursuing the enemy. They did so, though they were faint. Though faint they pursued. Weary, that is to say - hardly able to move forward, yet they went on. Affliction does weary people, like the waters that wear the stones. Affliction wears out the strength. Wears out patience. Exhausts endurance and brings the creature as it were to lie in the dust, unable to go any further. Faint in the conflict with infidelity. Infidelity that says - There is no God, or says to you, there is no help in God for you. That says He has just left you for the enemy to play with; left you to this dreadful spirit, this infidel spirit - There is no help in God. They were weary of it. You may be saying - If I had but a grain of faith I should be able to hold on. If I could but reach God in and by faith, I could hold on but here I am, just a subject of an unbelieving, that is an infidel nature and how am I to hold on. Faith in the conflict with innumerable sins; sins, which the Apostle Paul likens to a law in the members. A law warring. Not silent; not merely a principal more or less silent, of sin in the nature, but sin like a law running, and this wearies you. O some of you may be weary of fighting against a particular sin. Pride, vanity, worldliness, lust, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and you have been in it so long and have made no headway as it seems. You may be saying my nature is as bad, if not worse than when I started and I am worn out in and with the conflict. Faint, because I do not receive answers from God. I cry and He shutteth out my prayer. The Comforter which should relieve my soul is far from me, and my heart is faint within me. The Comforter has gone and this makes a painful weariness in the soul. Faint. Weary because, when I would do good, evil is present with me, and how to perform that which is good I find not. Weary because when I try to lay my case ^{out} before the Lord, there is no sensible entrance and it does seem as if He shuts out my prayer. Weary because the affliction grows worse and more difficult to bare and I do not know how to hold on or how to

approach the Almighty. His hand is heavy upon me, and weary because of the advantage the enemy takes of my weakness. He has broken down the hedge that was about me. Now the wild boar and the beast come out of the wood and the forest and trample on my soul and I am utterly faint and weary with all this. Faith weak, and unbelief strong. Confidence in God worn out nearly. Confidence in waiting on Him, believing that He will answer prayer; the prayer of the needy, and He seems to take no notice of my prayers when I cry and shout. I feel like the prophet - He shutteth out my prayer. You must fill in for yourselves, that is to say there are many particulars here upon which one need not enlarge. You know them for yourselves. You have got them in your hearts. May have them in your families; may have them in your business. There are difficulties, afflictions and sorrows and all of these combined cause a sinner to faint and to say - Woe is me, woe is me, for I dwell in the tents of Meshech. I am black. I am withered. I am like a bottle in the smoke, dried and withered - cracked and can hold no more.

Now this is the gracious word of God - He giveth power to that person. He giveth power to the faint. O, but you may be ready to say, I am not conscious of that. Do you never find your soul sweetly, at least powerfully moved as it were to begin praying again. "Yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple." As if in a moment, or ever you are aware of it you find yourself praying again; taking the matter up again and presenting it again to the Lord. Faith reaches God when new power is given; faith reaches God. Unbelief reaches circumstances; reaches sin in the soul. Faith, without saying that they do not exist, faith never contradicts providence; faith never says things are not, which are, but faith goes with them; does not leave them behind but goes with them to the Lord. Perhaps some of you have very recently, if not even now had a new start, as if the Lord has come to you and given you a fresh movement, an impetus in your spirit and you have said - I will arise, I will try again, I will bring this case again before the Lord, He may look upon me. He may take notice of my troubles. "Can prayer" Hart says, speaking of Hezekiah and his affliction, "can prayer reverse the stern decree, and save a wretch condemned like

me, it may at least ^{ill} try." and this trying comes from new power, fresh touches, sweet influences by the Holy Spirit, He gives power to believe. O when you can believe in God. When you can believe that His hand is on you, that no chance has happened; that this serious affliction which has come to you has come from Him ; when you can believe that He can make no mistake, that He is infinitely wise; that His own council and will, guide in everything that befalls you; when you can believe that He is full of kindness, as well as of wisdom and good, although His dealings seem not to be good. Then you have some real power, moving, assisting and helping you. "He giveth power to the faint." Do notice it dear friends, when your faith reaches God. It is a great help. Contingency has no place in God. Contingency does not belong to providence. The tangle that may have got into your circumstances, contingency has nothing to do with them, and faith, I again say reaches God, and the power given to the faint is again exercised in a fresh application to Him. There were stages in the movements of the Syrophenician woman when she came to the Lord with her daughter about that poor girl - my daughter is grievously tormented of the devil. That was her complaint. Then the next stage was when the Lord seemed to take no notice of her - she cried - "Lord help me." When you can get as far as that, it is a good step. A really good step. Lord help me. I am faint. I am weary. I am tired, mind and body and spirit, I am tired. Wilt Thou look on my case and help me. Prayer when moved in the soul, inspired, I may say indeed by the Holy Spirit, rises and enters into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Sometimes a sinner is made very blessedly conscious that his prayers do enter into the ear of God. Sometimes it is otherwise, and the sinner says - He shuts out my prayer. Then faith moves and says to the Lord- "Bow down Thine ear and hear me. Hear my breathing in my prayer. There is prayer sometimes without much breathing, but when the Holy Spirit moves and you are burdened and cast down, there is a real crying to God - Hear my breathing in my prayer. Lord listen to me. Cast me not away from Thy presence. Shut not Thine eyes to my petitions, and my coming before Thee, as burdened. "He giveth power." A great thing it is to have power with God. Jacob had power with God and prevailed, and if

you get hold of God by prayer, you will get what you want. The day may seem long that you have to wait for it but if you have got hold of God by prayer you will get what you want. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is heaven, give good things to them that ask Him." Prayer when moved by a fresh supply of power, is like the importunate man, who would take no denial. He wanted loaves and he must have them, and he got them. He was importunate. If you can let matters go easily, there is not much to be said for your prayers, except that they are more like death than life, but if you get hold of God, there will be an energy in your spirit, a real laying hold of the promise, and of God in it, so as that you again and again say "Attend unto me O Lord." "O Lord hear." "O Lord hearken and do, and defer not." "Bow down Thine ear." "Pluck Thy hand out of Thy bosom, even Thy right-hand, and come and save me."

He giveth power to hope. Hope is very ready to die when faith is weak. When prayer is all but gone, then hope finds it very difficult to hold on. It is not easy, to cast the anchor of hope, into that which is within the vale, when the vale, is as it were away from your view, and you do not see how you can be accepted of God. When your afflictions say, He takes no notice of you. When your infidelity hardens your heart against Him. When your wandering mind says there is nothing to wait for. Then hope, as it were dies. But God gives power to a dying hope. He did so to the Psalmist as the Psalmist records his case in the Psalms. "Why art thou cast down O my soul. Why art thou disquieted within me." He looked at his circumstances. Everything seemed wrong; upside down, and he was disquieted and distressed, but now hope springs again into exercise, and says in his heart—"I shall yet praise Him. I am troubled now, but I shall yet praise Him. He is the health of my countenance and my God, therefore hope in Him. Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plentiful redemption. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning, I say, more than they that watch for the morning." Hope in God.

Why? He is the same yesterday, when you saw Him by faith, and believed Him. He is the same to-day. No change in His will, in His purpose. No alteration of His council. He is just the same Eteral God. The same for ever. Therefore though we be shaken, He is the same. His faithfulness reaches the heavens.

He giveth power to love. Love waxes cold. First love has been left, and the little love that remains has got very cold, and you feel it. The saints feel it, feel the change, and say like Job- "O that it were with me, as in days that are past. O that I felt now, as I used to feel, when I felt after God, and God was not far from me. When His council was sweet. When His light shined into my heart. O that I were now as then. Now when some fresh power comes, it comes from the God of love. It comes from the grace of Christ, and new love, as it were, rises in your soul, and that is the love that waxed cold, now rises in a new warmth of exercise; rises in new energy, calling upon the name of the Lord. God gives power, and so I may say He gives power to the faint to pursue; to follow on. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going is prepared as the morning. He has fixed the time of shining again, as the hour of the rising of the sun is fixed, so is the hour when He will arise, and shine upon the soul is fixed. His going is prepared. Everything is in the covenant, Every blessing is there, and is prepared according to the time that God has ordained to come and bless you. Now, faith receiving this, gets new energy and begins to pursue afresh. My soul, you say to Him in prayer, followeth hard after Thee, as if you say - Lord I cannot let Thee go. I am a vile, unbelieving creature, but I cannot let Thee go. There is a pursueing after Christ, after His righteousness and His holiness, and His wisdom, and His redemption; after His appearing afresh to you. You want Him, so you pursue.

He giveth power to the faint, and that sense of weariness that you had in your spirit, it may be, had for a longtime, departs. New energy fills your whole spirit. You are like another person so to speak, seeking after, and feeling you can never be content until, you not only find Him, but embrace Him, and clasp Him in the arms of your faith, the antidote of death.

All deaths are swallowed up in this death. I am the life. Christ is the life of His people. Christ is the energy of their faith. Christ is the brightness of their hope. Christ is the warmth of their love. Christ is the object of their search, and so, when new power is given, there is this following on. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord. After two days He will revive us and the third day we shall rise again. He does it. He giveth power to the faint.

The means, of this giving power is by the Spirit of Christ. He is the Spirit of power. He raised Christ from the dead, and the power of that resurrection is imparted to the soul, and as Paul expresses it so beautifully in the Ephesians- that power that raised Christ from the dead and set Him on high, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come, That same power in a measure is given, when the Lord gives power to the faint, and when you feel this power, you are raised up in ^a measure, you have dominion over unbelief, and carnal reasonings, and you have power to say - I will wait for the Lord who hideth Himself from the house of Israel. Power in this case, is nothing less than the omnipotent grace of Christ, coming from the glorious Person of Christ, administered by the Holy Spirit as the spirit of Christ. May the Holy Ghost give this power to those of us who are faint. Faint-hearted. Faint under trouble. Weary of discipline. Weary of affliction. Almost unable to hold on. Ready to say 'I shall rise no more.' May the Lord grant we may have this. He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might," no strength left, "He increaseth strength." A seeming contradiction this. When their strength is gone He comes to help them. When they have no strength to hold out. No strength to hold fast to Him, He gives strength from His fulness.

What strength is this? Christ's. He is the strength of God, and every new feeling and motion of the soul, that has been lying down like a prey to the enemy is from Christ. An increase, a new manifestation. An impartation of strength by Christ. You may lay your body as the ground

as the street that men may go over, that is, you may be lying down in a feeling of utter helplessness and the devil, and unbelief and carnal reason may, like men, like enemies, by trampling upon you as you trample on the street when you walk. Now says God, I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand. Thou shall tremble no more in this way. I will put to rout thy enemies, and the might that I have, shall be in you. The strength that I am, I will give to you, in measure to enable you to pursue. Even the youths shall faint and the young men shall utterly fall. Their human strength shall avail them nothing, but thou shalt run and not be weary, and thou shalt walk and not faint. Now may this beautiful chapter take hold of us, and if it does in the Spirit's power, we shall know, what it is to rise up to God, and lay hold of His strength, and leave all matters of perplexity, and affliction, and trouble, and seeming contradiction, with Him, with whom is no weariness, no fainting and whose understanding is infinite.
