

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 6 February 1927

Jeremiah 17 verses 7 and 8

Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord,
and whose hope the Lord is, for he shall
be as a tree planted by the waters, and
that spreadeth out her roots by the river,
and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf
shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year
of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit

The chapter opens very solemnly and if we have any experience of such dealings of God it will be a mercy for us. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars." Not pictures to look at, but solemn experiences felt, written on the table of the heart with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond. Distinctness, distinctness of conviction that we know sin, not because we hear about it, nor only because we have read the Scriptures about it, but because the Holy Ghost has come and has, with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond, cutting into the tables of our hearts, not writing with a bit of lead on a tablet that you can wash out at once, but written, engraved upon the table of the heart. It is one thing to read the ten commandments; it is another for the ten commandments to be read to us by the Holy Ghost. Well it may sound a dreadful thing, but better to have all your dreadful sounds and feelings here than to enter into hell to hear and feel through an endless eternity of punishment.

God speaks then concerning a man who trusts in man, makes flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the living God. He knows in whom our trust is. If you trust yourself, if you think that you wont commit that sin again of which you have some

conviction; if you think you will be more careful for the future; if you think you will watch your mind and your thoughts and keep your tongue, your trust is in an arm of flesh and the Scripture says you are a cursed person, and your condition is to be like the heath in the desert where there is no rain, no fruitfulness. "He shall not see when good cometh (when there is some good thing it shall not be good to you) but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness in a salt land not inhabited". The contrast is very beautiful, may we be in it. "Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is." And what this man shall be, what he shall experience, we are told in the text. "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Let us, as enabled, look at the man who trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is, and in the first place let us notice the ground of his trust; secondly, how he comes to trust in the Lord. First the ground of trust in the Lord. If we know and feel that we are sinners, if we have some true appreciation of the righteous character of God, we shall see and feel that as we stand before Him in that character of His, there is no ground for trust, only ground for apprehension of wrath, of curse. God is as immutable in His righteousness as He is in His mercy; immutable in His righteousness as that righteousness is manifested in His law. But there is a ground, thanks be to God, there is a ground of hope for trust in Him, and that ground is the Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect obedience, His vicarious death, burial and resurrection. This is the ground for gospel trust; there the sinner is led to see that all his unrighteousnesses were removed and the righteousness of God in Christ is imputed; to see that God is propitious in His Son; that He will never turn away His face from His beloved Son, and so when a sinner comes to Him through His Son, He is propitious. And this is the ground for trust; no other ground. All other ground is just mire and mud, into which, if a person sinks, after death he will never come ^{out} of it. My dear friends, we are lost in two ways.

First in Adam. He fell and we fell in him. He transgressed and his sin is imputed by a righteous God who constituted him our head. We are lost in the second place in and by our own personal transgressions. We have gone astray from our birth, speaking lies; we have a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; we cannot fathom it. And out of this heart come murders, adulteries, thefts, hatred of God and every evil thing. Out of the heart proceed these evils, so by our own sins we deserve the anger of God throughout eternity. But He sent His beloved Son; that beloved Son took into union with Himself our nature without sin. God imputed to the Man Christ Jesus the sins of the Church. Jesus went to the end of the law in a perfect obedience to it; He received its curse, so as Paul says "Christ was made a curse for us", as it is written "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree". That obedience, that death, the Lord looks on, receives and is satisfied with, and no sinner standing in the merit of that obedience and that death shall come into condemnation. This is the ground, beware of any other ground. If you stand on any other ground you are ruined for ever and ever. If you stand on this no shock of temptation, no sin in nature, no storm of affliction shall move you, for you shall be as a tree planted by the waters. Whatever we do, God give us grace to be very careful about the ground of our trust. Many are deceived doubtless if, as they think and say, they do their best, God is too merciful to be hard on them; if they are sincere He will accept sincerity in place of perfection, of doing. Nothing more deceptive out of hell exists; nothing more deceptive in the mind of any person exists than that. Sincerity in the place of perfection that will never do. Paul, when a persecutor, was a sincere man. When he would not lie, he said, I verily thought that I ought to do such things.

In the second place, how do people come to put their trust in the Lord? A very important question. They come to life by death; they come to put their trust in the Lord first by an entire distrust of themselves. You find this in the Apostle's case where he tells us that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a pharisee; that he attained to great height and length in

religion; that he was zealous of the religion of his fathers, but that now, since the Lord had taught him, he had come to renounce all that; he esteemed all that to be loss and dung and dross; he was killed to himself, to his own righteousness; it was as if he had now nothing hanging on him but filthy rags, like Joshua, as we are told. He had come to see that what was his boast as a pharisee, as a Hebrew, as an abider by the law, was nothing more than dung hanging about him, loathsome, and so he was brought off from trusing in an arm of flesh. When God's perfect law comes like a plummet and is put to a man, the man finds himself entirely wrong. He is deflected in every particular and the straight plummet shows him that it is so. Holy commandments coming to an unholy, disobedient sinner, convince him of his sins. Divine light shining into a dark heart discovers the darkness and the evils that have existed unknown in that heart. Then the sinner cannot trust in himself. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" says Solomon, and that is true. But when in this condition a sinner receives the light of the gospel, the glorious gospel, then he sees that outside himself there is one to whom he may go and in whom he may trust, even Jesus Christ. This, the Apostle speaks of thus - "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." O what a gospel! "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face (or person) of Jesus Christ." Now this manifestation of Christ, whenever it is made, has a sweet, a powerful, effect of enabling, of causing the person who receives it to put his whole trust in Christ. As it were he quits, he abandons himself, leaves himself, denies himself, loses his life and finds it, and himself, in another, even Jesus Christ, who delivered him from the wrath to come. So his trust is in the Lord. Here he perceives righteousness and truth, mercy and peace, meeting. Here he perceives and feels God teaching him how to put his trust in a living Saviour. The blood of Christ becomes his plea and his confidence. The righteousness of Christ becomes His justification and strength. The Person of Christ becomes his hope and his refuge from all evil. The High Priesthood of Christ becomes his way of access to the Father.

The sacrifice of Christ is his plea before God and his confidence. Is this the case with us? Has God in His infinite goodness done this great thing for us, taken us off ourselves and put us on this Rock of Ages? If so, we are blessed people.

Now what do we trust for? Trust is not a naked, barren idea in the mind; it is a living act of faith with particular respects; a living act of faith with the particular respect of pardon; with particular respect of justification; the particular respect of acceptance with God, a standing with Him, a standing complete in Christ as it is said - "Ye are complete in Him". There is an aim in faith. Faith is an eye that has before it an object. This is much to be observed. Can we sing, have we not sung many times

Nothing but Thy blood O Jesus,
Can relieve us from our smart,
Nothing else from guilt release us,
Nothing else can melt the heart

That is what I mean by faith having a particular respect; respect to God, respect to what He may do, what He is able to do, and what we believe He does, forgive us all our trespasses. Not once only, but constantly are we needing this. "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Blessed is the man who trusts in Christ for pardon. He waits for it. A waiting sinner, that is a sinner who waits on God for the forgiveness of His sins, pleading the blood of Christ, is inside one great word spoken in Isaiah. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me". God will never, never let a sinner who waits for Him in respect of the blood of Christ, pleading for forgiveness, die unsatisfied, unanswered. It is one of the most amazing things that a sinner before God confessing his innumerable sins and the intolerable guilt of them and his own desperate condition as a breaker of God's law, that that sinner, while thus engaged in confessing and in pleading the blood of Christ, should get, on a day, an hour, never to be forgotten, the forgiveness of his sins by the inshining of God's grace, by the witness of His good

Spirit, by the purging of guilt from his defiled, burdened, conscience. O what a great thing it is to be forgiven! Think of it. Yea, every convinced sinner wants this; "forgiveness 'tis a joyful sound" The Psalmist waited for it, as in that blessed 130th Psalm he tells us - "My soul waiteth for God more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning" And what was it that he had respect to in that Psalm? His condition. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee". His request, what was that? That God would forgive his sins, and the blood of Christ was before him. "With Thee there is forgiveness that Thou mayest be feared and with Thee is plenteous redemption". It was that that kept him waiting. If you have no faith in the blood of Christ you wont wait for forgiveness. People don't wait for that they don't believe in. If you have no faith in Christ's blood I can tell you that you are not a person waiting for forgiveness, but if you have faith in the blood of Christ, however deep your convictions may be, however burdened your conscience may be, however ready to give up you may often be, still you will wait for forgiveness. This is a great respect that faith has; a distinct and direct point that faith has to the blood of Jesus Christ, and this is evident from what the Apostle John says "My little children these things I write unto you that ye sin not". That is, the effect of what he had written in the first chapter of that Epistle, was to keep those who received what he had written, from sinning, from sinning wilfully, persistently, but if any man sin, if a man fall, if he should turn aside and commit sin, then says the Apostle "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ". "And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin." Has your faith this in it? Do you look to, have you a particular respect when you go to God, to the blood of Jesus Christ? If you have, blessed are you. No other trust will intrude so long as your eye is fixed on the atonement of the Saviour. He made atonement. One particular provision under the Levitical dispensation is a great thing and has been a great deal to me, that is the atonement for the sin of our holy things, an atonement for the sin of ignorance. Think of it. How many things we do in ignorance, how much defilement there is in our best things, our

holy things. Can you sit here for the service and have no sin? Is there never a wrong thought in your mind? Is there never a wrong look? Is there never any unbelief? What sin we may commit in this chapel; how a man may fall from the pulpit into sin and how a sinner hearing may fall into sin, a child of God. Yet says the Lord there is an atonement for the sin of our holy things. Now faith will look straight to the blood of Christ sometimes. Yes, no excuses stand. Of all the things God will empty you of from time to time this will be very prominent, no excuses. I have none; you will have none. Blessed is the man who, not excusing himself, but accusing himself, before the Lord should have faith to go with a very particular respect to the blood of Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth from all sin. This brings peace; this brings peace; peace which is called the "peace that passeth all understanding." You will never be able to understand while you experience it how a holy, good, gracious God, can forgive such sins as you have committed, and embrace in the arms of His love, such a person as you find yourself to be.

And the second particular respect that faith has to Christ when there is this trust of our text is to His person. Our righteousnesses are called filthy rags. We are told that Joshua stood before the Lord clothed in filthy garments. God said I will declare unto you your works and your righteousness that they shall not profit you. Now these things written in the Scripture are also written on the heart, the fleshy tables of the heart, and then when it pleases the Eternal Spirit, whose office it is, and whose delight it is, to glorify Christ, to take of His righteousness and show it to a sinner, then his faith has a particular respect to that. So Paul tells us "That I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith". And again, he says "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth". The end of the law there is the perfect satisfaction Christ rendered to the law so that all sinners for whom He rendered that perfect satisfaction are accepted, and His perfect obedience is imputed to them for

righteousness. Then when their faith goes out to that righteousness, there is trust in the Lord. A man comes to this by the teaching of the Spirit. He comes to trust the righteousness of Christ alone. He says, I have none of my own. If I die without such a righteousness as God can accept and be pleased with, I am lost and must be in hell for ever. But his faith has showed to it this perfect robe, this beautiful righteousness, seamless and spotless. Ah, and his faith sometimes enables him to say

Bold shall I stand in that great day
For who ought to my charge shall lay

Ah sinner, God will reckon you righteous through the righteousness of His Son. There will be your trust for time and for Eternity, in that revealed and opened righteousness. The Spirit will explain that it is sufficient; sufficient for God; sufficient for you. It is sufficient for the sinner if it is sufficient for God. Has not the Spirit laid this as a divine principle in the conscience of some here, namely, that God can never accept anything that is not perfect. If He has, as blessed be His Name we believe He has, then we can see that He can never be pleased with a person, a sinner, who is not perfect. But how can a sinner be perfect in this life? Only in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. He remains a sinner still, but he does not sin wilfully. But that which is righteousness is what Christ wrought out. Christ did it, the Spirit shows it, faith receives it and relies on it. Is that so? Has your faith O believer, a particular respect to this righteousness? If so, go home, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and be no more sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Faith has still another respect to Christ, namely, this, that His grace shall be sufficient for the sinner all through his pilgrimage; for the soldier all through his warfare; for the servant in all his service; for the sufferer in all his sufferings. "Grace 'tis a charming sound" Are we pilgrims? If

so, we are in a land, a wilderness, a land that has in it no natural sustenance, no living water; many dangers, much weariness. How shall we get through? How shall we endure? Israel's weaknesses, turning aside, unbelief, rebellion, are all reproduced in us. We have not their literal things; we have their spirit, even as we have a pilgrimage. How were they sustained? How did they get through? Manna rained from heaven fed them; water from the flinty rock, smitten, gave them refreshment. A pillar of cloud by day covered them and a pillar of fire by night protected them. Divine mercy was with them; divine power sustained them. Their shoes waxed not old, their clothes did not wear out. That is a type of our pilgrimage. And how are we sustained? "My grace is sufficient for thee". My grace shall help you to say "Thy will be done", shall help you to say - "I have an object before me, a land of promise. Your pilgrimage is a short one; your pilgrimage may be heavy but it is certain as to the issue. Faith does look here; your faith will look here, O child of God. Grace, grace, grace to reign; grace to pardon; grace to sustain; grace to comfort; grace to assure and grace to set the end before you. "There is an end and thine expectation shall not be cut off".

Now look at this, there is a distinctness in it. It is not a rambling of mind, a thought, there is a distinctness in it. Faith goes to God. I might say that the beginning and the end of vital religion is contact with God. Contact with God is by faith, faith that is created by the Holy Ghost, that stands and moves and acts, fights and cleaves and follows in the power of the Holy Ghost.

One more word in conclusion, the next respect, particular respect, that faith has in looking to Christ is for perseverance.

Perseverance in our race
We draw from Jesus blood

The covenant of grace ensures perseverance, but the idea of that is not a power, the naked belief of that is not a power, but when

faith rises up to, and exercises on, God, in respect of getting to the end, then there is a looking for perseverance

Lord hast Thou made me know Thy ways
Conduct me in Thy fear
And grant me such supplies of grace
That I may persevere

Let but Thine own almighty arm
Sustain a feeble worm
I shall escape secure from harm
Amid the dreadful storm

What a disappointment it would be to some here if they missed, but we believe we shall not miss. We believe, as the Apostle Paul says, we believe we shall be saved even as they, even as Paul and the Apostles and the prophets and all the saints of the Most High. We believe we shall be held on and brought honourably to our grave. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord" in these particular respects. Do not think that faith is an aimless grace, a general notion of divine things; it is a special grace, called the faith of God's operation, the faith of God's elect, precious faith. These are the terms used to set it forth and the trial of it is said to be more precious than of gold that perisheth. This faith eyes the Saviour, goes out to Him. This faith is not daunted by a sight and sense of indwelling sin, is not baulked by the temptations of the devil, and is not crushed out of existence by all the trials that may come. It is a living faith in a living God and brings a living God and a poor and guilty sinner into a blessed contact, into a living union. This is the blessing of a man who trusts in the Lord, that he is in God's favour, under God's guidance, and in the Covenant of Grace, which is ordered in all things and sure. How many of you have got this blessing? Search and try yourselves; examine yourselves; see if you have got this blessing, the blessing of faith, that faith that wont be put off, that will cause you to say whenever any particular time of help comes, such as Jacob had, to say to God - "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me" and

then the gracious return that Jacob got, you will get. "He blessed him there", gave him an answer, said to him "What is thy name?" Jacob. "It shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man and hast prevailed." The Lord give us this faith to look to Him, to look to His power, and wait for His coming to us, that we may answer to that description of a good man - "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters."

AMEN.