

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel,  
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Job Chapter 23 verse 3

"O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might  
come even to His seat"

This is the language of a much tried child of God, upon whom the hand of God was laid, and whose case was entirely misunderstood by his friends. They misunderstood Job because they did not know God. They misunderstood God's character and His dealings with men. They thought that no upright man could suffer and that Job was, therefore, a hypocrite. They taunted him and oppressed him, and opening this chapter he says "Even today is my complaint bitter. I have to complain respecting these friends, and I complain respecting my affliction and especially I complain because I cannot get near God. My stroke, that is the stroke of God's hand, is heavier than my groaning. That is to say, my groaning cannot fully express the inward trial of my mind and also the sore condition of my body. He sought relief; that is what every afflicted child of God does. He needs relief. The Holy Spirit teaches him that relief can come from no source but one, that is God. The more the Spirit teaches us, the more we are led into that truth that there is relief nowhere in this world, in no creature, but only in God. This fixed the mind of Job; it fixes your minds who fear God. O that, passing all creatures, I might find Him; that I might come even to His seat. Faith knows that there is balm in Gilead, a good, never failing physician there. She knows that the name of the Lord is in Jerusalem, which is above, and that His throne is there, and seeks wisdom to find the way to the city, to reach that blessed throne. This exclamation, "O that I knew where I might find Him" sets before us the urgency of Job's spirit. He could be content nowhere but in the presence of God. That is what the people of God find when they have Him not, when they go forward and He is not there working with them, go backward and cannot see their signs, and their tokens; on the left hand where He doth work, and on the right hand He hideth Himself. Then there is this point, real religion has this point, God. If I can find God, all will be well. There is an urgency in this. If you who know the Lord are in this condition, distressed, and cannot get near Him to pour out your heart before Him and receive some healing from Him, then

you are discontent, troubled, and moved by fervent desire. You read, or it may come to your heart or memory "O that I knew where I might find God, that I might come to His seat, that I might find that the Lord Jesus does still receive sinners and eat with them. O that I might find that relief to my soul, that support under my trouble, that healing balm, which He has, applied to every sore of my soul." Is this description true of some of you, of your cases? You want God. There is nothing here, nothing in your circumstances, nothing in your positions as members of churches, nothing in providence that can be a substitute for God. You know I am speaking the truth. Nothing can take His place, nothing can fill the soul with satisfaction. He is the desire of all nations. God does remove from us the supports which we covet in this life, in providence, in friends, that we may just come to this, entirely dependent on Himself. And seeing in the gospel the great remedy for a sinner, then the desire is quickened, and strengthened and made very urgent "O that I could find God, then I would pour out my heart before Him." There is betimes, such a longing for God that it makes the person who has it understand the language of the Psalmist "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God. My soul thirsteth for God, as a thirsty land, when shall I come and appear before God". There is dear friends such an experience as being near to God. "A people near unto Me" is His word. Experimentally, it is understood by those who get this rich experience. The Spirit of Christ guides. He shall glorify Me, He shall guide you into all truth. He shall guide you unto the city; He shall guide you to the throne of grace; He shall show you that perfect offering of Myself, whereby I put away sin; He shall show you that I am the New and Living Way, and then He shall speak to you in the exhortation "Come boldly unto the throne of grace, that ye may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

"That I might find Him" No description just at the moment, is given by Job of Him. There is but one Him in the universe to the people of God, only one Him. If we never find Him we shall never reach heaven, but if we find Him, we shall find in Him all that we need. There are striking, and beautiful spiritual descriptions of Him in HolyScripture, and there is a glass in which He is seen. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord". The glory of Christ is seeable, knowable, and He is seen, and He is known. "We know that the Son of God is come, and

hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, this is the true God and Eternal Life" When He is found, then all is straight before the soul; a straight way to the city, to the city that God has builded; a straight way through tribulation. Not straight to reason, not pleasant to experience, but straight to faith.

"I would come before Him" Crooked things are straight to faith. rough places are plain to faith, and seeing Him the soul says "O if I could but approach Him" What a mercy it is to believe that He is approachable; that the vilest sinner out of hell may come to Him, nay more, He draws His people. "And I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" Now this first point then is of infinite importance to a living child of God. Job could see a straight way out of his trouble. "I would order my cause before Him" You may become silent to your friends, you may feel that you have none into whose ear you can pour your complaint, but God. Certainly none to whom you can fully express your case, but if you see that there is a new and living way to God, by which He can be approached, then Job's cry will be yours, when you are not experiencing that presence.

X "That I might come even to His seat" There is a seat. In scripture it is called the mercy seat, it is called the throne of grace. God said to Moses respecting the mercy seat "I will meet with you there" Respecting the throne of grace, the Apostle, by divine inspiration, says "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." This blessed throne, this divine seat, we have in the scriptures and every child of God has some manifestation of it to himself by the Holy Spirit; the suitableness of it, the approachableness of it, the blessedness of being there. God is there; mercy in its fulness, justice in its glory, power in the Lord Jesus to forgive sin, and support a sinner. At that seat, men of God see all these things.

"O that I knew where I might find Him". Did not Job know? Yes he knew God's gracious power supporting his faith when all the disasters came to him which are recorded in the first and second chapters of this book. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord" In all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly. He knew God, had been near God, but now he was not near nor did he appear to know the way to Him or where

God was. Where may I find Him? O that I knew where I might find God. This tells us that a child of God may lose the sweet powerful sense of being near to God. He may enjoy the presence of God one day, and he may have such liberty as to tell his friends about that experience, and another day he is so dark and distant from God that he wishes he had not spoken about Him, and his inward cry is "O that I could find God" Let me say again to you what I said a minute or two ago, there is no substitute for God, to a child of God. Were it possible to put the whole world into his hands, and his pockets, he would say "These are not my God" No food for a living soul in the world, no support under trouble in the world, but both food and support are in God, in Christ. So this then becomes a real cry. But may He be found? Where is He? He may be found. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found" Where is He? Often, in a pavilion of darkness; dark providences, dark exercises of mind, the presence of sin, unspeakable corruptions of nature. God may be in a pavilion of darkness in dealing with one whose sorrow is chiefly for sin, after the sorrow after an absent God. Where is He? On this blessed throne. He says "Come boldly to it" This is not the throne of justice, pure justice alone, it is called the throne of grace, because grace, and pure grace, grace in the Father, grace in the Son, grace in the Holy Ghost, grace in Jehovah is there. This is the throne, this is the place where He may be found.

O, our ignorance is very great and though we may have often found Him, yet when we come into dark places again, then it is as if we had no wisdom to come to the city, no wisdom to get to the throne, just dark creatures. This tells us that we need, at every step, and every turn, the Holy Spirit to prompt us when, and how to pray, where to go, on whom to cast our burden. The Spirit of Christ is in the soul, making it His temple, but when He is vexed, then He goes away as to His operations and there is no wisdom left. The wisdom of the world cannot come in here. "After that the world by wisdom knew not God" "God, by the foolishness of preaching," saves believers. God takes advantage of His designed purpose and accomplishment of His purpose to make men fools in their own judgement, so that they gladly follow, when they receive them, the leadings of the Holy Ghost. When you are led by the Divine Spirit to the Lord Jesus, you say "I have found Him whom My soul loveth" I was very blind, I should have remembered how the Lord dealt with me in the past, but I was very blind, and my memory was like a

leaking vessel, a sieve, letting go through it everything I had got, and I do need the Lord to cause me to remember how I have heard and received. To find God is to find the pearl of great price. It is to see the gates of the city, each gate of one pearl. It is to see that the gates are open night and day for there is no night there. It is to see that faith has a warrant to seek the Lord, a warrant to go and knock at the door that seems closed, a warrant to plead and argue with the Lord. Faith is a great grace. Now Job had this faith. It was the faith that believed God was findable. That may not seem much to some people, but it is a great thing to believe that God may be found, may be found by the worst of sinners, may be found by empty people, found by people who are covered with sores, whose sore runs in the night, and ceases not. People who know that they behave foolishly without Him, and are only wise as He is pleased to give them wisdom. Ah God will be sought unto. This is a truth that is deeply impressed on the heart by the Holy Spirit.

We need Him for everything that is good. Job needed Him to be the physician. O that He would come and heal me. He needed the fulfilment of the scripture, "I am the Lord that healeth thee" Sick sinners, there is balm in Gilead, there is a physician there. He never fails to heal diseases when He takes them in hand. Typical of His spiritual mercy and efficacy was Christ's going about doing good and healing all that had need of healing. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick, and sick souls are led by the Holy Spirit to seek the good the never failing physician.

"That I may come" He permits it, yea more He brings the soul to this seat, this mercy seat. He will bring His people, not only with respect to their souls, and their healing, and their salvation, and their establishment, and their final and blessed end, dying in the Lord, but He will cause them to seek Him for everything that they have, to try them in this life. Yes, you will find this, who fear God, you will be wanting Him either to take a burden off, or support you under it. One of these two things when you find God, you will be after. You will be saying to Him, I do not know how to bear this burden, if Thou wilt not remove it, do sustain me under it, keep me from rebelling against it, help me to say "Thy will be done" A good place, a safe place. A good experience issues, when either the burden is taken off, or the most comfortable sense of being supported is conveyed to you; when you can lie down in the Will of God. Rutherford says "The will of God is a bed in a fire." You could lie down

when you are under a fiery trial or when you are nearly crushed by a burden. O, one says "I did find Him once, I was near Him once, O that I might come again" The tempter says, "You forfeited this mercy" Conscience says "Yes I have" but the seat I would be at is the throne of grace, the mercy seat, where the Lord proclaims Himself thus "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" Then there is a plea, no self justification, but full confession, with the earnest desire for God's favour, for the voice from the mercy seat, the law covered, the incense covering and protecting you when you enter into the holy presence of the Lord God.

"O that I knew where I might find Him, and come even to His seat with this providential straightness that has come to me" We have in some ways (God has ordained these ways) to prove that "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live". He has enough. You may be saying "If such and such a providence occurs, what shall I do? Where will supplies come from?" He says, "If I were hungry I would not tell thee, the cattle on a thousand hills are mine, the gold and the silver are mine" and you may in your experience just have come to this. "This God I look to, I would be near to Him with the hand of faith to receive what I need" and He might by His Spirit teach you this "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" There is relief at the throne of grace, relief in taking your needs there, when you get there, when you can pour your hearts out there, there is great relief. Faith may get into her hand a supply before you see it literally. Many and many a child of God has found that. Faith sees a sufficiency in God.

"O that I might find Him and come to His seat." Next, with respect to temptation. Temptation, more or less, we must expect. Could the tempter try Jesus: Could the tempter try a tree so good, so green?; good God defend the dry. The word of Christ has great importance and gravity "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." Bunyan, after his deliverance from that great temptation, in reflecting upon it, felt that he had neglected the Lord's direction to pray that he might not enter into temptation. It is good to be favoured with grace, and wisdom to follow Christ in that direction. Pray, ask the Lord to keep

you from temptation or if it please Him to let you into temptation, or lead you to it even as the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, then you may ask Him to grant that, when you are tempted, there may be no opportunity. It has been well said that if temptation, and inclination and opportunity meet, woe be to the person in whom they meet. Pray, that if God leads you into temptation, there may be no inclination and no opportunity. Grace will make us afraid of falling under temptation. Self-confidence led Peter into a sad experience of his weakness "I will go with Thee, I will die with Thee" The shock, if I may use the word, the tornado of temptation blew him over, blew him off his feet. Who knows what we should do in temptation unless preserved?

"O that I knew where I might find God" Ah it were a well spent day if we could spend a day in asking the Lord to keep us from temptation, or to preserve us in it. The tempter is beyond our power. His subtlety is beyond our knowledge. We need the Lord to keep us, we need Him to say in His great mercy, "He shall not shoot an arrow into this city" Blessed city, which is defended thus by the Lord.

"O that I could find God, to ask Him to be with me when He takes the pains to put me into a crucible, a fiery trial." A fiery trial lays hold of the dross, the scum rises. Well, we do need God to keep us seeking His face at such a time.

"That I might come even to His seat" What would you do? Well you would obey the Lord. In what? Pour out your heart before Him. You would do it. Trust in the Lord. Pour out your heart before Him. Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face evermore. Well what a mercy it is to be seeking God. A seeker, under the influence and guidance of the Holy Ghost, is sure to be a finder In the end of this wonderful book, God came to Job, spoke to Job, dealt solemnly with him by question. Then Job said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Well may the Lord keep us seeking Him. A congregation with a few seekers in it will be like having salt in it and the soul that seeks God has the salt of grace in it. Grace moving, drawing, attracting, driving the soul after God.

We may judge that God is driving us away from Him if we judge by some of His dealings with us. If we judge of God by what we see in general providence, we may get far from God and think that He is doing it. Asaph discovered his foolishness when the Lord took

him in hand, yea when mercifully the Lord took him into the temple. If you judge God by what you see in providence and by some of his dealings with you in your souls you will come to wrong conclusions concerning Him, but if you are enabled by faith to wait on Him, and ask Him to open the door to you, to cause the gate to be opened at which you are looking for Him, then you will find that the seeker is a finder eventually. May the Lord grant that we may not be strangers to this word, if we have not got God with us. "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat"

The verses following tell us how he would behave himself but I cannot enter into those now. The Lord grant His goodness to be with us.

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