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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 25 March 1934

LAMENTATIONS 3 v 25

"The Lord is good unto them that wait
for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him"

The Scripture says, absolutely, that God is good, which appears to be the same as saying God is love. His nature is good; therefore, as in another Scripture, it says, the Lord is good and doeth good. He cannot do other than good. His justice is good; whoever is smitten by it and everlastingly destroyed and punished, it is good. His threatenings are good and in their own nature calculated to alarm poor, sinful men, sinners of mankind. There is running through the whole Scripture, from the 3 chapter of Genesis and the 15 verse, to the 22 Revelation and the last verse, a mighty stream of goodness - Blessed are the eyes that see it; God gives the seeing eye - and that stream, flowing from the eternal goodness of God, the pure river of water of life, every soul blessed with a spiritual eye, sees. Strange it may seem that in the Lamentations - so pathetic, so solemn, expressing terrible judgments poured out on the favoured nation, to punish that nation for its idolatrous conduct, having commerce with other gods - that in this very book there is a sun lightening the dark day; that there should be in this 3 chapter, in which that sun shines, this wonderful word, "The Lord is good". In all the judgments that were poured upon the wicked nation of the Jews who broke the covenant God made with their fathers, God was good to them, and He had a remnant and that remnant He preserved and blessed. So in experience the people of God - woe unto them, each one would confess it - do turn from Him. Our sinful nature manifests itself, goes away from God. There is a kind of naturalness in it, a natural disposition to turn away from Him in whom we live and move and have our being, and also who has been gracious to us. And this, our misconduct, brings chastisement. There is no child of God of any standing in gracious experience, who does not know what that is. He chastens His children because they are His children. He chastens them because He loves them. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten".

They get into low dungeons, dark places, through the cruelty of the enemy, the devil, and in their dark, painful experiences, they cry unto God, and they say, hear my breathing, hear my cry. Whence that breathing, that cry? From a heart with some penitence in it; out of the low dungeon. Then God opens His ear, then He speaks to that person. He drew near, said Jeremiah; He drew near unto me and He said "Fear not".

This word "The Lord is good" expresses the whole of His merciful dealings with His children and they are expressed in the word following; they wait on Him; they wait for Him. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him".

First, what this attitude is; waiting. It is a wonderful thing, a waiting spirit is an expectant spirit; it expects something. A beggar at your door may just receive "No" and go away, not like the beggar in the case related of the old Scotch minister who, seeing him approach his door, sent his servant to say, "No", but the beggar would not go away. No, No, sent again, but the beggar would not go away. At last the minister went out. Why did not you go away? Well, said the man you helped me before. He had received something before and so he would not go away until he got something again. There is an expectancy in every soul that really waits on God. Waiting is praying. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning". Why? Because they believe in that Psalm "With the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption". A sight of that will keep you at the throne of grace. With Him is the plenteous redemption that I need. A waiting spirit is kept from fainting entirely. "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" On his dying bed Jacob said "I have waited for Thy salvation O Lord". This then is a most blessed attitude of a poor, sinful creature. Waiting has a view to the supply. If only a scant supply were seen, then waiting would be feeble and soon faint, but when an infinite supply is seen by faith, feeble though that faith may be, it will not go away. Ruth said to her mother in law, "Entreat me not to leave thee nor to return from following after thee" and she went with her mother in law. The importunate beggar at midnight was not to be put off with, I cannot rise and give thee, from the man

within. This importunate beggar had a friend come to him and he wanted to entertain him properly so he goes begging and he gets what he begged for. If you really see in Jesus Christ a supply adequate to your present need, depend upon it you wont go away from the throne of grace altogether. A delay may discourage you, but you wont faint. The devil may tempt you that you will never succeed but you will try again. Goodness in God attracts bad people when the eye of faith sees that there is something in God that can supply, that can sufficiently supply their felt need.

Have we got this waiting spirit in us? If so, the Lord should have our thanks for that. We owe Him thanksgiving if we have a waiting spirit. What is waited for? Just what the soul feels its need of; no more, no less. What is our need? It is the need that the soul feels for God. He wants God, God's religion, God's truth, God's love, the precious blood of Christ, the sweet, precious robe of righteousness, the Holy Ghost and His teaching. He wants divine guidance; he wants divine support. Wanting these things really, leads him to the throne of grace, and the Scripture invites him to it, though he feels to be the chief sinner, as you have it in that wonderful word in Hebrews: "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do". To realise that the eye of God is on your heart which is deceitful above all things and desparately wicked, is a very solemn thing. Nothing but what His eye sees. A bit of leaven in that corner, an idol in that cupboard, He sees. What then? You say, naturally, He will bid the wicked creature to depart. No. He says I have called One to be a High Priest and He knows your infirmities, and through Him I bid you, out of my goodness and mercy, to come boldly. O, how difficult this is to one who feels his sins, sees the enormity of them, feels the guilt of them. Come boldly, without hesitation, to the throne of grace. That is a great wonder, a mighty work of the Spirit. Come boldly. Here is the supply; the supply is in Jesus Christ. He has a two-fold fulness. First in the Man Chirst Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Faith, seeing that great One, worships and

adores Him. All that God is, the whole essence of Deity, dwelling in the Man, pure, holy Man, Jesus. What a sight! It strikes with awe the sinner who gets the view. To see that lowly, broken-hearted Man, full of reproach, maligned, of whom they said, He hath a devil and is mad; that He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber and a friend of sinners; to see Him possessing the whole of Deity. Every perfection, every attribute of Deity, that Man Jesus possesses. Therefore whatever is good in God is in Christ; whatever God is capable of doing Christ is capable of doing. O that fulness; if you get a sight of it for a minute or two, it will make an indellible mark on your heart, and you will say,

That Christ is God I can avouch

Therefore, O waiting soul, when the Lord fixes your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, He fixes your eyes on Almighty God. May we believe it; may we adore Him. May we get the sight that the man whose eyes Jesus had opened got, when the Lord found him excommunicated and said to him "Dost Thou believe on the Son of God." Who is He Lord that I might believe? Thou hast both seen Him and He it is that talketh with thee," and the man worshipped. That is what you will do if you get that sight. He worshipped.

And the second fulness that Christ possesses we are informed by John. The law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace. That second fulness is nothing less than everlasting salvation, everlasting love, everlasting faithfulness, everlasting forgiveness, everlasting righteousness; all in the Lord Jesus Christ. And a waiting sinner has this fulness set before him. Yes, there are moments when sin working distracts and confuses and the sinner wonders what will become of him. The Spirit comes to his sustenance and turns his eyes away from the sins on which they have been too exclusively fixed for the time, and turns them to this blessed Saviour of sinners and O what a change the sight effects. Is this fulness for me? May I draw from this? May I hope in this? May my soul be interested in this? May my empty vessel be filled out of this fulness? He waits for it; he looks for it, and there is a sweet expectation rising sometimes, and he looks with sweet hope for the

supply to come. "The Lord is good to them that wait for Him". Good in His purpose in this matter; good in the time for Him to supply the need of a waiting soul. "The Lord waiteth to be gracious". And when a waiting God and a waiting sinner come together then something is done. God works; that is to say, He supplies that sinner's need. It is wonderful to get a communication from God. Not perhaps as powerfully given as you would like to have, but look at the effect of what is given. The manner, the measure, you may be intently set upon, so intently as to say I am afraid it was not from God, because it does not answer to my hope of something coming very powerfully. Look at the effect of it. How does it affect your heart? Well you say, it did soften my heart. It did humble me very sweetly; it made God everything to me. It made Christ my hope more fully; I lent on Him, I trusted His precious blood to cleanse me, and to present me, ultimately present me, spotless before the presence of His glory. Well when you get something like that, the Lord help you to say, He was good in giving me that measure. He is good in subduing sin. When a professor hears something about sin working until a person in whom it works is ready to despair, he may say, what a miserable religion that is. But that poor self-despairing sinner gets something from heaven. He finds one day his heart, as hard as the nether millstone, just dissolving; he finds his affections which had been set on some idol, drawn away from it. He finds his lustful nature subdued; he finds Satan who had seemed to get the victory and was rejoicing over him, put under his feet in some good measure; his sins are subdued. O what a change. A poor sinner, racked, distracted, torn, tempted, trampled under foot, made a conqueror through the blood of Jesus, through the power of Christ's Spirit. A conqueror for the time being; enabled to say,

Christ who conquered for me one once
Does in me conquer too

The Lord is good in fulfilling the desire of the righteous. Some of you may say, we are not righteous. I mean one thing; you perhaps mean another. You look at yourselves, and you say, of course we are not righteous. The world holds me here, says one; some particular temptation holds me here, says another; another says I am bent to this world; I am all Martha and no Mary. Well you are not righteous

in those things. When the Psalmist says "He will fulfil the desire of the righteous", and when Solomon says "The desire of the righteous is only good", it means something different. It means the communication of grace, the communication of sweet answers to prayer, answers to the desires. Ah when a man who has been groaning under the sad, sickening, weakening sight of himself, gets a view of Christ standing in his room and stead, as he hopes, then he says, my desire is fulfilled in a measure; I want more of this but what I have is good to my soul.

The Lord is good in guiding His people. In two ways they are guided. First they are guided into the way of peace by the Holy Spirit. They are guided into the truth as the truth is in Jesus. They are guided to the way, the only way that is open for sinners to approach Jehovah. They are guided one day into some doctrine of grace; O the beauty of it, they see. Perhaps they are guided into the love of God; O the preciousness of that: "I have loved thee". Think of God saying that to a wicked person, "I have loved thee"; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" That is a guidance that is most blessed. Sometimes it pleases the Holy Spirit to guide a poor sinner to a promise and set that promise on his heart. Now he has got a possession, a sweet possession. Sometimes the Spirit guides a sinner into the compassion of the Lord Jesus and into the blessed truth that Christ condescends to come and keep company with a sinner. He went to two men full of doubt and talked with them, and drew their hearts out to Himself, and warmed their hearts, made them burn within them, by sweet teaching and communications. The Spirit is sent to do this great work in the hearts of sinners. "He shall guide you into all truth". That keeps men from error, from error of doctrine, and kept from error of doctrine will keep also the humbled soul from error in experience, and that again will keep a humbled soul from wicked practice. That is one way in which the Lord guides.

Another way is in providence. It is not the worst thing that could befall you to get perplexity in respect of some step. It is not the worst thing that could happen that you should stand still and say I do not know what to do, which way to take. O, but why? How can this be good? Does it lead you to pray? Does it lead you to say "Show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee?" Well now

you are in a good condition, and your position is really to be envied. Why, you have to go to God; you are shut up to Him. Yes, you are shut up to Him. "To whom shall we go?" Whom have I in heaven but Thee to pray to, to depend on? Whom would I follow in my best moments, but Thyself? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. Sinners wait for these things; they wait for them.

They wait for the holy gospel to be brought to them in the power of the Spirit. They wait till the Lord shall say, This is the way; this is the way in My providence; walk ye in it. This is the way to heaven; walk up and down in the Name of the Lord Jesus. O happy man, happy woman, blessed with grace to wait on the Lord. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him". How long have you waited? Dr Goodwin says, He waited for the sinner from eternity. How long have you waited for Him? Not very long at the longest. Not very long. But then He knows every step and every moment; the waiting soul has a momently promise. "I will water it every moment; I will keep it night and day". That may meet some of you. O Lord do show me what to do. That is the prayer that, though it may seem weak in your heart, is strong enough to reach the ear of the Lord God of Sabbaoth, and all will be well. Wait for Him.

One more word on this part. They wait for establishment. Establishment ordinarily does not come to the sinner in early days. He gets much tossed about. Today he is on the mount and rejoices; tomorrow he says, my hope and strength is perished from the Lord. Today, it is as if a word of God says in his heart, you can walk at liberty, go where you will. (Go where you will. And that is just what a worldling may say; that is just what the world says about the Lord's people. They say, live as they will. Ah that was a slander upon the Lord's people in Apostolic days; it lives today.) But when I say, it is as if the Lord says in the heart, go where you will, I mean this. He says, as it were, walk in Christ; room in His Name there is. "I will strengthen them in the Lord and they shall walk up and down in His Name saith the Lord." Walk up and down in justification; walk up and down in free forgiveness of sin; walk up and down under a sense of the Lord's favour; walk up and down in their house feeling, O how good God is to such a wicked person. They shall walk up and down in His Name saith the Lord. This is the perfect law of liberty. This is

the standing fast in Christ in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made a sinner free. This is walking in love, in hope, in peace with God. Wait for it. It is worth waiting for. If you were to wait all your days till you came to your death bed, waiting, and said with Jacob "I have waited for Thy salvation O Lord", you would say it was worth waiting for. The beginning of heaven in my soul was worth waiting for. Yes, dear friends, it is worth waiting for. The little we get here from time to time says, the best is to come. Not the best in nature but the best in measure; it is to come.

The continuance - "to the soul that seeketh Him". A sinner must seek. What does he seek? In a word he seeks to possess God. There be many that say, who will show us any good? Any good? No discrimination at all; any good. An increase of crops, an increase of wine; any good. Where was the Psalmist's heart? "Lord", he said "Lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon me" "Thou hast put more gladness in my heart than in the time when their corn and their wine increased". Is God the Object of your search? Do you go to Him sometimes when you are working or walking or on your bed and say,

Less than Thyself will not suffice
My comfort to restore
More than Thyself I cannot crave
And Thou canst give no more

Is that true of you? Bless God for such a religion. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him and they shall never say they have waited in vain.

In the world of endless ruin
Let it never Lord be said
Here's a sinner perished suing
For the boasted Saviour's aid

It never will be said. "They that seek shall find". "To him that knocketh it shall be opened". Establishment, grace, justification, righteousness, forgiveness, the possession of God; all, all must come from a promising God, to those who have the Spirit of God in

them, teaching them to wait, enabling them to wait, keeping their eyes fixed on that blessed fulness that the Psalmist had before him when he said, "With the Lord there is forgiveness and with Him is plenteous redemption". What a wonder.

AMEN.