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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed
Chapel, Brighton on Wednesday
Evening 22 January 1930

Text: Nahum 1 verse 7

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of
trouble, and He knoweth them that trust
in Him"

It is a mercy to be kept exercised toward God. To be realising from day to day our weakness, ignorance, sinfulness and liability to fall at every movement, at every turn, so as being led by the Spirit to flee to the refuge God has made for His poor people. To be without exercise is an evil thing. A comfortable, respectable, easy profession of religion will never do a sinner any good, but if you are battered, beaten down, almost torn to pieces, sometimes able, constrained to say - Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth, and then to get some revival, some new touch, some fresh instruction, a repetition of the given views of the Lord, O, well, if men say it is a miserable religion, we who have it can say we would not part with it for all the world, for God is greater than sin, grace is greater than sin, the Spirit is greater than doubt, and fear and bondage. My brethren, I hope you will always be exercised. I hope God wont leave you to walk in the flesh, to war after the flesh. You wont want this refuge, this stronghold, if you are not in trouble, if you have no sense of danger, or feeling of weakness, but if you are tried then this word, as opened, brought home to you will suit you, and into the name of the Lord, which is a strong tower, you will be running. The prophet Nahum prophesied against Nineveh about 150 years after Jonah had prophesied and it would seem now that the iniquity of Nineveh was full, that God would no longer bear with that wicked city. They had hated God's people, and God's jealousy was roused. He is jealous and jealousy here has fury in it. Fury against the enemy who has hurt the bride the Lord's people. Ah it is terrible to hurt the saints. Terrible to be an oppressor of the people of God. The Lord is furious. He comes out against His enemies and the enemies of His people. Better that a man had never been born, than to be an oppressor of the

saints. God is jealous. This Elkoshite, Nahum, whose name means consolation, was to console the saints, and the consolation is implied in this jealousy. The Lord is jealous. The Lord revengeth. Exactly the same, in the spirit of it, is the Word of the Lord to his weak people by Isaiah - Say to them that are of a fearful heart, "Fear not, be strong, your God will come" He will come with vengeance. He will come and save you. Vengeance will never fall on the oppressed people of God. They will be covered by the hand of the Lord, when His fury goes out against their enemies and His enemies. Did it ever comfort any of you to consider and believe that your enemies are God's enemies. It is a very comfortable truth. May it be opened to all to whom it may be applied. He will come and save you. The Lord revengeth and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. And they do not think, do not believe, there is any wrath being reserved for them. Let us eat and drink say they for tomorrow shall be as this day and much more abundant, and yet all the while the wrath is reserved for them. What a grand thing it is that God does look on His people and puts them in a place of safety when He is to pour out His wrath upon His enemies. He revengeth. May we not be found in company with His enemies. May it be our prayer - "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men. O my soul come not thou into their secret, my honour be not thou united to their assemblies." What a change of place is coming. The princes who are walking and the beggars who are riding. What a change. Well dear friends, do not be offended at tribulation. You must have it if you are going to heaven. Be not offended with it. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me, and in my dealings. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked. This slowness to anger makes the enemies of God say "Where is the promise of His coming?" What sign is there of the truth of these preachers who tell us that wrath is coming? What evidence is there? It will come in time, though all things now may continue as they were and threaten as it were to continue. The anger that is slow is burning, it is sure. It will fall on the head of the wicked. Are you afraid? Do you tremble? Do you ever cast an eye on the chambers that God has provided, into which He invites His people saying "Come My

people, enter thou into thy chambers, shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast". He is slow to anger, but He is swift when He begins. He is swift to take vengeance. He is great in power to execute His purpose and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind. Solomon in the Proverbs says that the wicked are taken away as a whirlwind, and they are not found, but bruised reeds, smoking flax, these are cared for. These, He will not break, will not quench. Their weakness is felt by themselves, and the unpleasant odour of their smoking flax, which they think must be infinitely displeasing to God. He looks on them with pity and mercy. But He is great in power, but this people have no faith in this. No, no faith in it. They mock at the threatenings - All things continue as they were, let us go on. Tomorrow shall be as this day, yea, and much more abundant. May the Lord grant that any of you who are not born again may consider what you are heaping up; heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. God give you to consider it, for it will be very serious indeed to be found an enemy of God and to come under the terribleness of this word - The Lord is slow to anger, bears with the wicked; great in power to execute His wrath and vengeance and will not at all acquit the wicked, just reckoning up their sins to bring them against them in judgment. Do you count or try to count your sins sometimes and fail? Do you go through the years you live and see and feel your shortness and your wickedness, your unbelief, and your ingratitude, and your hardness of heart and then think, what will the Lord do with me? Ah if He gives you repentance, He tells you what He will do with you. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. He says He is faithful to do it, just to do it. Yea, He declares - "I even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud and as a cloud thy sins". But when a man says "What have I done, there is nothing in all this, it is only a myth, an imagination, a religious thing, I will go on as I am going", the day comes when God stops him. Some are stopped suddenly, and as in a moment, as in a whirlwind, hurled into eternity, and others are left to go on until the day comes when God opens the vial and pours it out on them. Be afraid of being united with the wicked, be afraid of being in the world, for which Christ did not, does

not pray. See what He does. He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry and drieth up all the rivers. Bashan languisheth and Carmel and the flower of Lebanon languisheth and all the earth quakes at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation and who can abide the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by Him. Exhibitions of His greatness, manifestations of His power. O if we fear God we shall tremble. We may have a humble comfortable confidence, but if we fear His great name at this moment we shall tremble at these great words. Perhaps you may say, but I am not afraid of hell. What a mercy if that is a well-grounded feeling that dispels the fear of hell. I am not afraid of going to hell. I thought of it today and said - I am not afraid of hell. Then need you be afraid of anything? Do you never think about the chastisement of the Father? Do you never think of the stocks that may hold the wandering feet of a silly saint? Do you never think of the cloud that God may cause to hide His face for a time? Well these chastisements do not come from that slowness to anger that is here expressed. They come from the love of God.

And now in the midst of this that I have read and what follows, there is this wonderful rift, break, opening in the cloud. The Lord is good. Naturally good, eternally good. He is good in His justice; He is good in His love; He is good in His gifts; He is good in all that He does in the church and absolutely, everlastingly good in His justice in the world. He cannot be other than good and out of this eternal goodness, flow infinite mercies in the covenant of grace, in the Person of Christ in the redemption and work of Christ, in His priestly offering of Himself on the cross and in the gift and work of His Holy Spirit. Just one or two observations here on this goodness, in the manifestations of it. It is not an abstract idea. It is an eternal truth, coeval with the Being of God, but the manifestation of it began with respect to the gospel on the eve of the fall of Adam, when the utterance of this goodness was heard by Adam and Eve when God was speaking to the serpent and saying - The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head and thou

shalt bruise his heel, and if this be opened to us, we shall not wonder at the words of the Apostle Paul - "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." He gave the Son out of His bosom. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And why did the Lord Jesus come, being sent? Why did He obediently come, and why did He obediently die? Because He was commanded to lay down His life, because the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep; because the High Priest offers an offering and our Great High Priest offered Himself without spot to God, that He might satisfy justice, meet every demand of a perfect law, that in Him, on the cross, righteousness and peace, mercy and truth might meet and kiss each other. We shall never fully know what is included in that wondrous amity between righteousness and peace, mercy and truth coming to and kissing each other in sinners; that their salvation should honour justice as well as love; should honour truth as well as mercy. This is a manifestation of the goodness of God. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us in that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him". O dear friends, if the Holy Spirit should take us, convinced of sin, to the cross and put us down there and say - now look and gaze and meditate and spend your life in this position, what a favour it would be. You cannot think of naked justice, if you are rightly convinced of sin, without terror. You cannot think of the broken law in all its perfection, in all its terrible sanction, as a convinced sinner, without trembling, and you cannot think of a deserved hell without fearing. But if you see the justice and majesty and goodness and truth of God in the law magnified in the Lord Jesus, in dying, then O what a sight you will get of Him; what a feeling you will have.

O, why did Jesus show to me,
The beauties of His face,
Why to my soul did He convey
The riches of His grace

and then to continue singing in your heart

'Twas because He loved my soul,
Because He died for me
Because that nothing could control
His great, His firm decree.

That is a good religion - sin removed by blood, hardness of heart melted away by love, an infinite distance taken out and a sinner made nigh unto God. That is a good religion is not it and the goodness of God has made it what it is. It was a wondrous sight that John had given to him and he said "He showed me a pure river of water of life, and He took me into a great and high mountain and showed me that great city holy Jerusalem coming out of heaven from God, having the glory of God". That is the religion that God gives to His people because He is good.

And the Lord is good because in the next place He gives His good Spirit to them, to these people, loved and redeemed, and what is the Spirit's work in a person to whom He is given? It is first, the washing of regeneration, the act of God, a sinner renewed, born again, having given to him a heart to know and fear God and not depart from God. The stony heart removed, and a heart of flesh given. True conviction of sin, that is His first work, in some gradual, in others more sudden. In some weaker, in some stronger, but in all alike the Spirit's work, issuing in forgiveness, ultimately in heaven. O what a gift. The beginning is terrible, the end is glorious. The beginning withers, and shrivles, and convinces and kills a sinner to himself, to the law and to his own righteousness. And then the good Spirit brings the Lord Jesus, that is His second work. He has given faith, He has given prayer, but His second work is that of which Christ speaks particularly when He says "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." And He does not show it as a picture to be hung up on the wall, but as a life, a justification, a sanctification, a liberation. You know what I mean, who have had it in any measure and very wonderful it is. The Lord is good and He gives His Spirit. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your

children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him". And when He has come, they want Him, they ask for Him, they believe that they could as easily get to heaven without Christ as they could get there without the Holy Ghost,

The Lord is good, and He teaches by His good Spirit. Thanking Him, as you have it in the book of Nehemiah, thanking Him for His great mercies to an ungrateful people, Nehemiah says "Thou gavest them Thy good Spirit". And if you have had Him and felt that you have grieved Him, then the Psalmist's prayer will suit you - "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me". His work is glorious. His work is holy, sanctifying the people of God so that their name is holy brethren. Sinful people, called holy brethren. People who say that they cannot do the good that they would, and are driven to do the evil that they would not, these are holy brethren. Paul addresses them as such in His epistle to the Hebrews. Holy brethren. The Lord is good in giving His Spirit and not only giving Him to do these two great things, but also giving Him to warn His people. Take heed brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. In checking them, by putting some bar in their consciences against doing an evil thing. In stirring them up to prayer and supplication. In moving them to give dilligence to make their calling and election sure. In fighting against them when they have vexed and grieved Him, speaking against them in their consciences by some scripture and it may be also fighting against them in providence. And how good He is by speaking by the scriptures. With what power does He invest some passages. How He repeats them, put in His own light, or rather illuminates them and they come as the Psalmist prayed they might come to him "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me; let them bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles." He is good in reviving us. He does revive His people. He is poured out as water upon the dry ground. Did you ever fear that that scripture might become true in your cases - "A garden without water". How I have looked at it "A garden without water". What does it mean? Barrenness, death of the plants. Now the Spirit comes, and He is as water poured out upon the dry ground. God is good in providence when He sends trouble.

He is good when He works deliverances. He is good when He holds us in some affliction. He is good when He says - "Go forth out of this affliction" He is good. It is well to be enabled to observe God's providence. God's providence is very wonderful and very terrible. He does deal in terror sometimes. He says concerning His people "I will rule over you with terror" His people? No, one says. Yes, the scriptures say so. What then? "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and bring you into the bond of the covenant, and I will accept you with your sweet savour. These people, thus dealt with in terror are led on until they come to a place where the sacrifice is, even to the cross, and they are accepted in the sweet savour of the Lord Jesus. Hence they persevere. The Lord is good in affliction. Some can say it, and when they get to the end, the testimony of Joshua shines in their eyes and may be felt in their hearts - Not one word of all His good promise hath failed. O I hope I shall be able to say that and that you will also. Not one word of His good promise. He has started some of us with a good promise and will He fail? God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.

Let me turn now to what is said of Him in the second place. A stronghold in the day of trouble. A strength to a sinner. A day of trouble may be when you are under a cloud, a dispensation that afflicts you. When you are made to look upon your ways. "Come let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord". It is a day of trouble when prayers are not answered immediately. A good store may be laid up in heaven, but the enemy may be saying you have not prayed properly because you have got no answers. If he is saying that to any of you at any time, may the Holy Ghost help you to remember this - that he is a liar, the father of lies. It is a day of trouble, I say, when prayers are not answered. It is difficult to go on with unanswered prayers before you, difficult because unbelief makes it difficult. Because temptations make it difficult; because providences may make it difficult. It is a day of trouble when you cannot do the good that you would. When you would be lively in the ways of God and the inertness of nature gets hold of you; when you would believe and unbelief quibbles and queries and questions and

spreads a cloud over your spirit. It is a day of trouble when you would pray and cannot; when the utmost you can do seems to be to pray for a prayer. It is a day of trouble when the law of sin in your members prevails to some extent and you have to confess and do confess that iniquities prevail against you. It is a day of trouble when, in your weakness, you flee before the pursuer as one who has no strength. A day of trouble when a mocking Ishmael says - "Sing us one of the Lord's songs". A day of trouble when the Lord seems to take no notice of all these things, but just leaves you, as it were. But now this comes in - God, by His Spirit, may very secretly, but effectually, whisper in your heart - Come to Me. Faith says in your heart - "Go to the strong for strength" Go to God for protection; go to the atonement for cleansing; go to the Spirit for animating you. Go to Him for fresh teaching, fresh oil, fresh guidance, fresh light, and for the life of Christ to be again poured out upon your fainting heart, and faith obeys. The scriptures are very clear about this. There is the obedience of faith. And the obedience of faith here is the motion that faith takes, the steps it takes, the running of it to the Lord Jesus. And what does this great, glorious One do? Why, just what is written of Him. "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them", takes kindly notice of them and, as it were, stretches out the hand of His gracious power, and brings them into the house, the strong-hold. I am not a Barbarian to all of you in saying this am I? You have known it, have you not, when the Saviour, as it were, has graciously plucked His hand out of His bosom where, for a time, He has kept it, while you have been saying - pluck out Thy hand out of Thy bosom, and He has done it, stretched forth His hand, received you and put you in a place of safety. "I will put thee in the cleft of the Rock, the secret place of the Most High, the shadow of the Almighty, where no plague, no pestilence, no arrow, no death, can enter. O, the defence of the church is here. Of the enemy, said God, in the day of Hezekiah, in answer to his prayer, "he shall not shoot an arrow into this city". Think of it. He shall not come into this city. I will defend, I will save it, for My own sake. A strong-hold, and you will take hold of it. The spider taketh hold with her hands in the king's palace, and a sinner takes hold of Christ by precious faith, and

finds sufficient strength and sufficient grace in Him and it is poured out into the heart. O it is great to have this strong-hold and to have an entrance into it. It is one thing to talk about it. It is another, and a better thing, to get into it.

O brethren, how safe you are, however you may be surrounded by danger and however much you may apprehend danger. A strong-hold. Blood divine is a strong-hold for a sinner. Grace divine is a strong-hold for a tried soul. The promises of God in Christ are a strong-hold to hold up sinners. The oath and promises of God constitute a wonderful strong-hold for those who are plagued by unbelief and tried by the lapse of time God causes to be between giving a promise and fulfilling it. Well, take refuge in Jesus, dear tried people. Take refuge in Jesus. If He takes you in, nobody will pull you out, no devil, no sin.

And thirdly, a few words upon the last clause. "And He knoweth them that trust in Him". God's knowledge is universal. Nothing in heaven, nothing on earth is out of His sight. "Can any hide in secret places from Me, saith the Lord". "Do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord." "His eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth" There is nothing hidden from God. But this universal knowledge is not what is here intended. "He knoweth them that trust in Him." Has peculiar feelings, if I may express it so, to these believers. Particular attention is given to these believers. Watchfulness, carefulness, tender jealousy respecting them. "I am jealous for Zion with a great jealousy" He knows them in their weakness, and has provided strength for them. He knows them in their ignorance, and has made Christ the wisdom of God for them. He knows them in their guiltiness and has sent His Son to die for them. He knows them in their exercises and says to them, "When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee". All your exercises, all your fears, your sinking, all your needs, I know them all. He knows them approvingly. He does approve of them. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him". O they do not take much pleasure in themselves sometimes. How they hate themselves sometimes. How they abhor their own ways sometimes. How they grieve over their deathly condition sometimes. But in such states they do not see what the Lord

does. They do not see the motions of godly fear. He does. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him." He knoweth them; approvingly He knoweth them. O better hate yourself and be loved of the Lord than love yourself and be hated of Him. He knows them in their prayers; He knows what is the mind of the Spirit when the Spirit helps your infirmities in prayer. "He knoweth the way that I take" And the way that Job took just at that time was this - "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat" And though He could not find the Lord, nor see Him, saying "When I go forward He is not there (How could He find God without God discovering Himself) When I go backward" where I have seen Him, where I have had His work in me and for me "I cannot behold Him." "On the right hand, on the left hand He hides Himself", but he came to this - "He knoweth the way that I take". The way of prayer, when I pray for submission to His will, when I ask Him to give me the Holy Spirit to wash away all my uncleanness, and when I ask Him to satisfy my soul as with marrow and fatness, to give me a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow. He knows. He knows how I behave in affliction. One said of old I was chastised and I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and God said when I chastised him for the iniquity of his covetousness I hid Myself from him. Then he went on frowardly, and the Lord knew it, and what did He say of this creature. O He said "I will give him repentance", and so He gave Ephraim repentance. Then Ephraim smote upon his thigh and began to confess his waywardness and his stubbornness, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Then the Lord said "Is he my dear son, is he a pleasant child, for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him." He knows this, and when He sees some of us, alas for us, going on frowardly in the way of our own heart, although we have been smitten for the iniquity of our covetousness, He says "I will restore comforts unto him and to his mourners". He knows them as conquerors. "No", one poor, beaten down creature may say, "No, that is not true", but it is, for known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world and He knows what His purposes are, to give weak creatures the victory over the god of this world and

over all their sins. "Thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" But in the midst of all this what is there that the Lord sees in them? Their trust in Him. He sees a poor sinner who says - Lord I am very doubtful about myself, but this is the thing I would do every minute, even cast myself on the atonement of the Saviour. I have no hope apart from that. I would have no trust but that. Ah there is not anything in the world that is so pleasing to God as that. Here Jesus is seeing the travail of His soul with satisfaction. Is it so with us? Is He, the Lord Jesus, our only trust? He knows it. He must know it, because He has given it to us. He sees the motions of faith struggling through the clouds and crowds of difficulties and enemies, devils and troubles. He knows the struggle of faith because He gives it its power to struggle. He knoweth them that trust His word. Why poor sinner, you may not know you are trusting for your own comfort, but that does not alter this that the Lord knows it. He knoweth the way that I take. You may trust one minute and doubt the next. Peter walked on the sea for a minute or two and when he saw the winds and the waves boisterous he began to sink. I like what Bunyan says on that. He says that faith acts in two manner of ways, first it walks as long as it can, and then when it can walk no longer it begins to cry "Lord save or I perish". Well the Lord knows that. He knoweth them that trust in Him, that forsake themselves, that deny themselves, that renounce their own strength and their own wisdom, that look with fear on the terrors of the Almighty in the world. He knows that they run to Him in the time of danger. My brethren, what a God we have, O what a God we have.

And they trust for the resurrection. They trust Him for the resurrection of their bodies. They can sing some times

He from the grave my dust will raise
I in the heavens will sing His praise

They trust Him for providence. Trust Him for daily bread, trust Him for guidance through difficulties. Yea, the subject is endless, I cannot express more about it

May the

Holy Ghost open it to you, to me, and make it a living word in our hearts and consciences, so that we may say - The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him."