

38
395

1397-30
La P 812

30

**Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 8 January 1930**

Psalm 50 verses 14. and 15

**"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto
the most High: And call upon Me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt
glorify Me."**

There is no state into which a child of God can come in this life when there is no cause for thankfulness; there is always this: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed". If we believe that, if it be true that it belongs to us, then may we be enabled to pay the debt of gratitude we owe, at least in some measure. Affliction should not close the lips with respect to thanksgiving. We have so much mercy and whatever afflictions come they are so infinitely beneath, less than, our deserts, that it becomes us to walk in this Scripture: "Offer unto God thanksgiving". How He has borne with us; how often He has sent some comfort; how many times He has commanded deliverances for us, may not present afflictions harden our hearts and blind our minds against. May we remember His goodness and never cease to acknowledge, that "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed". We, as a little cause, are now under God's heavy hand - that is my judgment - and heavy it is to me and brings me to a good deal of searching of heart as to my own case. This has been with me today a good deal. "Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord". When I search and try my ways, shame and confusion cover my face and pain fills my heart and fears come and are very heavy. I wonder what the Lord will do with me and whether my sins provoke Him so as to just allow me to stand here and talk without any unction and whether there will be a death in the pulpit. I am not without fear. I have lived a long time and spent a large part of my life here with you, but I am not without trouble about my ministry. I know your kindness too well and acknowledge it before God as well as before yourselves, but I am not without trouble about my ministry. When I see some, as I do, apparently unaffected, going along in an easy quiet way, although they are professors, I am troubled and wonder if the Lord

makes no use of me to them. Now do try to give thanks; offer to God thanksgiving and remember when you vowed conjugal love, when you told the Lord you did not mind what you went through if He would but bless you and that by His grace you would follow on and thank Him; now do not forget those vows. Offer thanksgiving and pay those vows. Beware of a coldness coming over you. Beware of indifference respecting your standing before God. Beware of getting easy in your profession. Take heed to Holy Scripture. That says this to you: "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God", for if you, as a people, if the church here, gets into that state, even if there be no error of doctrine among us, you may find this, that if I am right before God, He may seal my lips to you and bring that to you that He did with respect to Ezekiel. He would not let him be a reprover. There was a time when his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth and God would not let him be a reprover. Do you ever fear it? Do you ever feel that your sins may provoke Him just to close my lips with respect to you in your own cases. While He may speak to some well exercised people, and they may flourish, He may be silent to you and very solemn that will be. Pay your vows and do not take refuge in your helplessness. May the Lord give you and give to me, give to us as a people, real tenderness, spiritual exercises and keep us from coming into awful bondage to any sin or any sins. Let us look at the gracious word: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". A day of trouble may be when God causes grief and does it unwillingly. He doth not willingly afflict, though He cause grief. And what is it for God to cause grief, but to withdraw His protecting teaching, His unction, the authority of His Word either in your reading of it or in the ministry; when He witholds His presence, when He keeps you without answers to past prayers because present prayers are formal, You may be asking and not receiving because you ask amiss. Or He may send some providence against us and cause grief; let us perceive the weakness, the weakness that we are daily, more or less, exposed to. This will be a day of trouble. It is a day of trouble when God thus causes grief for weakness comes and the soul flees before the pursuer, without strength, and the enemy pursues you and you have no power to resist him. When he accuses you and you have no gracious answer to give to him. When he tempts you and you have no grace to say begone unbelief, or begone devil. When you just are, for the time being, a prey and flee before the pursuer without strength; cannot

stand, as the Psalmist did at that time when, facing his accusers, he said "How say ye to my soul flee as a bird to your mountain?" The power to say that is taken away. That is a day of trouble. Do you understand it? In this day there will come, before recovery, conviction. O conviction from God is very different from the feeble voice of conscience that says in a whisper that you hardly hear, and have power to refuse to listen to, says in a whisper, you are not right. That is one thing, and I say it may be without any power so that you can be deaf to it, but when a conviction comes from the Holy Ghost, when He says, "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor?", (Jeremiah 2 v 18) when He says, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say My people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?" (Jeremiah 2 v 31) Mind this dear friends, for this conviction that comes from the Spirit will be so piercing, wounding, grieving, and weakening in a way that perhaps, at this moment, we do not understand. It will have such an effect upon us as that there will be nothing but this - we shall fall down wounded and half dead. That is a day of trouble. A day of trouble may be when you are in darkness; darkness as to God. The light you have had may not suffice, will not suffice, if the sun goes behind a cloud and does not send his beams through that cloud. A thick cloud of transgression may keep the rays of the sun from you and then you are in darkness as to God. Notions about Him won't stand here. Indeed past manifestations won't yield you the comfort that they have done if you are in darkness. Darkness, as to His Word. You have seen light in it; it has been a light in you; it has had life in you producing sweetness, comfort, health, strength in your soul. A day of darkness may just be without all that to you. A day of trouble may be a day of very fierce temptation when you are given up for a time to the enemy. It may be a day when God may take off His hand of heavenly restraint from your lusts, your pride, your vanity or unsettledness of mind and disposition and leave you just to be a prey to the very things on which His hand once was laid with heavenly power to your comfort. What a day of trouble. O dear friends, look if there be this. Is His hand off your hearts? Are the sins that once were laid under tribute by that power now rampant? If so, then you are in a day of trouble.

And lastly here a day of trouble may be in the providence of God

when, as it were, He takes away all the protection of goodness in providence and gives permission to some affliction to enter your body or your family or your circumstances, and you cannot resist it. "Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass when the Lord commandeth it not?" and who is he that can resist that hand that sends an arrow, a trouble, a breach, an evil in your circumstances? This may be in a church. We have affliction as a people here; many are afflicted. I do not, for myself, wish to take refuge in the painful fact that affliction is rife, that many in the town and everywhere are afflicted, and may not you take refuge in that. If you, if I, take refuge in that fact we may rest, but we are not resting in God. We may take a sort of comfort but it is not divine comfort. Do not rest in a general circumstance. If you are in trouble in providence, if we here are under God's hand, two things will be our mercy. First, to search and try our ways. Is God angry? Is He in any way fighting against us? I am not saying it is so but speaking out of my own heart, and as to what comes there. When trouble rises and when, in any particular form, it comes, then I hope I can say, through God's mercy, I begin to search and try my ways. Is it so with you? Can you look, do you look around the town and say, O there is a great deal of sickness here, and why should I escape? I say, if you do that, I repeat what I said, you may have a kind of rest, but it is not rest in God. Now what does the Lord say to His dear people? "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" If He should put that question to us personally, collectively, what should we say? Have we valued our dear deacons as we ought to have done? Have we thanked God for them as He deserves to be thanked? Have we prayed for them as we should have done? Have we blessed God that, by their means and His goodness to us as a people, we have so far peace and no quarrelling? If we have failed here can we be surprised if He should weaken them and, as it were, say to us: see, their strength to serve you is in My hand; their health to be present at the services depends upon Myself. He may say this. Search this matter, look into this. A day of trouble may be that even as the voice of God so speaking to us as that it will be a great mercy for us. O do not - God keep us from it - do not say, O but it is my own case I want taking up. My friends, the case of the church is dear to God according to Scripture, and it says: "Look not every man on his own things but every man on the things of another". Let each seek his brother's wealth. Now a breach in those commandments may bring

divine displeasure to those who make that breach. If we here have made that breach, may the Lord help us to acknowledge it. There may be this in the day of trouble, a continuance; a continuance. Little did Israel think as she went on in her frowardness and turning away from God that those sins would cost her 70 years captivity. Little may we think that our backslidings and our saying, here and there: O spare it; is it not a little one? little may we think what God may do. I know He is not a hard Master. I know something I trust about His tender mercies. But I know also that He will be attended to; He will have His Word attended to. O do you fear making a breach in His Word? Do you fear making a breach in precepts and commandments, holy commandments, by the Apostles, as Peter speaks? A continuance may bring us into an acquaintance with the word in Job. The waters wear the stones. Affliction, like a dropping of rain on one spot, will wear away something, wear away the strength and the patience and the confidence and the comfort. May the Lord give us grace to attend to these things.

Now turn to the other side. Bless God it is not all one side; in the Lamentations we see the dark side that I have named expressed vigorously, strongly. He hath broken my teeth with gravel stones; He hath made my way crooked. You look at such passages. You may have an acquaintance with them yet, if you have not had already, if you are not having now, but now look at the other side. "Call upon Me". O the compassion of this word, the tenderness of this word. I trust it has had some alleviating sweetness to myself today. "Call upon Me". Though I smite, I am love. Though I afflict I am graciousness itself. Though I make your way crooked, though My providential dealings are strange and I am weakening you, yet come to Me, call upon Me. An open door is thus set before us, dear friends, an open door for confessing people, an open door for sinners who have provoked a gracious God and Father to deal solemnly and severely with them. He does not say, do not come, I am against you, but He says though I have caused grief, turn to Me. Hear the rod, hear My voice in it. I have appointed it. Turn to Me. I say, is not this gracious? Is not this compassion, divine compassion? His left hand is under the head here. His left hand is under the head of a fainting person and saint who is afflicted and He says: I won't leave you.

In calling upon the Lord in a day of trouble, there will be these things. First, faith, true faith. The voice of God awakens faith in affliction. It awakens this great, gracious spirit, faith, the creation of God in the heart, and this faith says in the soul now go to God, He is your only abiding helping Friend. Vain is the help of man. Vain is your own arm, vain is your own confidence. Turn to the Lord. It says, He invites you to come near; go to Him. It says, He is full of compassion. Though He cause grief, yet will He not cast off for ever; He will not cast off for ever. This is the language, the testimony that faith will give of Him in your heart, a great thing, and where this faith is there is obedience. We read of the obedience of faith. The blessed Lord Jesus says to these sinners "Come unto Me" and they, in humble obedience, though guilty, though polluted, obey the divine voice. We have to go just as we feel and faith takes us, gives us humble courage to go to this gracious God. In calling upon the Lord there will be first humble confession. You will never get near if you have got far off by some sin or sins; you will never get near until you have this confession. "If we confess our sins". O it is a business; I know it is a business. How they will well up in your memory. This sin, that light spirit, that trifling with the things of God, that gadding spirit that had no satisfaction anywhere, that hardness of heart, that unthankfulness, that pride, that lust, that evil spirit of unbelief, that departure from God. Now this is just a word; you can fill up for yourselves. O I say how these things will well up in your memories. You won't be able to use words perhaps beyond this: Lord, I am vile, I am unprofitable. How I have said these things today, unprofitable, vile, full of evil departures. Well it won't be unprofitable. He may begin to whisper to you some encouragement and let you know that He is full of compassion, that the compassion that has spared you will be the compassion that will restore you. He will let you get a glimpse, give you a glimpse of the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness and you will obey His gracious Word: "Come unto Me" Ah and then you will be wanting a plunge into that fountain that takes away all causes of separation. Causes of separation - it is a beautiful word and meets cases. You look within and you say here is a cause of separation, and there is a cause of separation and there is another cause of separation, until you do not know how to look at them, they are so many and they are so bad, they are so black, they are so filthy. And yet faith goes

according to His gracious Word to confess; confess your sin. "If we confess our sins". Happy the man who is enabled honestly and humbly to confess his sins.

Next in the calling on His Name there is faith in the Redeemer, in that precious Person who is at the right hand of God, ever living to intercede for all that come unto God by Him. What should we do if we never got a view of the Lord Jesus? How could we hold on? But He grants, He grants glimpses of Himself. He sends His good Spirit to show this great Person, filling heaven and earth; heaven full of the incense of His merit; the church filled, at times, with a view of that Person and a smelling of that incense whereby faith is strengthened and encouraged and emboldened to come to this great God. And this is in the calling on the Name of the Lord. "Call upon Me". What for? For what I have promised. What has He promised? "I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely." What does God say of such a promise? "Put Me in remembrance". What does the church say to Him when enabled by faith? "Remember Thy holy promise". O the greatness of God here in this great work of restoring and blessing a sinner. This is in the calling upon the Name of the Lord. Call upon Me and come to Me and ask Me to do what I have promised to do. Put Him in mind dear friends. O, but shame covers me, and happy you are when it does, but that will not hinder faith. Nay, it will be part of the work of faith to cover you with shame that the grace and the love and the mercy and the forgiveness of the Lord may the more abundantly shine and be the more powerful in your consciences. Ask Him to do what He has promised; to take away the sins. "I will remember their sins no more". Ask Him, in the next place, to remember His covenant. "Remember Thy holy Covenant" This is His Word, "Put Me in remembrance". And what is His Covenant? The end of that Word in the Hebrews of the Covenant is this: "I will forgive their sin and remember their iniquity no more". That is in the Covenant. Afflicted saint, draw near, and come and put Him, as faith enables you in the Holy Ghost, put Him in remembrance of that Covenant. Come for the unction of the Holy One, that unction that teacheth of all things; come to Him who says: "Behold I make all things new" Go, if you can, with the 80 Psalm in your heart and mind and finish the Psalm as it is finished in the Book: "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not

we go back from Thee: quicken us, and we will call upon Thy Name."

All these things belong to calling upon God. "Call upon Me". Lord, I am in trouble. "None can deliver thee, but Myself." Lord I am afflicted; only Thy hand can heal me. Lord I am a backslider; Thou alone art able to restore my soul. "Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not we go back from Thee: quicken us and we will call upon Thy Name."

Now look briefly on the promise, a double promise. "I will deliver thee". Is not that wonderful? You have got into a pit, got there by your own sin. Who can raise you out of it? "I will deliver thee". You have provoked the Lord to put your feet in the stocks. Who can take them out? "I will deliver thee". You have indulged in some evil, an evil spirit perhaps, an evil tongue. Perhaps you have spoken against your neighbour or some thing and provoked the Lord and who can take all that away? "I will deliver thee". He has brought trouble to you, He has laid affliction on your loins or He has laid His hand on some of your friends. Here He has laid His hand on our dear deacons. May we go and get this: "I will deliver thee". He can do it. Hold fast to this. He can; yea He has bound Himself to do it. He may not do it in the particular way in which we want Him to do it, but He will deliver; He has promised it. "I will deliver thee". Ah, they said of old, "The Lord has turned our captivity as the streams in the south". That was deliverance. It made them like men that dreamed. So great, so wonderful, so beautiful, so complete was it at that time, that they said "Our mouth was filled with laughter". They could hardly realise that it was done. So wonderful, they could hardly enter into it; so wonderful. But they were delivered, and think of 70 years of captivity ended. Who ended it? God did. So, dear friends, look for deliverance. But this may not be outwardly. I have heavy fears about the nation and about the church of God in the nation; what the Lord will do with us I do not know, beyond this, that I believe He will afflict us more and more in the nation and the churches will know that He tries the reigns and searcheth the heart. All the churches shall know that, but there is a deliverance; it is to come; it is promised. And what is the ending of this beautiful word? "Thou shalt glorify

Me". What we have not done. Many of us have to say that; we have not done it, at least, but in a very very small measure. Suitable has that word been to me today, an unprofitable servant. An unprofitable servant cannot boast of having glorified His Master. Can you say you have glorified Him? Has your tongue glorified Him? Did your tongue glorify Him when you were saying things that you would not like some people to hear? Has your spirit glorified Him by hanging on the Lord Jesus Christ? Has your understanding glorified Him when you have seen, by faith in that understanding the Lord of Life and Glory and the Trinity and their holy, eternal relationships and the Covenant of Grace ordered in all things and sure, and the everlasting gospel with all its precious provisions and amplitude? Have you glorified Him so? And have we, as a church, glorified Him? I am not scolding anybody; I am only putting affectionately questions that are in my heart respecting myself? Have we glorified Him? Are we zealous for His Name and honour among us? Are we jealous of His Word? Are we afraid lest He should leave us? Is it in us to say, "Leave us not, neither forsake us, O God of our salvation". "Thou shalt glorify Me." If we have not, when the deliverance comes we shall glorify Him. It is a promise. Dear friends, it is a kind promise. "Thou shalt glorify Me." I will do this and you shall say that. Now He comes to a very beautiful ending in this Psalm. He says "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Is not it wonderful that the Lord should speak so to His poor people. "Whoso offereth praise" comes to Me with thanksgiving, acknowledging his sins and praising Me for My mercies, he whatever he may judge of himself, glorifies Me. May the Lord help us to take great heed to His Word and by it search and try our ways and by the Spirit come to a proper conclusion, that we have sinned, and also to conclude by faith that His compassions fail not, that in Him is life, that in Him is immutability in both His nature and His Covenant, and may we wait upon Him and pray for our dear friends that the Lord would lay His healing hand on them.

AMEN.