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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 22 March 1933

PROVERBS 1 v 33

"But whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil"

The Proverbs of Solomon, as spoken of in the beginning of this chapter, are the words of wisdom, and wisdom, in this blessed, wonderful book, is the Son of God, and He speaks to the sons of men, but the sons of men are so enamoured with themselves that they turn away from the gracious words that wisdom speaks. But there are some of the sons of men distinguished from others by having given to them the Holy Ghost, and to all such it may be said what the Saviour said to His disciples: "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear." It is a great mercy not to be left to reject the Son of God. No man, with the Scripture in his hand and reading of the gift of God, even the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, can be innocent if he rejects that blessed Person. It is a revelation of God and all that God says is worthy of acceptance, and the man who prefers himself before Christ, who esteems the riches of this world better than the riches of grace, will find that God knew his wickedness and will punish him. When his fear comes upon him he will find it is destruction coming as a whirlwind. They shall call on God then but He will <sup>not</sup> ~~now~~ answer them and all He will say to them is I never knew you. When I was in prison you did not visit Me. When I was hungry you gave Me no meat, and thirsty, you gave Me no drink. I never knew you. Depart from Me. Now what a mercy it will be if the Holy Spirit comes to us and opens our ears to discipline, and gives us a heart to receive the gracious words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The turning away of the simple shall slay them; the simple man, the ungodly who turn away from the words of Christ. And the prosperity of fools, alluring them to self-dependence, shall destroy them. "But whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from fear of evil." It is wisdom speaking, wisdom crying without. She uttereth her voice in the streets and some poor, foolish sinners, through grace, have their ears opened to listen to the Divine voice and they turn in to hear

what this wisdom has to say. "Turn you at My reproof" and the heart says, Lord help me to do it. Then He says, Behold I will pour out My Spirit upon you. This is what the Holy Ghost causes the simple ones who turn to Him to receive - I will pour My Spirit upon you. I will pour My Spirit as water in a dry land. My blessing is that, the Holy Spirit given. It is a dreadful thing to disregard such gracious teaching. It is an infinite mercy to have the ear opened; not to pull away the shoulder, but to bend to the discipline, the correction, and the gracious teaching of the Lord Jesus who here speaks under the name of wisdom. He is wisdom. The world by wisdom knows not God, but Christ is the wisdom of God. He is strength, the only strength of Israel. The wisdom of God is foolishness to men in their natural state, but O the beauty of wisdom in the eyes of all who are blessed with spiritual sight. And there is the opening of the ear, and this brings a sinner to hearken to what Christ has to say - "Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely". This hearkening is the inclining of the soul by the Holy Spirit to what God has to say. Not turning away the ear, not walking in the pride of your own knowledge, but, being made a fool, you are brought to be made wise unto salvation. "If any man will be wise in this world let him become a fool, that he may be wise." And when he is this fool in his own judgement, then he begins to be made wise unto salvation. Then his ear is inclined to Christ's teaching. Are we of this number? "Whoso". Any poor, wretched sinner; any poor, miserable creature, bemoaning his sinfulness, and his ignorance and wondering whether he will be found under the teaching of the Spirit, his heart is inclined to Christ and to the words of wisdom which proceed from Christ.

And what is it that is heard? What does this divine wisdom say? To the listening sinner who, prompted by the Spirit, prays "Thy kingdom come", Christ says, Behold thy King cometh, riding upon an ass, lowly, bringing salvation. And the sound of salvation coming in the power of the Holy Ghost is the sweetest and most heart humbling sound a sinner can hear in this world. Salvation, O the joyful sound. It is indeed music to the listening ear. But this salvation has in it many things. First, when a sinner is wondering, seeking, desiring to be found right with and before God, wisdom says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." "Would you approach Jehovah? Approach Him through Me. Would you call Him Father? I am His Son, and by My Spirit alone can

you call Him Father. Would you find happiness, true happiness? I am the way to that. There is no happiness but in and by Me. Would you find strength to bear the burden that is on you? I am strength. Would you walk in wisdom's ways? Then the Spirit will show you that Christ is the way to the city. In this way the listening soul finds wisdom. Christ is the wisdom of God. And when poor Spirit taught sinners listen to this gracious instruction they find that their hearts are more and more inclined this way; that there is a strength in the instruction that bends their wills; that there is a light in the teaching that illuminates their understanding; and that there is an influence of kindness that touches their hearts, and awakens, and warms and brings forth the most gracious love which pleases God.

Whoso hearkeneth unto Me with respect to the pardon of sin. "Sin to pardon without blood, never in God's nature stood". The blood that puts away sin is called, the blood of God. "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His Own blood." And here, when a sinner hearkens, under the teaching of the Spirit, to Christ respecting the atonement, he sees infinite worth; sufficient forgiveness for all his transgressions, innumerable though they be. He sees in the blood of Christ that efficacy that can purge the guiltiest conscience from dead works to serve the living God. In the atonement he sees how the vilest of sinners can be reconciled, are reconciled, to God, reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to be presented whole and without blame before Him in love. When the listening soul hears these sounds he believes that sin, even his sin, can be put away. Then, believing that sin can be forgiven, the Spirit inclines him to say - As the watchman, more than the watchman, waiteth for the morning, so my soul waiteth on God. And this instruction affects the heart. It does not rest in the judgement only; it affects the heart most blessedly, so that a sinner can say honestly at times

Let worldly minds the world pursue  
It hath no charms for me

The beauties of the atonement, the fullness of the atonement, are such as to win the affections and hold the attention of the soul. You know that I am speaking the truth who have had this by hearkening to Christ's teaching. And moreover, whoso hearkeneth to Christ will

hear that He saves sinners with an everlasting salvation. There is a covenant that the Holy Ghost makes with the soul. Even as the covenant was in the Trinity, so the Spirit comes, according to the Hebrews, and enters into this divine covenant and says these hearkeners shall no more say every man to his neighbour and to his brother, Know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest. And why? For I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquity no more. And so one whose ears are open to listen to Christ's gracious teaching enters into that great word, an everlasting salvation. It is an everlasting gospel in the beauty of it, in the fullness of it, in the sufficiency of it, in the blessedness of it, in the eternity of it. Whoso hearkens unto Me by the Spirit shall find this, that there is a discipline to be experienced, a training, a real training; to be brought up in the nurture of the Lord is to be trained. He loves His vine too well to let the branches be bedraggled and trampled under foot always, and when they are inclined that way He looks after them as the gardener takes the branch that is hanging down and nails it up. And this is a divine discipline that every hearkening soul is brought to receive. Grace is given to receive the discipline of the gospel, of the Holy Spirit. The reproofs and the rebukes of God administered by the Spirit are made acceptable to the soul that hearkens to the Lord Jesus, and that prevents the sinner from despising the chastening of the Lord, from fainting under it. It moves him to say, "Thy will be done". Let Thy kingdom come into my soul. When the kingdom of Christ comes into a soul, then the kingdom of self is put out, the throne of self is put down, and this makes it very bitter to nature to have the kingdom of Christ within, but, listening to Christ's word, you say this to Him: Never be silent to me Lord. The silence of God to a child of God is one of the severest trials he can have. But when He speaks a word of reproof that enters into the soul more than a thousand stripes on the back of a fool, then there is a real hearkening; attention, close attention, the attention of faith. Faith says, O what does my Lord say? Let me hear it. "Be not silent to me." What does this rod say? What does this affliction say? What does this threshing instrument say? "What is the chaff to the wheat saith the Lord". So dear friends, when we are led by the Spirit of Christ to hearken to Christ, we hear the word of discipline, of reproof, that enters the soul; not like the besotted, ignorant, and terribly poor Papist

or Anglo-Catholic who has what is called the discipline which is whipping with cords and knots, and in some cases, steel; thrashing their own flesh. It does not mortify the soul. But when the Lord says, Whom I love I chasten, then the listening sinner says, Lord enable me to endure chastening. "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons." To endure chastening is not to despise it. It is not to say, I will bear it as well as I can. But it is to submit to it; to see and feel the wisdom of God in it and to come, by the Spirit's grace, sooner or later to say, It was good for me that I was afflicted; good that I lost that confidence in myself by grace, good that I lost that substance that I valued, good that I lost my wisdom and was brought to depend on Christ, the wisdom of God.

Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall also hear this, that I am the rest, the only rest of the soul. God, on the seventh day, rested from all His labour and work of creation, and He said He sanctified the Sabbath, the 7th day. It is a rest. When the Lord teaches His people about this rest, He says, now bring no burden into the gate on the Sabbath; carry no burden out of the gate on the Sabbath, and if you obey Me in this then you shall find rest to your souls; then you shall call the Sabbath a delight; it shall be a real rest to you. What is that rest? Jesus Christ. What does it imply? That you take no burden on that Sabbath; that you cast every burden on Himself; that you carry no burden of sin, and guilt, He having taken all away, and your soul rests upon that blessed Person, that dear Lover, that gracious God, Jesus Christ. Jesus gives rest. "Let us labour to enter into that rest". And the labour consists much in listening, by the Spirit's grace, to the teaching of Christ.

Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall hear Me say, Be separate, touch no unclean thing, and He will bring the soul to that Scripture in the Romans: "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." There is nothing unreasonable in the gospel. Spiritual reason sees this, and sees that it is a blessed necessity to come out of the world, as to come out of self and follow the Lord whithersoever He goeth.

Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall hear the word of the gospel in a

divine promise, a promise of all that is good. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things" that you need naturally, "shall be added unto you." O what a voice the voice of Christ is.

Now what is said of this listener, this believer, this humbled and therefore humble sinner? He shall dwell safely. When there is war? Yes. "Come My people enter thou into thy chambers". Come to Me. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Plague cannot come to Christ, and He is the dwelling, He is the house that is inhabited; the temple which the Lord pitched and not man. The secret place of the Most High, the pavilion of God, into which no arrow shall be shot, no pestilence can walk in it. "Safety on earth and after death the plenitude of heaven". Now this is a gracious experience when wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost. It is not an empty notion, nor a bold, unhallowed confidence which God will reject - O many a high, hard-headed Calvinist has gone to ruin with that kind of confidence - but it is this, a sweet persuasion by the Divine Spirit that your life is hid with Christ in God. Whatever may befall the body, whatever may come to the circumstances, whatever sickness or trouble or loss or cross or persecution may come to affect the body, your life is hid with Christ in God. No evil shall befall that man who makes God his refuge and dwelling-place. The two words in that passage are very wonderful and beautiful. First, the refuge from danger perceived and felt. "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe". O there is no enemy can come there. But a refuge in experience is indeed literally just for a storm which may pass away. A habitation is different; it is something more permanent. A habitation is a place in which you dwell, in which are the comforts, as well as safety, that you need, and because faith, in the Spirit's power, has laid hold of Christ and said, Here is my home, here is my rest, here is my provision, here is my safety; because thou hast done this, in the power of God, no evil shall come nigh thy dwelling. Your house here may be struck by lightning and destroyed - no evil, no judgement, no hell, no hell-fire, nor hell-terror, shall come nigh this dwelling. He shall dwell

safely, and sometimes he knows it. Sometimes indwelling sin prevailing in particulars will bring the poor listening soul to hear a word of chastening and rebuke and have grace to accept the punishment, but he does not feel that comfort and rest that he has had in the past. But still he dwells safely, quiet from fear. What do we fear? What has a child of God to fear? Looked at, as he is in Christ, he has nothing to fear. Looked at as he is in the wilderness, seeking a city which hath foundations, whose maker is God; considered as in the wilderness with serpents and dearth and hunger and enemies, very hostile, all around him, what then? O the fear that you will be overcome. Fear first of indwelling sin; a readiness therefore to murmur against God. Grievous is the example of our type, the church in the wilderness. Hardly a day's journey with inconvenience could they bear without murmuring. Want of water made them wish themselves back in Egypt. Want of bread had the same effect, and in various ways we see the Israelites were constantly provoking the Lord. I wish I did not know so much of that as I do; fretfulness, murmuring, greatly provoking the Lord; I have known that. Some of you have perhaps. What do you fear? I can tell you; you fear that heart that is within you, that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, unknown to you in the fullness of it. Ah, if you listen to the Lord Jesus speaking by the Spirit of inspiration in Paul, you will hear Him say this: "Take heed brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Who here can lift up his face to God and say, I have never fallen into that snare. But God says this, and O may we hear Him saying it in our hearts by the Spirit: "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." Plead it; yea, if you hear it you will plead it. Some may say that they have often taken that word to God, often pleaded it before Him: Lord, Thou hast promised Thy people that sin shall not have dominion over them; do not let it have dominion over me. "Let not any iniquity prevail against me." And so, when faith gets hold, in the power of the Spirit, of such a promise, it takes away the slavish fear of sin's dominion, and enables the soul to cast itself on Christ and on His promise; to lean on His arm and come up out of the wilderness.

"Shall dwell safely and be quiet from fear of evil". What evil, fear of evil, have you? You may have this, that you will fail to walk

with God in tribulation's path, yet it is the promise of Christ: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" You shall have peace in Me, but in the world you shall have tribulation. And as I have often named to you tribulation means trouble. Tribulation is the old Roman flail used to separate the chaff from the wheat. Does God use trouble that way? And has He used affliction in that way to you? Tribulation is spoken of in another way, in the way of the Scripture. "I will turn My hand upon the little ones and I will purely purge away thy dross and take away all thy tin." and that is a great word. And, not seeing, not feeling, the dross and tin removed as you would, may have made you many a day afraid and taken you to the Lord. Lord, didst Thou say that word to me? I have had to take it to God. Unfulfilled promises become a trouble, and this, if you have it not fulfilled as you hope, will be a trouble to you. But it will be good; when it takes you to God who spoke it, it will do you good. When you ask Him to fulfil it, whatever you may suffer, that is good. But when He comes and says this, then you dwell safely. You can say, I believe He will fulfil His word; I believe He will be with me; I believe the path of tribulation shall prove profitable to me. Then you hope that the day is coming when you will say It is good for me that I was afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I learned Thy statutes. Well, he shall be quiet from fear of evil; the evil the devil is, and the evil the devil may attempt to do. What is the devil always about? This. "He walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour". There is one word in the Psalms, or rather two words, I have often noticed and felt some attraction to. Speaking of the mercy of God to the saints, it is written: "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence." And both deceit and violence the devil attempts on all the Lord's people. But listen to Christ, hearken to His word. "Be diligent, be sober" Why? What ground have you for that when you have some experience of the roaring lion or the deceiving devil? This is the word of Christ; may you hearken to it. "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". Victory is coming. O one day we shall be out of gun-shot, out of the violence and the deceit of the devil; he shall never reach us after we have finished our pilgrimage; we shall dwell in safety and be quiet. "When He giveth quiet who then can make trouble." You may have trouble and be very quiet. You may say, the Lord is my refuge. You may be enabled to look on moving mountains, shaking earth, raging waves of the sea;

"Quiet from fear of evil".

Lastly there is a quiet in the mind sometimes with respect to eternity; where you are going, the dwelling place, Emmanuel's land, the land which is very far off, and the King in His beauty. O, says faith sometimes in the heart, you are going there. There you will rest, there you will have no hunger, no thirst, no pain because no sin. Dear friends, hearken to Christ. May the Holy Spirit bend our hearts this way, that we may find the gospel, the glorious gospel of Christ in our souls, working in us both to will and to do of God's good pleasure, so that we say to Him: "Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless His Holy Name.

AMEN.