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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 22 April 1917

WHERE TO RUN FOR SAFETY

"The Name of the Lord is a strong tower;
the righteous runneth into it and is safe"

Proverbs 18 v 10

In taking up this verse again I shall speak a little more upon what I touched on on Wednesday evening, namely, the danger to which man is exposed. Man is exposed to danger; danger, not from all the accidents, so called, to which we are exposed; not from the diseases to which we are all liable; but from the wrath of God which we have deserved. That is an imminent and, without Christ, an inevitable danger. No man can avoid it except he be found in Christ and the children of God are as much exposed to it by nature as they are "children of wrath even as others"; as Paul speaks in the Ephesians; not in God's purpose which is eternal, but as to all appearance. And when they are born again and convinced of sin, then in their own judgment and feeling they are exposed to that grave and dreadful danger, which they think they cannot possibly avoid. It is a danger that arises out of the law which we have broken, and which we can never repair. Our breaches of it are innumerable, and irreparable as to ourselves. It is solemn to be law breakers. Our danger arises also therefore out of the justice of God. The justice of God is one glorious attribute of His Being; and He could as soon deny Himself and cease to be, as He could allow His justice to be sullied in the least possible degree. Our danger also arises from our inbred corruptions. Those corruptions issue in innumerable instances in infidelity, in uncleanness, in lying, stealing, cheating, in all kinds of sin; in Sabbath breaking. Alas, that Sabbath breaking is now sanctioned in high places and by ecclesiastical authority! What will become of the Archbishop of Canterbury if God do not have mercy on him, for sanctioning and recommending labour on the Lord's Day. Wickedness - that is

what it is, and God will judge him for it. Better be a beggar lying in the gutter, with grace, than be sitting on an Episcopal throne, and be guilty of such an abomination. Our danger arises from these things, and we are all exposed to them.

Now if we are to escape it must be by the infinite goodness of God, and that goodness is made known in the Lord Jesus. On Wednesday I mentioned first that He is a strong tower in respect of this - that He is a Redeemer. We need a Redeemer or we shall lie in eternal captivity to sin, to the law, and Divine justice. But if we are redeemed by the blood of Christ we shall be redeemed by the power of Christ, and find that He, as the Redeemer, is a strong Tower for us, to set us aloft, aloft from all danger. He is a strong Tower in respect of His righteousness. "This is the name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness". (Jeremiah 23 v 6) No justice, no wrath, no law-cursing can ever enter that strong Tower; and if we are in it, we are safe. Christ is a strong Tower in respect of faithfulness. Faithfulness is "the girdle of His reins" (Isaiah 11 v 5) "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds" (Psalm 36 v 5). He is "God that cannot lie". (Titus 1 v 2). Faithfulness respects engagements. If God has engaged Himself to any of us, we are safe; if He has promised not to leave us, He will not. If He has said He will help us, He will help us. If He has told us that He will guide us with His eye, and afterward receive us to glory, no trouble, no perplexity, no crooked paths, no darkness that may be felt, shall cause us to go fatally astray. He is a strong Tower here.

Now I would speak again this morning of this strong Tower. My friends, we are all sick; but some of us feel we are sick. We are sick by sin, and sometimes sick of sin. Sin is a disease. Disease is used in the Scripture to set forth what sin is. It is a leprosy foul. And can there be, is there, a strong Tower for escape from this, a cure? Yes, there is. He is the Lord that healeth His people. He has promised them "health and cure." (Exodus 15 v 26; Jeremiah 33 v 6. He will heal all their sicknesses (Psalm 103 v 3). None else could do it. There was no

earth-grown remedy, there was no prescribed remedy for leprosy. God will have that, I think, particularly used to set forth the incurable nature of sin, with respect to everything that a man can do. He will have no possible cure used, in the Scriptures, by the priest, or any one for leprosy. It should just come and it should just go according to that rule that God Himself laid down. It should go to a man, and God alone permitted it; and it should be cured according to His will; and the cure should be known and declared by him whom God appointed. And this is indeed a very striking thing to set forth sin. The cure of this is by Jesus Christ; and every one smitten with this fearful malady and convinced of it, is brought to know how strong a Tower He is, how effectual a cure is to be had by and from the Lord Jesus. His blood cures the leprosy of sin. His witness communicated to the soul by the Spirit brings a knowledge of the cure of sin; nothing else can. And that not once only, O no; not only when deliverance is first given, but O how often afterwards, how often! O the times that God conveys to a soul the sense of his utter helplessness with respect to sin, that he can never subdue it, that he cannot cure it; that it is just an incurable disease respecting his own power. Then Christ brings the remedy. There is no child of God of any standing in truth and experience who does not know this. Take one single sin, take an abominable thought; can you manage it? Can you right it, arrest it, seize it, cut its throat by your own strength, and by the knife of a good resolution? No, there it is. It leads you always; you wish you had it not, but it is there; you wish you could expel it, but it is there. It is like the air, so subtle that it is all but impossible to exclude it; and you find yourself just a helpless creature in this respect.

Now when the Holy Ghost leads a sinner to the Lord Jesus, he has a cure in His blood, in His righteousness, in His mediation. Then there is a strong Tower for the sinner in Him. This sets him aloft, this enables him to say

I'll wage the war within
Till death that puts an end to life
Shall put an end to sin

This helps him to wage the inward war, helps him to follow on; helps him to say "I will follow on, I will wait on the Lord, I will struggle as well as I can; but all my struggling must be vain to cure; the Lord alone can effect the cure that I need". Heaven may often be doubtful to the man of God who feels sin's raging power and pollution; but it is not doubtful to him when he is in this strong Tower. No, he says I shall overcome, I shall get the victory, I shall reach the place I am set out for. So he speaks just when he is in this strong Tower. The Name of the Lord is this strong Tower - the good Physician. He illustrated His spiritual power over the disease of sin by the exercise of His power on earth when He healed poor people of all manner of sickness and disease. We read that He "healed them that had need of healing" (Luke 9 v 11; Matthew 4 v 23). And my friends, it is so today. He is in heaven, but He is the good Physician there. He is there to exercise His heavenly skill and His authority; and as He cast out devils in the days of His flesh on earth, so at times today He casts out devils of sin - devils which have plagued the poor child of God till almost his life was worn out. Devils, O what legions of these, I say, He has cast out again and again! And I will tell you this: if any of you live and die without some experience of the Lord Jesus casting out the devils of sin from your hearts, as to their dominion and the love of sin, you will never be where He is in heaven.

O beware of trust ill-grounded

Beware of thinking you can manage any sin. Beware of thinking you have got a remedy of your own. Watchfulness, prayerfulness, reading the Scriptures, conference with God's people, hearing the truth, whatever things you may think would be remedies for your lust, your pride, your hardness of heart, your ingratitude, you will find yourself deceived in respect of these things. The one Physician is He of whom it is said, who Himself says this of Himself: "I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exodus 15 v 26) We do need healing, daily healing in respect of sin. And when a sinner feels himself, as it were, dying under the movings and

spreadings of some sin, then what Hart writes is very beautiful

Fly then, awakened sinner, fly;
Your case admits no stay

and under the Holy Spirit's teaching that sinner can walk in that counsel; he runs to the throne of God's heavenly grace, for there and there alone is hope.

The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower in respect of peace. Christ is the Prince of Peace; He is the God of peace. (Isaiah 9 v 6; Hebrews 13v 20) "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15 v 13) "And the very God of peace" says Paul "sanctify you wholly" (1 Thessalonians 5 v 23). What a mercy that is! and it is a mystery too; it is strange that a person can be in trouble and full of peace at the same time; that he can be engaged in a hot battle, and be full of peace at the same time; that he can be full of the sweet peace of God through the atoning blood of Jesus and be resisting sin and the devil at the same time; that he can have trouble in providence, trouble in his house, trouble in his person and yet have the sweet sense of the peace of God in his heart at the same time. He can say of a bitter cup - "Thy will be done"; and that is when the Prince of peace is present and hides his poor, afflicted creature. O it is great for the Lord to hide a creature in trouble. There is plenty of trouble, O plenty of trouble today; and the Lord's people are not exempted, nor are they to be. But what a favour it is if in the midst of our troubles, the blessed Jesus, the Prince of peace, the Lord of life, comes and says "Peace, be still". "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid. (John 14 v 27) He had trouble, He passed through a sea of trouble; waves and billows of trouble rolled over the Lord Jesus. His holy soul that did no sin, but yet had the burden of sin, went down beneath the waves and billows, but He rose a Victor over all; and then He said to His disciples, "My peace" - the peace that I have as

having overcome for you, the peace that I have as a conqueror of sin and the Lord ^{over} of the devil, this peace, that is My peace, I give unto you. Not the peace that the eternal Jehovah ever had and ever will have, notwithstanding all the commotions amongst men and in the world; but the peace which Jesus the Redeemer had after His conflicts; the peace that came to Him after the law had expended its anger and wrath and curse upon Him instead of the sinner; the peace He had after He had overcome the devil for His people, destroyed death and him that had the power of death; the peace that He had after He had risen from the dead, and now was no more subject to the law or affliction or anything of that kind, but only peace filled Him. Now He says to His disciples "I give you this peace, My peace." This peace of the Saviour having finished His work - that is the peace that He gives His people; and it is just like a garrison to them, like a strong Tower. It lifts them up, does, as in the margin the word is, "sets them aloft". It is called setting them with princes, even the princes of God's people (Psalm 113 v 7 and 8); being made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2 v 6) Why, you know this, some of you, you have been there; as we sometimes sing,

Thrice comfortable hope
That calms my stormy breast;
My Father's hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best.

You did not then want with your own fingers to put some sweetness into your cup, did you? You did not want then with your own hand to take out some bitters that God had put in, did you? Peace with God, peace in your conscience, peace in your mind, peace with your circumstances, peace with what God has done - O it is a sweet thing! And it must be known to be understood, even to be believed in. Nobody can believe it could be until they come into it. No change in your troubles, yet such a change in your mind that you may say "Am I the same person I was five minutes ago? Then I was troubled; now I am quiet." Everything is changed, yet nothing is changed in your circumstances. It is this: you are in a strong Tower, in the Lord Jesus, in His mercy, in His

kindness and pity. It is as He says "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66 v 13). This is His blessed work. I wish the Lord may give us this: It is so different from sleeping and slumbering, from indifference; so different from disregarding God in any judgment, in any providence. "Faint not" He said, "when you are rebuked of Me". "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (Hebrews 12 v 5) It is a great mercy to be brought to this point, really to accept His dealings with you. And even perhaps you might think "Now what else is coming? I am afraid still more trouble may befall me;" and yet with that to say, "It is well - well with the child, well with me".

Well while life shall last
And well when called to die

And all this is in the Name of the Lord - "the God of peace". And this brings you to some experience of that Scripture where God promises this: "I will strengthen them in the Lord and they shall walk up and down in His Name, saith the Lord. (Zechariah 11 v 12). This is a strong Tower, plenty of room in it, plenty of peace and plenty of strength.

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The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower also in respect of fulness. A fulness resides in the Lord. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". (Colossians 1 v 19). You cannot need more than that, my friends. Moses thought all the world possessed could not suffice Israel for a moment; but this was when he was looking at what the world possessed. (Numbers 11 v 22) But when a sinner looks on Christ, on God's love, on God's goodness, on His word of promise, on His infinite wealth, then he says "How can I want? How can I sink with such a ^{Prop}Rock? How can I want having such a fulness of supply?" This strong Tower of Christ's fulness will support and preserve and make you quiet in the midst of everything that you may have, that you may be suffering, and every want that may be pressing upon you. And O, I know this, as some of you do: a sense of this gives a proper,

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humble independence of every creature on the earth. You have God and that is enough. How can you fail with such a Fountain of supply? Well my friends, what a comfort it is to come to this - to be brought by the blessed Spirit of Jesus Christ to Him who has everything in Himself! "I will be with you", He says. He illustrates how that He can supply His children by what He did when on earth. Think of the miracles of Christ, the miracle of feeding thousands on a few loaves and fishes, and the baskets of fragments which were taken up (John 6 v 11-13). O if the Lord opens it to you, that He has this same power now that He is in heaven; and O, if He shows a sinner that all the blessed fulness of His love, love which passeth all comprehension, all knowledge; if He shows a sinner how that His grace is sufficient, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12 v 9); how that His power is sufficient to keep fire from burning and rivers from drowning, and devils from destroying and, much more, from hurting, and sin from ruining a sinner; O, if He but show His wisdom in the infiniteness of it, how His promises run, "I will guide thee with Mine eye", - then says the sinner, "What harm can ever reach my soul? What trouble, what want can ever come to me, seeing I have such a Fountain of supply?" And this strong Tower is for every elect person bought by the blood of Christ and quickened by the Spirit of Christ. How afraid we are of some things! How afraid we may be of wants sometimes! How fearful some people are, some of the Lord's people! If any one here were to say "Well, I am full of fear of every sort and kind", I should be able to say often, I am a companion to you in that"; I know what fear is. But then this is what God gives, power at times to say, "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?" (Psalm 49 v 5). Why should I fear? You say, "There is plenty of reason for fear" Not when you see where you are, not when you feel that you are in this strong Tower. O, faith lives on this strength and fulness; faith says "Here is enough, here is all a God can give" O, He can give no more than His Son, and His Son is equal with Himself. He can give no more than everlasting love, and this is in His Son. He can give no more than omnipotence; He can give no more respecting this world than a promise to help you and supply you;

and all this is in Jesus Christ. Here is all a God can give. We shall need the creatures that God has ordained us to need; but we only need them as being ordained; we only need them to what God has ordained them to do for us. Our dependence ultimately reaches God Himself. "I will trust and not be afraid" - Why? - "for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". (Isaiah 12 v 2; 26 v 4) And this is a strong Tower, the Tower of God's fulness.

A fulness resides in Jesus our Head
And ever abides to answer our need

O happy people who come to this! A man may say he possesses enough for this life, and more than he has power to spend; and yet God may in a day or two or a moment cause all he had to make to themselves wings and fly away. But he who says "My treasure is immense in heaven, my providence is in heaven, my life is in heaven, my temporal things are in heaven," he, even he, is safe.

The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower in another respect; in respect of that fitness for heaven which every child of God is brought to long for. The thing that will shut a person out of heaven is in himself - sin. That which will prepare and fit a person for heaven is in God, in Christ, and the whole of that is wrapped up by the Apostle Paul in these few important words to the Corinthians. "Who" - that is Christ - "of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption" (1 Corinthians 1 v 30). It is wrapped up there friends; and whatever else you would have, would be of no avail at all. That is the whole of it, the whole of the gospel - Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption. You will get through if you have an interest in that; you will reach heaven if you have an interest in that. "Though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not", O, if you can say, "doubtless Thou art our Father, Thou art our Wisdom, our Righteousness, our Sanctification and our Redemption", all, all is well. (Isaiah 63 v 16) Well now, faith wants to get hold of this.

And this brings me to notice in the next place what the righteous man does - he runs into this Tower. The righteous man is one who has no righteousness of his own; he has not a rag that he can trust to. He has everything to make him ashamed of himself, everything. Why, a good man would not dare to trust one single experience, nor all the experiences that the Holy Ghost has wrought in him as a title to heaven. Evidences, experiences are; but title, never. You will never, never, never plead what God has wrought in you as a title to heaven. A righteous man is a man who stands righteous, justified, in Jesus Christ, who says in sweet faith "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". (Isaiah 45 v 24). Ah, it will be solemn to die, but blessed to die with this. "This is the Name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness". (Jeremiah 23 v 6) O sinner, may this be brought home to you. O poor soul in bondage, this is the liberty you will get. Poor creatures under the law, this is the deliverance God will give you, no other; this is the way to get nigh. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ) Ephesians 2 v 13). This righteous man feels in danger, and he sees a strong, high Tower, a stronghold, and the Lord gives him faith to run into it. He sees it by faith, and by faith he runs into it. What a mercy it is to have a sight of this Tower; that is, of Jesus Christ. "Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope". (Zechariah 9 v 12). "The Lord also will be a Refuge for the oppressed, a Refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee". (Psalm 9 v 9 and 10). "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". (Isaiah 26 v 4). The righteous know this; the good man knows this. He may be ignorant of many things; but of this the Lord gives him some knowledge sooner or later, gives him to see that there is strength here, and nowhere else. So by faith he comes to this.

In order to run in, there is one certain thing needful: "Draw me, we will run after Thee". That is what people who are blessed with it love to feel in their souls. The deadness, dullness, flatness, aversion, inability, all, all go from the soul

as to their power, when that drawing comes. "Draw me". Draw me by Thy suitableness; draw me by Thy Spirit's operation; draw me from the things that hold me back from Thee; my idleness of nature and my indifference. Draw me Lord and then I will run. The Psalmist has an expression to the same point. He says "I will run the way of Thy commandments" - when? - "when Thou shalt enlarge my heart". (Psalm 119 v 32). He does not say this backwardness was innocence. O, no; he says "I am a guilty creature in my indifference and idleness of hands. I am a vile creature in my aversion to prayer. That is what he confesses. How often have some of us confessed all that to the Lord!. That is one important point. The other comes as a remedy. Draw me Lord; enlarge my heart, touch my mind, influence my conscience, take hold of my will, inflame my affections; and then I will run after Thee. Another word the Psalmist has which is very true in the cases of God's people at times: "My soul followeth hard after Thee".(Psalm 63 v 8). Do you ever find that? The Apostle Paul had that experience. Though he knew so much, yet he said, "I follow after; I do not count myself to have apprehended; I am not where I would be, not as I would be; I know not what I desire to know fully. But this one thing I do; I forget the things which are behind and reach forward to the things which are before. I follow after, if by any means I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3) Says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians "So run that ye may obtain" (1 Corinthians 9 v 24). "If a man also strive for masteries", he lays aside every impediment, lays aside the things that so easily beset him, and he runs, and is temperate in all things (2 Timothy 2 v 5). "So run, that ye may obtain". And now, when the blessed Holy Spirit looks down upon a poor creature lying perhaps in trouble, forlorn, distracted, distraught, He teaches him, influences, moves, prompts, and urges him. The Apostle uses that strong word: "He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8 v 27). He helps our infirmities; He comes alongside of a sinner burdened with many things, and gives him what we should call a lift. O how welcome is a lift for a person walking on a hot and dusty road in the summer, if one passing by should say, I will give you a lift.

But here is a poor sinner burdened with infirmities; he is struggling on to heaven; he does not think sometimes he shall get there, but thinks he shall faint and die by the way. But the Spirit comes and gives him such a touch, such a blessed lift in his soul, such an operation upon his mind; He inflames his desires and affections, and then the sinner goes on. That is being helped to run so that we may obtain, so that we may win. "That I may win Christ - that I may run into this high Tower, and find safety for my soul". "The righteous runneth into it". It is written, and solemn it is to read it in the Spirit's light: "The Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man". "An horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength". (Psalm 147 v 10; Psalm 33 v 17). But O, if the Holy Spirit comes and gives you that assistance which He gives to all His children, then you will find yourself running. "The righteous runneth into it and is safe". He runs by faith to Christ, by precious faith. The poor creature may be in a fire, and he will run to Christ because Christ has come to him. Yes, it was said by one of old who did not want to know the Lord and would not bow to Him, "There is One in the furnace like unto the Son of God". And those three men who were there in the fire were safe in the Lord because He had come to them; and they found Him a safe Tower, a Defence from the fire, and they came out unhurt.

May we be favoured to run to this blessed Tower. All will be well with us then; all will be well then. Safety? Yes,

Safety on earth, and after death
The plenitude of heaven

AMEN.