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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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PROVERBS 22 V 3

"The prudent man forseeth the evil and
hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are
punished"

I should like to add a few observations this evening to those which I made on this passage on Lord's Day evening. There is a vein of truth and of experience in this Scripture which, if the Lord would kindly open to us, and apply to us, we should find to our edification; we should find it profitable. The way to heaven is very difficult. Christ has left no uncertain sound on this. He said to one who professed a willingness to follow Him - "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Also He said - "In the world ye shall have tribulation", and it has been the common experience of the saints of God in all ages and he who thinks he is going to heaven and has no pressure of affliction, no separating flail of tribulation laid on him, no temptations from the devil, and no difficulties in the way in respect of divine providence, is under a great delusion.

Shall Simon bear the cross alone
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me

And each saint finds it so with more or less distinctness, and pain. Naturally, we shun the cross, we seek to avoid the probing, we want to get away from trouble, but, after the Spirit, a child of God would have his heart in the hands of a good and gracious God and his path, and life, and difficulties, and all things under the management of Him on whose shoulders the government of the church is. And how your hearts stand affected to the path of tribulation, God knows, but be assured of this, if you are not in the path of tribulation, if there is no flail laid on to separate the chaff from the wheat, if you find

a contrary experience to all the Scripture speaks concerning the way to heaven, then you are not in the way to heaven. But if you find trouble, anguish, difficulty, temptation, many evils stirring, moving, incessantly persisting, soliciting, then if, with these things, you find access to the throne of God's heavenly grace, and some sustenance from time to time, then you may conclude that things are favourable, things stand well on your side, and look well for you. You will have the good society of the slain prophets, martyrs of Jesus, an Apostle Paul with his thorn in the flesh; Job, under the hand of God. You will find yourselves in godly society, and climbing the hill Difficulty you will reach the summit where the house of the Lord is built. Blessed saints who are in the path of tribulation. There is an evil in the world, in the hearts of the saints of God, which, above all other things, all other evils, they fear, and that is indwelling sin, and sin about them. They have it, and bless God that our eyes are not closed to it. Some of us see it; we feel it; it solicits, it assaults, it deceives. It is powerful; it lies still. O, its shapes, its forms, its workings, who is able fully to discover? Indwelling sin is that that pollutes us, pollutes every thought, blemishes every word, every act; blemishes the whole child of God, and he finds that he can do nothing good as he would, and needs, and feels to need, the blood of Christ to cleanse his holy things from their imperfections.

On Lord's Day evening I mentioned sin with respect to that which is a consequence of it, in all in whom it is, and particularly in all who die in it, namely punishment, and this is foreseen by every prudent man, every man whose eyes are opened to see, whose conscience is quickened to feel, what sin deserves. And, seeing this, and also seeing by precious faith the Lord Jesus, he flees unto Him to hide him, as said the Psalmist - "Deliver me from mine enemies, for I flee unto Thee to hide me" Blessed is that man who maketh the Lord his trust and turneth not aside. Blessed is that sinner in whose eyes the Person of Christ is that one hiding place into which he flees by precious faith and this means to all in it, heaven. Everyone who flees to the blessed Son of God, Jesus Christ, for refuge from the wrath to come and lays hold of the hope set before him is in a fair way, a very fair way, and better will be the end of the thing with him than the beginning, and better will be the day of his death than the

day of his birth. O, what a favour it is to say from your heart,
Christ only I seek

Other refuge have I none
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee

This evening I purpose speaking of the evil of indwelling sin, the evil of temptation, and the evil we may find in providence, and speak of a prudent man fleeing because he foresees the evil in those things. Fleeing from them unto God in Christ to hide him.

Now I take that monster - I would use proper language, but I know I cannot use adequate language to express that abominable thing, that polluting thing, that deceiving, that violent thing - indwelling sin. That bar that is often set up between us and our God; that pollution that puts us far from Him for the time; that hardens our hearts by its deceitfulness, that takes the form of infidelity, that laughs with a mocking Ishmael, that unites with the Unitarian who denies the Son of God; that would fain blaspheme the Holy Ghost. That dreadful, wicked, awful spirit of indwelling sin; we have it, and may we never be other than thankful if we know it by the teaching of the Spirit, and if we are led to flee from it into our only hope and hiding place. This indwelling sin makes a man of God look more a devil to himself than a saint. Erskine said - I am both a devil and a saint - and surely a child of God who is instructed to make discernment between the two, and differentiate, will perceive that though he believes again and again he has grace, he firmly believes, and mourns over, the fact that he has sin, and that sin mars him, pollutes him, hardens him, and makes him look to himself much more like a reprobate, like a hypocrite, than anything else betimes, and he sees this - connected with indwelling sin and its workings - that if left to its dominion for ever so short a time, he takes steps that look like the steps of an apostate. I do not speak a strange thing to you all do I? Have none of you thought that some of your steps were like the steps of an apostate? Have none of you felt that you have walked contrary to that exhortation - "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God". And if you had so walked, what trouble has come on you lest you should be left to that power that has beguiled, that has overcome, that has thrown you

down, that has polluted you, and set up a bar between you and that gracious Redeemer who once, if not more than once, you thought you loved, and could wholly trust, entirely confide in. Now a prudent man has faith; he is a believing man, and he perceives that if he is left to indwelling sin for a time he will take those woeful steps and bring himself into that woeful condition that I have just named. and, foreseeing this, what does he do? He says, I flee unto the Lord to hide me. I have no power against this sin. I know it, I feel it. I feel its workings, I realise its power. Sometimes I am under it; sometimes I have to say - "Iniquities prevail against me", but I have no power. I can become an idolator, but I cannot turn out the idols when I perceive them. What does he do? He says, I have no refuge, I have no hope, but the Lord Jesus, and here he runs by faith, here his fervent petitions go - Lord, deliver me, deliver me from that state that I see set forth in the Scripture. May not my carcass fall in the wilderness. May I not, as concerning faith, and a good conscience, make shipwreck. May I not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. May I not be left to turn my back on Christ crucified. O keep me. Can you enter into this? Is this part of your life, fleeing, fleeing, fleeing to the blessed Saviour, the Friend of sinners. Is it part of your experience that, if you cannot get to Him you are miserable, you feel destitute. The prudent man foresees what a terrible thing a fall is, and sees too how easy it would be for him to get such a fall as would greatly hurt his conscience and dishonour his Lord, and therefore he hides himself. He goes to Christ. He has got a thorn in the flesh and he goes to Christ; he cannot do without Him. Now shun not to look at this, dear friends. We are living in a day when one cry is for a bright and cheerful religion. Well, it is far more important to have a good religion, a religion that will stand when devils roar; that will stand the shake of that icy river, death; that will stand the test to which God will put it. Far more important that is. Therefore I would pray you, look at this. Do you know what it is, not merely in a general way, to be a sinner, but in a particular manner to feel this awful thing, indwelling sin which, left to its own workings, would soon give you a foul fall, and therefore, seeing this by faith, you run, flee to hide yourself in Him whose Name is a strong tower into which the righteous runneth and is safe. This will end well. This will end well in two ways. It will end well in that the person so conducting himself shall get answers to prayer, and

Christ's word by Paul shall be fulfilled in him - "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace" Ah, how good that is. And it shall have also a good ending with respect to his ending his mortal race, for "he that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne." If we rightly view and feel the nature and the workings of indwelling sin, there will be no hope for us but as we are enabled to hide ourselves in the dear Saviour of sinners. "Hide me O thou Saviour hide" - till this, of all other storms, this the most - "till the storm of life be past." And to you who are young in the ways of God let me say this in all sobriety, do not think that you will ever get rid of this trouble while you live, and do not expect it to weaken, as long as you live, in itself. O, but one may say, that is too dreadful a thing to think of. But though it is so, if you are alone, if you have Christ's grace you will say - "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" What for? For deliverance from a body of sin and death. He thanked God for it. He had been, and he was often, so to speak, a victim, vanquished, a vanquished person, the Apostle Paul. "The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that do I". Hence his exclamation, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind" - that cried, and wept, and sobbed, and prayed, and longed, and looked for the Lord - "with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin". So then "it is no more I that do it", when I am crying out of the violence offered me; it is no more I that am guilty in it when I object, when I pray against it, when I struggle against it. "It is no more I that do it, but sin" - which God will exterminate one day - that dwelleth in me" And let me exhort you to note that point. "It is no more I that do it". Bless God for a purity in you, if it be there, a purity in you that rejects, that objects, that resists, that does not consent to, that sin, and that violence that is offered. O what a mercy it is to be so blessed. "It is no more I", the man of God; I, begotten by the incorruptible seed of God's Word, "that do it". The inward man, the hidden man of the heart, the new creature, the pure child of God in him, the word and seed of God, shall remain for ever, but sin, that is separable, that shall be separated eventually and for ever from the child of God. Sin is separable. Sin is separated, and sin shall be extinguished from the child of God's very nature. It

shall be removed absolutely and for ever and ever. "I flee unto Thee to hide me." O, what a mercy. Blessed conflict, blessed soldier, blessed soldier that resists the enemy, that looks to the Lord for victory. O what a mercy of mercies it is to foresee by faith the evil that indwelling sin could do you, the damage it could do to your conscience, the hurt it could bring to your mind, the perversity it could bring to your will, and the rebellion with which it could fill your heart and, foreseeing all this evil, to be enabled to hide yourself in Him whose grace alone is sufficient. Why, brethren, our conflict makes Christ the better to us. It makes Christ the brighter and the sweeter; the Rose of Sharon's fragrance we need, but we shall not need it as we feel to need it if we had no painful experience of that foul thing, sin, indwelling sin. O Christ, He is the fountain of all goodness in His children, and they do need Him. He is in heaven and they want to get there to be with Him. He is their Lord, their life, their Head, their righteousness, their all and in all, and at times that thing that keeps them from Him, that sets up a bar between Him and their souls, that filthy thing, that mocking spirit, that atheistical spirit, indwelling sin, is hateful, and it is hated. I do not know how to speak about this. If any man ought to speak against it, I should, for it is much in me, and much damage has it wrought in me for these many, many years, and O, but for sovereign grace and timely assistance brought, and rendered by that ever gracious, and blessed One, Jesus Christ, what would have become of me years ago. But look at this dear friends, there is a hiding place, there is a Deliverer, a Saviour, a Brother born for adversity, who has promised to help, and who has said by His servant Paul - "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." Heaven is sure to all strugglers; sure to all who climb that great and dreadful hill Difficulty; sure to all who are enabled to conflict with sin, to resist it, for, says Christ - "I go to prepare a place for you" and that enemy you have resisted, that enemy who often has done you so much harm that you could not express it, that enemy who has followed you all your life, hunted your every step, and frightened you again and again, that enemy you shall see no more, hear no more, feel no more, by him be hurt no more. Blessed conflict, yea rather blessed Victor, Conqueror, Jesus Christ, who says - "Sin shall not have dominion over you". Lift your heads up my brethren for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed, and the day is coming when

every weary soul, every worn out soldier, shall find rest in Him to whom they fled, in all their difficulties, to hide them. "I flee unto Thee". "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself"

Now let me mention another thing that a prudent man has some knowledge of, and again and again foresees what harm he may get by it, and therefore hides himself in Christ, and that is the power of temptation. Temptation more or less we must expect. O we must expect it.

Dream not of faith so clear
That shuts all doubtings out
Remember how the devil dared
To tempt e'en Christ to doubt

He can picture you to yourselves, who are the saints of God, as nothing better than hypocrites, painted hypocrites, and everything that you loathe. And if God permit it, he can make you believe that you are just the very opposite of all that you would fain be. He can make you blush if a child of God speaks kindly to you, and lets you know that he thinks you are a child of God, and make you say what have I been saying to him, and what have I done to give him such a kindly opinion of me, and he can make you fear that you are just nothing better than an Ishmael, than a Judas, than a Balaam, than a Demas, than an enemy of the Lord Jesus and of your own soul. And although I may - some may understand it - I may have something to suffer for speaking thus of the enemy, for he is a revengeful spirit, I will speak as much as I can against him. O what a devil he is. With plenty of sin of our own to be perpetually condemning ourselves for, but we have an enemy, a vile enemy, a cruel enemy, a God-hating enemy, the enemy of God and man, that fallen spirit, the devil, that subtle creature, that adversary that stands always, when permitted, at the right-hand of a poor Joshua clothed in filthy garments. What will he do? Why he will make it appear an impossible thing for you to be a saint. Anybody may be, but not you. Ah my friends, the devil is a fallen spirit, and has no love, but only hatred, for God and man. And perhaps some of you know him, know him in a violent form, know him in the most terrible subtlety. Know him as an Ishmael who mocks at your solemnities. Know him as an east wind sucking up all the sap and

moisture of your spirit. Know him as one who maligns God and paints Him in such black characters as that you would flee from the Divine Majesty. And know him as tempting you to believe everything that is evil of yourself, that you are just nothing better than, as I have said, a hypocrite. And he torments you; he walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. A lion, a strong beast; a roaring lion, terrifying all within the sound of his voice; all the saints, that is to say, and none, none going to heaven, shall be altogether exempt from this terrible spirit as to his temptations. Jesus, our Forerunner and Redeemer, was in the wilderness forty days with wild beasts, and the worst of all, the devil, who tempted Him, here and there taking Him, Christ submitting to it; tempting Him in a variety of ways. And shall the Head suffer and the members go free? And shall the Head suffer and the rest go free? Shall we belong to Jesus Christ and the devil be our friend, and let us, if I may use that word, let us go to heaven without any roaring? without any attempting to destroy us?. No. O, afflicted saint, look at this. The enemy is the devil; he is subtle, he is powerful, he can speak and yet maybe you think it is your own voice. He can hurl blasphemies into your mind and you think they are partly from your own heart. Then you are terrified that you should have such thoughts. He may just malign God, and make you think you are the only one in the offence, and you do not perhaps suspect the enemy, the devil, has anything to do with those thoughts that terrify you, and you see that, under this temptation, a fall is imminent, and perhaps you feel it is inevitable. Perhaps you feel there is no way of escape. You may feel, even with David in a case: he said "As the Lord liveth there is but a step between me and death", and you think you will soon take it. Now you foresee this; it stands before you. A fall seems - let me say it again - imminent, and inevitable, but there is one way open to you; the Lord show it you. The Lord help you to run into that way. "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself." And where does he go for this safety? Why, to the Lord Jesus; the precious blood of Christ, the great power of Christ. Paul, when he had the messenger of Satan to buffet him - remember, the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him - had one resource, and you, a child of God, will have, again and again in your experience, the very same. Prayer; "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching unto the same". Three times over said the Apostle, Lord remove this thorn. O,

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it killed him so, pierced and pained him, confused, and weakened him, and tried him; made him feel, perhaps, how can I serve the Lord with this? How can I go on in the way to heaven with this? How can I deem myself a child with this? And so he must, of necessity, seek the Lord that he might have that thorn in the flesh taken away. But Christ gave him something better than deliverance - do not start at it, though I say it - Christ gave him something better than deliverance. He gave him grace to bear it. He said - "My grace is sufficient for thee". And so powerful, so sweet, so penetrating, so permeating was that word, that it fully removed Paul's wish to get rid of the thorn. It brought his will to the will of Christ. It subdued his feelings, it made his pain bearable. Yea, he could glory in it. "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." And I say, poor, afflicted one, tempted sinner, you have the same refuge open to you. You, a tempted child of God, may go, and you shall by the Spirit's assistance, go, to the same Lord, and in your manner, and your measure, get the same grace that the Apostle Paul got and, in your manner, and measure, glory in your infirmity. The prudent man goes here, he goes to His Lord and Master. Go, you poor sinner; go, you tempted sinner, to this blessed One. He wont forsake you; He wont turn a deaf ear to you. The devil is cruel; Christ is kind. The devil is a polluted, and a polluting spirit; Christ is holy, and good, and He can cleanse every thought of your heart, and bring into captivity to the obedience of Himself. The devil is a liar; Christ is true. The devil is a murderer; Christ came to grant His people life, and that they might have life more abundantly He comes to them from time to time. A word must suffice to the wise here.

The third thing is this, when a child of God has providential affliction he finds himself weak, and knows not often what to do. Afflictions have such a look of a curse in them, such a taste of a curse in them, and the enemy of the soul will come in here and use them as an evidence, if possible; he will make them appear to be that you are a reprobate.

Now you see this evil, in connection with trouble, that if it is not sanctified to you, it will do you harm. You see that either you will be profited or injured by affliction. If it be in your person, if it be in your family, if it be in your business, whatever it is, you will perceive by the teaching of the Spirit, that unless it be sanctified it will be harmful. And what effect will this have? It will lead you to cry to God; it will bring you to hide yourself at the throne of God's heavenly grace. The Apostle expresses this point beautifully; as inspired by the Spirit he writes: "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby". "Afterward" - there is a rub. We think the moment we get trouble, that is the time to be delivered out of it. Paul says "afterward"; when you have been exercised; when the trouble has wrought in you what the Lord sent it to do. "Afterward" - when you can see the way God has dealt with you, that it was wise, that it was kind; that He detached you from some things to which you were too much attached; that He drew you to Himself; that He set your heart more on Himself and less on other things; Afterward it will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto your exercised heart. And the man goes to God; prayer is his one thing now; the open door set before him which no man can shut and no devil shall shut. The Lord invites him to come to Him. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". Come to Me with your troubles. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." His friend Jesus Christ, speaks to this prudent man, will not let him despair; says, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." One says

Thou art coming to a King
Large petitions with thee bring
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much

Ask Him to bless you, give you grace to bear the affliction, and to bless the affliction to you to bring your will to His will, that it may lie straight with His blessed will, and you may be made willing to be poor, to be afflicted. Willing to have that trouble in your body, or in your circumstances, or in your family, willing for it to be

there so that Christ may bless you. O you say, if He will but bless me, what matter other things. This then is that that the Lord will give. He will give safety, a sweet sense of it sometimes. The man hides himself. This hiding place is none other than Christ, the secret place of the Most High, the shadow of the Almighty. That is the dwelling of a man of God, near to which no plague shall come. "It shall not come nigh thy dwelling" is God's promise. And the man who makes the Lord His trust shall surely find it true. No harm shall reach the soul. Who is he that shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good. Fear not tempted sinner, fear not afflicted sinner, fear not poor soul plagued with indwelling sin, you have a good God. A good God, a mighty Redeemer, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it. And all this because He is faithful. God is faithful in all this, His great work, and faithful to His blessed promise.

These are the main observations I desire to make this evening. There are many things growing out of this, but I cannot take them up now. May the Lord make us sensible of this, our blessed, and our safe place, the hiding place which is provided, the glorious high throne from the beginning which is the place of our sanctuary.

The simple pass on, heedless, thoughtless of what is in them. Not tempted, not violently driven against their will and wish by the devil, and, though afflicted in providence like other people, do not fly to God and get no sanctifying grace in their afflictions. May we then be made the prudent man who, foreseeing the evils that may come, that must come without grace, we may hide ourselves in the dear Person of Jesus Christ, remembering, by precious faith, that God has set Him up to be a hiding place. A man shall be a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the storm. Yea, He shall be a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, when the blast of the terrible ones shall be as a storm against the wall. The Lord add His blessing. AMEN.