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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Wednesday evening, 27th. May 1925

Text - Proverbs 8. v. 34.

"Blessed is the man that heareth Me,
watching daily at My gates,
waiting at the posts of My doors".

After describing Himself, setting forth His eternal presence with His Father, speaking of His own eternal word - that nothing in creation, no stone however valuable, nothing that can be named or imagined are to be compared with Him for value; after declaring that He was with His Father in the work of creation, which in the language of Paul to the Hebrews - creating all things Himself by His Father, Jesus Christ enters upon an exhortation. He says, 'Now therefore, seeing I Am that I Am, that I have what I have, that I am sent of My Father, that I always have been' - "Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men. Now therefore hearken unto Me, O ye children." What a wonder it is, what a wonder of sovereign grace it is to have the hearing ear to listen to the Saviour, the Friend of sinners. "Hearken unto Me." Men listen to anything but the gospel; to anybody but the Lord Jesus, but He graciously causes some to hear. He gives the hearing ear. The seeing eye and the hearing ear - the Lord hath made both of them. "Hearken unto Me." He has something to say. He has words to say which He has heard with His Father in eternity. Words of counsel for fools; of strength for the weak; of comfort for the troubled; of confirmation to the shaky: of fulness for supplying the needs of empty people. "Hearken unto Me." Words of wisdom to direct the feet of the uncertain and to comfort all who mourn. Ah, if we have but the ear; if we have but the ear! - "for blessed are they that keep My ways." Ways of truth - of peace. A way above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath. Blessed are they that are in them, and often fearing lest they should be turned away from them. They beg and beseech Him to preserve them. "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Do not you think that Asaph was one, who slipping as he had done, and restored as he was, would appreciate, in a spiritual manner and in a good measure, an exhortation of this kind. Asaph you have been foolish, you confess yourself to have been "as a beast".

Now regard Me. Listen to My instruction. "Turn not to the right hand nor to the left." "..... keep My ways." Keep to the atonement. Keep to My righteousness. Keep to My precious Word. Keep to My power. "Abide in Me." If you have gone astray and you hear this word it will bring out, evoke from your very heart, the petition that you might hear Him; receive His instruction, and keep His ways. "Hear instruction." It will be contrary to the wisdom of nature. "Hear instruction." That will be contrary sometimes to the voice of providence. The voice of providence may seem to say - 'now you must do this, you must omit that, you must forbear the other.' Listen to Christ. 'Cast what you have on Me.' "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart," and and not let you fall. "Be wise." 'Wait on Me.' Refuse not instruction that comes against your pride and that may come athwart your path. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors," - that heareth My wisdom.

I said, and I repeat it, if we hear Christ, we hear words which He heard in eternity. We hear the words of His Father. We hear the words of His Spirit. We hear His own words. His words are words of life. "The words that I speak unto you," (the words that I, Jesus, the Wisdom of God, speak unto you) "they are spirit and they are life." The words therefore, being words of life, animate the soul, draw out faith, bring forth love, work patience, and set Christ before the sinner. What words He speaks! 'Tis good when you listen; when you can say, "Hark my soul, it is the Lord." When His gracious instruction is life to you; to your conscience, making it tender; to your understanding, instructing it; to your will, subduing it; to your affections, attracting them and setting them on Himself. It is great to hear God. Listen to what He says. If He says to you, "Abide in Me." - it will mean you must leave yourself. No man hath left house or child, husband or wife, father or mother, brother or sister, anything and all things for my sake, but he shall have, in this life such and such things and in the world to come, eternal life. Does He say, "Abide in Me," to you? Does your nature say - 'I will go my own way?' Listen to what He says - "Abide in Me." 'I am all the fulness you can need. A full supply for every need. Light, life, instruction, constancy, perseverance.' He has everything. "Abide in Me." "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you,

ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Abide in Me." Blessed is the sinner who hears such a word as that. It is an instruction. It tells me that there is death everywhere but in Christ. Emptiness in all things but in Him. Vanity in everything but in himself. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me." Warning him. We need to be warned. Said Peter, "Be sober, be vigilant;" (be vigilant, watchful, sober, regarding the things which He teaches) "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Such a word will put you on caution. It will bring you sometimes to the prophet's position - "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the fenced place and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." We need caution. "With caution we should tread." We need it. You may let an idol in; you cannot get it out. You may turn to some vanity; you cannot turn again to substance, and if the Lord warns you, give heed to His blessed word. When He had instructed His disciples concerning Himself and His approaching death, He said to them - "Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men"

"Hearken unto Me." 'Do not expect to go in the sunshine all your days. Do not look for My presence in a glorious way always. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you but if I am delivered into the hands of men, so also you will be and if I do not send communication to you and do not speak comfortable words to you; if for a season I am silent to you as I was to John the Baptist when he was in prison for My sake; let these sayings concerning Me and My being delivered into the hands of men, sink down into your ears, so that you may not yield to despair; so that you may say in your heart, He is not gone for ever.' - That is the thing! "Say not He is gone for ever though His visits He adjourn." Blessed is the man that heareth Me," - warning him. Remember what Christ said - "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and yet He may withdraw as to manifestations of Himself. Then when He does so, hold fast. Cleave to Him. Plead what He said to you. Put Him in memory of His blessed words to you. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me" speak a promise to him. Christ does speak promises as some here know. He does speak promises. Yes, happy is the soul that has a promise locked up in its breast. Oh it will never fail you, nor will He

leave you, who spoke it. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" "God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent." O how good it is, to have in your breast the word of the Lord. So, when you hear Christ's word, hoard it up, as Hart says, "Hoard up His sacred word." - "Depend on Him, thou canst not fail." He will be sure to make good what He has said. "Hearken unto Me," with respect to the future. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." That is before some of us. Yes, blessed be God there is a future. Sweet is the prospect sometimes that is given of this.

"Watching daily at My gates." This watching is the opposite of sleep. "Let us not sleep," says Paul, "as do others." - "We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep," We see in the Word of God, the evil of sleeping. Foolish virgins sleep and so do wise ones sleep. We see that foolish Sisera slept and then Jael, Heber's wife, smote him to the ground. The warrior slept and the woman overcame him. Haman slept, with regard to God, when he planned the destruction of the Jews. He reckoned not that God was alive; that God was good; that He was faithful to His promise: to His covenant with His people. He slept - he slept the sleep of death. Evil men have slept; God sending a deep sleep upon them. Saul, King Saul, slept and so David was able to show his righteousness by taking his spear and cruse from him, and whenever wicked men sleep, it is by that; God sends a spirit of slumber upon them. But good men have slept and have not watched with Christ, and David slept with respect to his feet, and danger, and so he fell into murder and adultery. Peter slept, and though it was but a short sleep, as it were, it brought him into a terrible condition. He denied his Master, and though blessed be God for that testimony concerning him - "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," and though his fall was not of mallice principally, it was a terrible fall for him, and some of us have slept and what the consequence has been. "Therefore," says Paul, "Let us not sleep, as do others." "Watching ... at My gates." This is the soul's attitude. This is the word, in the spirit of it, of the Lord by Paul, where he says, "Pray without ceasing." That is the attitude of the soul, the trend and bent of the mind. Not kneeling the whole day long, but the

spirit bent, and kept in that bent condition by the Holy Ghost. When a person watches, he watches for something. "My soul," says David, "waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." He was looking for God; wanted Him. With what eagerness would the watchman, as the hour for the morning to awake and dawn approached, look and crane his neck and strain his eyes for the first dawn and the beams of morning to come and gladden him. O but with what further and different groans does the soul sometimes look out for God. "Watching ... at My gates." where He appears; where He looks; where He sits; where He speaks. Gates - the place of counsel; gates - the place of judgement: gates - the place of contracts. "Watching ... at My gates." He is not always hiding Himself. He is not always just allowing us to see Him through the lattice. That sometimes is the case, but sometimes there are the gates, where He is seen watching at these. Do you wonder sometimes whether He will come? When a sinner watches himself; when he is enabled to obey the word of God. "Watch and be sober." - "Keep thy heart with all diligence." When he looks at his corruptions and says - 'Lord do not let them prevail,' - at his weakness and prays - 'Let me not be overcome;' - at his ignorance and fears lest he may be left to receive some error and walk in some vanity, then his eyes are wet with tears. Then he is afraid, sometimes afraid with amazement when he looks intently on untoward providences, then also he is weak. If we judge by what our eyes see in providence we shall most probably judge unrighteously of God. Watch your own heart in respect of exercises when you are dealt with by God in providence, then it may be, you will find great fears arising. The brethren of Joseph had their eyes not on the sovereign wisdom of God in sending Joseph into Egypt to preserve them alive; they then knew it not, but their eyes were on themselves as they were wrongly charged of theft, but God, though they were in that case, meant good. He brought real sin to their memory by a false charge. Watch God in His providence, but may your eyes not be intently and only on providence. The gates of providence are wide open. Horses, chariots come through them, riding through the earth. The gates of providence, I say, are wide open and none can shut them and strange things come through them. Strange happenings in the world; strange happenings in the church; strange happenings in your families. These things, when you watch

them, when you look at them, they perplex thee and the enemy may say, 'where is God's wisdom; where is His power; where is His goodness; where is His kindness' and "where is the promise of His coming." And when you watch these gates, I say again, you are perplexed and you are weakened but these gates of Jesus Christ are different. Providence is the hand-maid of grace often. Strange things take place in the souls of God's people, brought about frequently by some dealings of His providence, as well as by the operations of His Spirit. But now, these gates, the throne of grace set there, and sinners invited there. - "Come unto Me." If the gates of hell have counsels in them, what of the gates of grace. "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in". Now there is this then, a dear Saviour to look for. Do you look for Him? He comes sometimes thus - "Behold, thy King cometh ---- lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." He comes with state, with grace, with glory, with His sword upon His thigh. He comes and discovers Himself to be fairer than the children of men and makes it manifest that grace is poured into His lips. Watching may be weary work though, "toiling in rowing." It was a long night for them, and you may have a long night toiling in rowing with your weakness, and against your corruptions and your dreadful things, and in providence too, you may have a weary time of it. Now is the time for two things. The time first for our sins, our unbelief to assert themselves. 'He wont come.' That is what unbelief says. 'I don't want Him.' That is what pride says, and if you can turn a deaf ear to these voices you are wise. Most of us have been much affected, and damaged and weakened by listening to them. Enemies come when Christ delays. An enemy went to John in prison and whispered that he had made a mistake, that he had preached Christ and yet Christ had not come. At least there was a doubt about it, and poor John, valiant as he had been; strong in his faith; zealous in his love; a preacher of Jesus Christ, now forsaken of Christ and righteousness: cast into prison. This wicked whisperer sought to separate him from his Chief Friend but, you know, the Lord overcame him. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Wait for Christ. Wait for Christ. Now when this enemy has come, a Friend will come also. A Friend of Christ will circumvent and overthrow the counsels of hell. This Friend of Christ is the Holy Spirit who lives to honour Him, who lives to

glorify Him. It is His covenant office and work to do it, so He comes and He graciously lets fall upon the spirit some kindly thought about Christ, some believing thought concerning Him; some real hope about Him and that will bring the sinner again to his feet, so to speak, to his senses, and enable him to say, "My soul doth wait." 'My soul doth watch.' "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob." That is faith; that is courage: that is "watching". It is a great thing to watch for Christ. When people watch for Christ, they watch for the love of God, for He is the very exemplification, and so to express it, substance and fulness and brightness and beauty of the love of God. If you watch for Christ; watch at His gates; straining the eye of your faith sometimes to see if He is coming; to catch the beams of light and life that will ever precede Him as He is coming: you wont be disappointed, no, you cannot be disappointed. He "dwelleth between the cherubims" and He shines forth. The man is a blessed man, who watches at the gates of Christ. You will watch for Him in His suitableness to your different cases, conditions and needs. You may one day, have a peculiar experience of your own weakness; something tries you; how to bear it you feel you are not able; you are too weak, just ready to fall: your feet are slipping. "I said, my foot slippeth." Too weak to believe and to love and to hope and to justify God. Too weak to say, 'I will wait for Him', though you do earnestly long for Him. It is a case of real weakness. Too weak to resist the powerful corruptions of your nature. Too weak to say 'No', to these things that crave an indulgence. Too weak to say, 'Well my back is on the world and I will keep it so.' Too weak for anything that is good; entering into Paul's experience, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Now where can you go; to whom can you go for strength? "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." That will do. Watch here. You wont be disappointed. There is strength in that, secretly communicated. There is strength in that. Strength in the cry, "Hold Thou me up." Strength in the confession, 'Lord I am ready to slip with my feet.' Strength in the fear of His great name lest you should bring a dishonour upon Him. There is strength in that. Not felt, not enjoyed perhaps, but it is real strength. Blessed is the man who watcheth at My gates. He is not fallen in a faint. He has not fallen into carelessness. He is not asleep. He watches.

He is weary; the night has been long; it may have been very cold and there has been no comfort to him. There have been lions roaring and difficulties and dangers, but still watching is not sleeping, neither is it carelessness nor indifference to whether He will come or no. There is a strength in it, real strength from heaven. The strength of God is in waiting and he who watches thus, will not watch in vain. Sometimes it is a sense of real emptiness; emptiness that you are pained with: emptiness of all good. The word is not a full word to you, though it has been. The promise is not a full promise to you, though it has been. You feel with Abraham, "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?" He had Isaac in the promise, but had not yet embraced him, so he said, 'What wilt Thou give me Lord? If I go childless I am poor, because the promise is not fulfilled.' Do you feel empty? Something promised not yet come; something you have seen by faith but have not embraced; something, the substance of which you get and the evidence of it in your soul, yet not realised. Blessed is the man who believes in the promise, against all his emptiness, against all his disappointments. Blessed is the man who waits on a faithful God; a full God; a full Saviour: full of love, pity, power, goodness, wisdom, faithfulness. You cannot watch in vain. Look at that beautiful word which I have before quoted, "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." Alas, some of us have slept. That was a solemn thing that the Lord said to His disciples when leaving them at about a stone's throw. He went to pray alone and He came back and found them asleep. They slept for sorrow, and notwithstanding all their profession. He said to them, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" And you may find yourself so empty of strength and courage and faith, as it were, to go to sleep even though Christ is in your view. Still, what a mercy to be put on your knees again; to be set on your feet again, and again to be enabled to say, 'I watch for Him, I am dead without Him; empty without Him: weak without Him. Sometimes it is a word of wisdom that is particularly needed, when you have to move and do not know which way to move. "Ready to halt." At a stand, and friends cannot advise you. Of counsellors you are bereft, and of wisdom in yourself, you are bereft. What then? "Counsel is Mine," says the Lord Jesus, "Counsel is Mine." "I Wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out

knowledge of witty inventions." "Come to Me."

He had without any measure, the spirit of counsel and of wisdom. The Man Christ Jesus is the Wisdom of God and He may say to you - "This is the way, walk ye in it." You have been doubtful, fearful, wondering what to do; thinking yourself wrong here, wrong there and wrong everywhere. He says, - "This is the way." 'It is lined with blood. Walk close to the atonement. Walk close to My righteousness. Walk near to my strength and you will go in the right way.' Blessed be God, He is full of wisdom. He is the Wisdom of God. He is the Wisdom of God. And sometimes you may have a peculiar sense of sorrow, almost unmixed, little or no joy; little or no peace. The peace I mean, is not the peace you can have in the bosom of your family; not the peace you can have in your business; not the peace you can enjoy in yourself: but that peace that comes from Christ crucified; peace by His cross, that is the peace. Sin mars this as to our experience. It can never touch it, as it is in Him, but it can, it does, mar it in respect to our experience, and then what? You have lost it - and perhaps you can go to some sin and say, 'This lost it; my indulgence in this, lost it. I went astray.' What then? 'Oh,' says the enemy, 'you cannot expect to get it back.' Some of us have been held in that snare for a time. What says the Spirit? - 'If they are defeated, if they are carried into captivity; if Thou send mildew, caterpillar, locust, famine; if their enemies carry them away, and they bethink themselves, in the land of their captivity; if they turn to this house which I have built, in which Thy name is put for ever:' then, "hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place: and when Thou hearest, forgive." What will that do? Set you on your feet; turn you to Christ and help you to watch at His gates. 'Will He come? Will He come again, though I drove Him away, will He come again?' Ah, yes! He says, "From Me is thy fruit found." "I will turn," He said, and, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies," and so brethren the watching always has some sweet result. "Hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place: and when Thou hearest, forgive." There is waiting here. Watching, and waiting, may be, and are in some respects, the same. What you watch for, you are waiting for, and yet there is this in it, that may be a difference - that while you are watching and looking out, you are truly weary and perhaps discouraged and ready to give in. Waiting

is more quiet. It is like a steadiness in the spirit, that says, 'The Lord you are watching for, will come, wait for Him. Do not give way. Stick to His gates. Wait at the posts of His doors. He is sure to come, therefore wait on Him.' "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." It is a quietness in the mind. It is an attitude that has a little more, as I said, a little more steadiness in it, than just only watching. Watching is blessed. Waiting is blessed and what about this waiting. Well now, this is said. - Listen poor waiter, listen! "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." Think of it think of it Sin makes you ashamed. The devil makes you ashamed. Weakness, wandering, shaking, turning aside; these things, of which we are guilty, make us ashamed. But praying brings no shame, confessing brings no shame, looking for the Lord brings no shame, waiting for Him brings no shame. Ah, one day you will say, - 'I waited - my soul waited for the Lord and He inclined His ear unto me. He gave me what I wanted - what I came to Him for. What I waited for. He gave it to me.' Hear instruction then. Hear the sweet instruction of the Saviour. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors."

Now what shall be the result? This:- "For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour," or, "bring forth," as the marginal reference is, "bring forth favour of the Lord." And to "bring forth", here, means, he shall get what he watched and waited for. Did he watch for the Spirit to come and be in him - the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ? That Person shall be his. Did he watch for some sweet token for good - even the manifestation of Christ's cross? That shall be given him. Did he watch for some good supply of the Spirit whereby he might be mightily strengthened to walk the ways of truth? He shall have that from the Lord, for Jehovah is the strength of Israel and He shall not lie. "Whoso findeth Me" - My Person. My work. My righteousness, My atonement - "findeth life." It is life you live, when you have Christ! You live when you have His blood. You live when you have His righteousness. You live when His power is put forth in you. "Whoso," - bad, wicked, helpless creature, "Whoso findeth Me, findeth life." Life, eternal life! "I give unto them" (My sheep) "eternal life; and they shall never perish." Now what a mercy it is, to be enabled then, to watch for Christ. Watch for Him. When you

watch your own heart, you are not badly engaged, inasmuch as it brings you, through grace, to self-aborrence; and to real detachment from yourself; to a real abandoning of yourself: but when you watch for Christ, then you watch for Him who swallows up death; who removes filthy rags; who purges defilement from the conscience, and who gives strength to the weak. "The young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Now then, may the Lord help you waiting, watching people to continue in that attitude till you find Him. That is the trouble with some of us, that He seems so long in coming, that the discouragement is very great, but do not go away. Jesus said of hungry people when there was no adequate provision for them, that they need not go away. They need not. "I am that Bread of Life." And I would say then, do not leave these gates and posts. The throne of grace - the blessed God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - but as you can, wait here, lie down here, crave, beg, confess, weep here, and the end will be this - one day, angels will come, and carry you from earth to heaven.
