

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at
Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 8 February 1925

TEXT: Psalm 101 verse 2

"O when wilt Thou come unto me"

This petition is the prayer of every member of the spiritual Israel of God. If we are at all alive and lively toward God, it is our prayer this morning, that is to say, if we are not now in the enjoyment of that presence. It is a great blessing to be unhappy if God is not with us. It is an infinite mercy, given to some, to know the presence of God. He can visit, He can dwell with sinners. He can do it; He does it; He visits sinners still. Even today, though the state of Zion is so different from what it used to be, still He visits sinners, and every visit of His is a gracious enlargement, an establishment of the soul, and it brings heavenly joy. The scriptures are abundant in showing that the Lord has, in all ages since the fall, visited sinners, dwelt with them. You go back to the first sinners, Adam and his wife, and you will find that the Lord visited them. They had a knowledge of the law which we have not had. They knew it when they were upright and were obedient to it. Then they knew it as they had broken it and when they knew it as a broken law, ~~they~~ were ashamed. If you look at their case, it is very solemn and you will see, as you are convinced, your own case there. They were ashamed, they hid themselves. They were ashamed of meeting God and afraid of His meeting them. What were they to do. And in the cool or wind (margin) of the day, that is, in the evening, they heard the Lord God walking in the garden and they were afraid and hid themselves. But He brought them out of their hiding place; He dealt with them by the law they had broken. He had threatened death, and death had now come to them. Every child of God, in some measure, understands this. He may not put it in the same words as you put it or that I put it, but he will understand the guilt, the shame, the hiding, or trying to hide from the presence of a heart searching God whose law has been broken. Then, when the Lord had preached this to them, that is

had convinced them and brought them to the light of His word and truth, He preached the gospel to them. He visited them; He was with them as a God of grace. He clothed them with coats of skins, skins of beasts doubtless offered in sacrifice to Himself, for He would preach blood when He preached the gospel, for without shedding of blood is no remission. So, sinner, that is just how you must come to know the presence of God, through the blood shedding of Jesus Christ and the sweet application of that to you will bring the peace of God to your heart which passeth all understanding. And by this sinners come into felt union with God, into sweet communion with Him, see His well pleased face, hear His gracious voice, hear Him speaking to their souls by Jesus Christ. The promised seed must come, and O the sweetness of that view, distant though it was from them, who can tell when God preached to them the Lord Jesus. Probably Eve, when Cain was born, made a great mistake, for she thought, as it is supposed, that she had gotten the man whom the Lord had promised, but it was not so. Their faith perceived Christ. If you have faith and the Lord speaks to you and draws the attention of that faith to His Son, then you will understand how He can forgive sins and justify the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. A free gospel will then be the joy of your heart, your liberty, your peace, your strength, your life, your hope for the future. All will be well as you see God in Christ. You see His presence again with a good man, Abel. Abel brought the firstling of his flock, an accepted sacrifice. As we are told by the Spirit in the Hebrews, he had this testimony, he pleased God, because he took a sacrifice, he took a life and offered a life in place of his own forfeited life. Everyone born and taught of God does that. You will take another life and offer it by faith to God in place of your own. And what life is that? The life that Jesus Christ freely gave. "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear," This is Christ, and when your faith looks at that life as Abel looked at it, when he took that accepted, because acceptable, sacrifice to the Lord, he was accepted. Cain did otherwise. He was wicked, yet he took that which the Lord had commanded His people to take to Him. They were to take the first fruits of the land to the Lord, but then blood had gone first. The sacrifice of a life had preceded the

offering of the first fruits of the land, so Abel was blessed in his soul with the presence of God. See, my friends, if this is your life. The life that men could not take away, how freely did Jesus give. And that life is accepted and through that precious offering of Christ God visits sinners, speaks to them in peace, speaks to them in His love. He speaks by His Son to his people. He ever has done and He ever will do. You take other cases in the scripture, you take Enoch, of whom we read this beautiful language, He walked with God. How can a sinner walk with God? We, in our fallen nature, do not agree with God and how can two walk together except they be agreed. How then did it come to pass that Enoch walked with God? Because God came to him in Christ, because God visited him in Christ, and he knew and found and felt and enjoyed the presence of God and walked with God, which means he had fellowship with God. He had visits from God and he paid visits to God. He took his case and it was received. He walked with God in the ordinary affairs of the life which he lived, the hundreds of years that he lived, and became the father of many. All this shows the goodness of God in visiting sinners. You take Noah. The same mercy came to him. His name means rest. How could Noah rest, being a sinner? Why he rested in God in the revelation which God gave to him. Noah was told to build an ark, a type of Christ, in whom is rest, in whom is safety, in whom is heaven. No rest in this world for law breakers, no rest for you who are under the law, no rest for your spirits, no rest for your minds, no rest for your consciences, no rest for your immortal souls out of Christ. Religion wont be a rest to you, the letter of the Bible wont be a rest to you. If you have no faith, and God never speaks to your souls there will be no rest for you. But Noah had that blessed word of God - Make Me an ark - and he made it. By faith he did this. By faith he prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and that is what you will do if you have faith. You will go to the Lord Jesus Christ and He will speak to you. You will have His presence, His Spirit, and His goodness if you have faith. Moses had the presence of the Lord, and you may have noticed (if not, may I draw your attention to this truth) that the law was given before the commandment to make an ark was given. The law was promulgated before the gospel was preached to Israel as you read in Exodus that God came down upon Mount Sinai

and the whole mount smoked because God was there and He spoke to Moses but the people trembled. The lightning and the thunder and the voice of the trumpet growing louder and yet louder terrified the people so at last they fled from the mountain. Who can bear the burning of that mountain. And they said to Moses, speak thou with us and we will hear. Let not God speak lest we die. Then you know Moses in his great heat of spirit took those two tables of stone which God had written upon and flung them down as he went down from the mountain and they were broken, typical of the law which the people had broken, violated. Later God said to Moses, make an ark. Put the new tables I will give you, the complete law unbroken, put them into the ark and cover them with the mercy seat. And then He said, there will I meet with you. So it must always be the gospel. If ever we have God with us, it will be in Christ. If we hear His voice in mercy, it will be by Christ. If we see His well pleased face, it will be in Christ. Always that. So when you think of this, if you do think of it, may the Lord help you to say - O when wilt Thou come unto me.

God's presence in the soul is the most mysterious thing that you can imagine. It is the most wonderful condescension; it is the most wonderful experience that God can, God does, dwell in the hearts of sinners. "Christ in you the hope of glory" Every sinner taught of God condemns himself, then God justifies him. Sin binds, and the gospel gives liberty. Filthy rags frighten and depress and the robe of righteousness justifies and makes happy. So look for this if you do look to God at all, for there is no other way of escape from the wrath to come.

Now this presence of the Lord is a thing known. You may hear of it; I try to speak of it to you and tell you about it, but I cannot make you understand it. No preacher can; it is such an amazing thing. "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" was the question asked by Solomon when he had built his magnificent temple and when the day for opening and dedicating that temple to God came, he wanted the Lord to come in. But his view of God was so great, his vision was so extended by the Spirit, that he saw infinitude by faith, and then also the glory

and majesty of God and said "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth; the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less the house which I have built?" Yet the Apostle says that the mystery of God is this which He has hid from ages and from generations which now He manifests, namely Christ in you the hope of glory. And in the gospel of John, the Lord Jesus Himself teaches this. He says "If a man love Me he will keep My words and My Father will love him and we will come ~~unto~~ unto him and make our abode with him". So if you ever have this honour, this mercy, this religion, you will have the greatest mystery in your heart that God can show and give to any sinner.

Now in Christ there is everything that God could put there. Think of it, everything that Deity could convey to the Man Christ Jesus is there; and this blessed Man Christ Jesus magnified the law. It is a very beautiful thing to know and very blessed. He magnified the law, became, by His obedience and death, the end of the law. It could ask no more than it received from Christ, could never be more honoured than it was honoured by Christ. It never could bring forth a debt that Christ did not pay on the behalf of His people. So He is the end of it, and He glorified it and He is the end of it to everyone that believeth. And this brings each believer into liberty and into peace with God. But now look at this mystery of Christ in a sinner. It is life. Just as the root of the vine conveys its fructifying sap to every branch in it, so Christ conveys His own life, called the divine nature, to His children and makes them partakers of it and this life is a purifying life. It casts out the old leaven; it breaks the power and love of sin. It is a pure, purifying, fructifying life in the soul and if it is in us we shall know something about it in two or three ways. First, we shall know what it is to hunger and thirst for God. All nature hungers for that which is suitable to it. Our bodies hunger for suitable food and nourishment. So, if we have the life of Christ in our souls, there will be this hunger and thirst for God. Can you say that anything outside, anything short of God can satisfy you? Could you appeal to God, could I appeal to God, and say that to Him that nothing short of God, God in our souls, God felt by us, enjoyed by us, can satisfy us? I am sure we can if we have this

pure, blessed life in us, the life of Jesus Christ. Everything goes after its kind. You, if blessed with this, will go after it. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God" That is the life, the effect of the life, of Jesus Christ. And do you want Him? Whatever a man possesses in this world, if he possesses also the life of Christ, he says Christ is the one thing needful to me, I without Him perish must. This life is free, free in your soul when your soul feels in bondage. It is free in the gift of it; it is free in its motions, in its aspirations. Nothing will keep it down; nothing will kill it. It just comes from God and rises up to Him. As water can only rise to its own level naturally, so this life will rise and can but rise to its blessed level. And where is that? Heaven. You will never be content with anything that does not come from heaven into your soul if you possess this blessed life within. O to have visits from Him. What an emptiness there is to those who have Him and yet do not feel Him with them. "When wilt Thou come unto me", and pour fresh life on my fainting heart? When wilt Thou come unto me and again purify my conscience? When wilt Thou come unto me again and hold fellowship with me, and, if He has done it, again, call you His friend. Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends. What a wonder for the God of heaven to call a sinner His friend. He called Abraham His friend and He will call you His friend if you belong to Him. A great wonder, a great mystery and a great comfort and joy this is to all who get it. When wilt Thou come unto me as my life? Paul said "When Christ who is our life shall appear". He is our life. He declared it Himself. "I am the life". I am the life of the dead, and that life is sufficient for every purpose that God intends it for. To quicken, to move, to purify, to raise up and to hold up those to whom it is given. "O when wilt Thou come unto me". Here was the Psalmist; he said he would sing of mercy and of judgment. He does not appear to have started that song until you reach the 103rd Psalm. He goes through this Psalm; he says I will behave myself in a perfect way; I will conduct myself in my family and in my kingdom in a perfect way. And then, as if, in an instant, he felt his insufficiency for that walking, he said, O when wilt Thou, who alone art able, come to me and enable me to do it. I will behave

myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt Thou, the Almighty One, come unto me and give me power to do it. You may look at your position in your circumstances and say I will endeavour to behave myself as I ought. I will seek to humble myself as I ought. I will seek to walk prudently as I ought and to speak as I ought. But then, blessed with grace, you will say - Lord I am not sufficient of myself to think anything^{as} of myself that is right. Then up goes this petition - O when wilt Thou my helper come unto me. And this brings me to notice the second point, namely, the presence of God, His power. There is a power, when God comes to a sinner, of which he is very conscious, really conscious. Let us look at the power of God as it is set forth in its working in the saints or rather first of all, in the Son of God. The Apostle Paul in the Ephesians tells us that the exceeding power of God was exerted in raising Christ from the dead. There was that lifeless, sacred form of Jesus Christ in the grave, uncorrupted. And then came God to Him and exerted that mighty power of love and of justice and of wisdom and of omnipotence, and raised that form again and brought Him from the grave. Now, says the Apostle, that very same power that God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, has exerted itself in you, who believe in God. When wilt Thou, Almighty worker, come unto me. And what does this mighty power do when it is exerted? It scatters unbelief by strengthening faith. It scatters unbelief and faith then lays hold of the Mediator, lays hold of Him who is the peace of His people. Faith then looks into the mystery of the law fulfilled and into the mystery of the gospel which is made known as the very way to God and the reconciling of sinners unto Himself. Faith lays hold of this. This faith, wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost, gives character to God's grace; its distinguishing nature is here made known. The thing is settled as to what salvation is and from whom it comes when this question of faith is settled. Does God give faith to whom He will? Then it is no more of works but of grace. Altogether and absolutely of grace. So, when the power of God is in you, this faith, strengthened, will go out of itself, out of your heart, out of yourself, into Him, the author and end of it and the finisher of it. It will work that mighty work in you, make you a true believer. It will make you such a

believer as that you will never let God go. As He will not lose you, so your faith will not lose Him, not let Him go. "I will not let Thee go". And whenever He is absent, faith droops. Long absence of the sun from our earth is, if I may so express it, an affliction and it shows how barren and inert the earth must always be without the sun. And whenever God is absent from us, then we know how barren and inert our faith is. It moves in His power; it stands in His power; it exercises itself in His power, in His presence. It gets victories this way. "The people which do know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits" And further, when God comes to a sinner, and works mightily then also the sinner has love. The law of love flows into his heart and out of that flows love to God. Eternal love to the sinner begets love to Him who is loved eternally. And then you will sing triumphantly - Who shall separate me from the love of God, from the love of Christ? This is love in the soul from the very presence and working of God, the Son, in you. "We love Him because He first loved us". And when we have this love, everything that God does is agreeable to our souls. It is written of David, when he became king over all Israel, that he gave to every man a piece of flesh and a flagon of wine and the people were pleased. Whatsoever the king did pleased the people, and when you have His presence and favour then your love goes out so as that you can say, whatever the Lord does pleases me. This is saying in your heart "Thy will be done." This reconciles you to the path of affliction. This brings you to feel satisfied with God, whatever you lack here. O sinner, this presence then, in its working, is very wonderful. It works faith and faith also has love as a companion. "Faith which worketh by love". They will never be quite separate, though they may seem very far apart from each other in your experience. But really they are never, never separated. O how high this love carries you, even to heaven. It carries you, just as it did the Psalmist - "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee". It forms your judgment a good deal. You things that are excellent when you have this love in your soul. There is a kind of spiritual discernment in a man of God who has this powerfully working in him, whereby he loves the Lord.

I love the Lord with mind and heart
His people and His ways

When is that? Hart says

When Jesus, with His mighty love
Visits my troubled breast
My doubts subside, my fears remove,
And I'm completely blest.

Because he has the Lord with him, he loves the Lord. "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications." He loves Him for what He is. He loves Him for what He gives. He loves Him for what He does. He loves Him for what He has promised. He loves Him because he has an anticipation of enjoying His presence in eternity without interruption. Love is a sacrifice; it is prayer; it is praise; it is all. A beautiful grace, celebrated remarkably by the Apostle Paul in the Corinthians. He says - Love, this charity is love, it beareth all things; it endureth all things; it believeth all things; it hopeth all things. It is the most seemly grace; it is a becoming grace; it doth not behave itself unseemly; it is not easily hurt, or puffed up. How different from the noisy religion that you meet with almost everywhere. How different from the blatant love that people talk about, is this sweet stream in your heart rising to its very source, even to God, and being pleased with Him. The religion of Jesus Christ then is emphatically a religion of love. O how sweet it is to feel it flowing from the presence of the Lord Jesus in your heart. It rises to God the Father. You see the Apostle Paul had this in his heart. Says he "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." It goes out to Christ - "If a man love not the Lord Jesus let him be Anathema Maranatha". Every person who has a sight of Christ by faith loves Christ. When wilt Thou come unto me. This presence affects the will; it mightily affects the will of a person. Not to break it, not to make it nothing, but to subdue it, when the sinner comes bending unfeignedly to his Lord and Master and King. "Thy will be done". A word quickly

uttered, but slowly, painfully learned in affliction. "Thy will be done", because the will of God is the only right will, the only perfect will, the only good will. Our will is perverted. It is a creature; it is perverted from right things. It became perverted when Adam took the forbidden fruit and made choice of himself and his carnal appetite, before his God and his lawgiver and his joy. And that perverted will is communicated to all his children. So our will is perverted. Now what can straighten it? You will never be a creature without a will, whether you be reprobate or elect, saved or lost. Through eternity you will have a will. It is part of the creature, part of an intelligent creature to have a will. Therefore if we are to have this will put straight, how can it be done? How can it be straight with God's will and God's dispensations when affliction is on us? This way only - when the Lord Jesus comes, when the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush is with us, when, as it is in the Philippians we prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and we see that good and perfect and acceptable will of God has sent trouble to us, has taken something from us we would like to have kept and given us something we would rather not have. Then to see by faith, in the light of the presence of Jesus Christ, will ineffably touch, soften, mollify, put straight a crooked and perverse will and then we can say with holy angels in heaven, with Jesus Christ in Gethsemane's garden "Thy will be done". Then, have you no will? O yes, better have a will thus straightened than have no will and be a crippled creature. Grace does not cripple men by taking away a part of that which is essential to their being, but it comes and takes hold of the will and just graciously and tenderly, but powerfully, puts it quite straight with the holy will of God. Unison with God's will is a very sweet feeling. When wilt Thou come unto me and do this. When wilt Thou enable me to walk in a perfect way, to walk wisely, to behave as I ought in affliction. My friends, it is great to have God's presence. When He comes, there is another thing effected, namely union with Him is enjoyed. Some of you long for, but have never, as yet, had the joy of God's presence. You want it. He has come to you sometimes in a way of chastisement and you have felt Him. He has come to you in a way of judgment and you have condemned yourself but as yet you have

to say - I have not had what I want. I want the presence of God to fill me with joy and peace in believing. That would satisfy my soul that all is well with me, that God loves me, that Christ loved me and gave Himself for me, and that the Holy Ghost has made me His temple. Now, when that blessed, that desired visit is paid you, then you will find your prayers answered in a moment. You will begin to say, O let this union grow

Lord, make our union closer yet
And let the marriage be complete

That will be your desire, your prayer. It will grow out of some sense of union. It will make you feel a little of that, abide in me, let the union be closer Lord. Let me abide more continually and steadfastly in this union. When a sinner is, as to experience and his walk, out of Christ, never really so, but I say in his experience and his walk, then he is in danger. The archers are ready to shoot at him, the avengers are ready to follow and slay him. So Christ said "Abide in Me."

O when wilt Thou come unto me. He does visit sinners, murmuring sinners. He comes and stays their murmurs, as He went to the wilderness and rained down manna for the hunger of the people, told Moses to smite the rock and gave water for their thirst. When will God do this for me, one may be saying here. When will He come and visit my soul? Now let me ask this question. First of all, have you room for Him? What is room for Him? Destitution, destitution felt, sin felt, barrenness felt, ruin felt. Have you that? Let me put another question. Have you a prayer for it? What is prayer? Not saying some words, the breathing of a soul after God. A thirsty land speaks so to us, speaks by its cracks, by its burnt grass, by its withering leaves. So a sinner, he may not say much, may hardly be able to express his case, but his thirsty soul speaks his barrenness, inability to move. These speak. Have you got that condition that will take you to the Lord, and if you speak no words yet, presenting this case to Him, will be a real prayer. O when wilt Thou come unto me. If David could not, without the Lord, walk wisely in his way, walk in a perfect way, how can we walk before

God without Him? How can we believe without that faith that will never let Him go, and love, without that love that cannot be quenched or put out, or say to Him, Thy will be done, without a true submission? We cannot, and therefore, the real case that we have will go out, issuing in strong cries and tears in our hearts for His blessed presence.

And let me close with this. This presence is a freely given presence, an undeserved presence. Whoever deserves, or could merit, this presence, - God in Christ? O bring no money, price or aught, no pleasing frames, no good tempers. Mercy never can be bought, grace is free. God's visits are freely given visits. They are suitable visits, they are blessed visits, but they are all free. He comes as the rain comes down and the sun from heaven. So He comes in His word, in His Spirit, in His own life and His own light to all to whom He will pay this great honour, give this wonderful, eternal blessing, - His presence. You say, can it be lost? Yes and no. Yes, as to the sense of it, as to your retaining it, lost. Slip, fall, turn aside, backslide, and He says - "I will go and return to My own place till they acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they will seek me early". That is how you will lose it, but never can it be lost. No, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". Yet I forsake thee for a small moment. How are these two strange, apparently contradictory statements, to be reconciled? They are reconciled this way. There is an abiding presence of God with the church, with individual persons. There is a removal of His presence, a removing of His operations, for chastisement, but not for eternal ruin, When He goes He will come again. When you acknowledge your iniquity, He will come again. When you say - Lord I have sinned, forgive my sin, He will come again. When you acknowledge your sin, then He will put it away. He is good; He forgives sin, pardons iniquity and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage and will not retain His anger for ever because He delighteth in mercy. O when wilt Thou come unto me? Lord is this night always to continue? Am I not to have a day of the gospel? Is this night of guilt to continue? Wilt Thou never break through the cloud, never blot out the cloud, the thick cloud? Is this dark dispensation always to be unilluminated?

Wilt not Thou, O light of life, come and shine on my soul and shine in, and by means of this dispensation? "When wilt Thou come unto me". We believe He can come. The Psalmist believed that, else he would not have prayed this prayer. O the love of Christ in visiting sinners; the love of the Father in visiting sinners; the love of the Holy Ghost in visiting sinners. Who can express this love. High, beyond imagination, is this love; free, beyond conception, is the visit of God. Great in its effect is this. And, what is so wonderful to those who get it, is this, - each one says - "This, I the worst, receive." Is then this prayer yours? Are you really wishing for this blessed, mysterious, wondrous, glorious presence of God? If so, the day must come when He will come to you. Why must He come? Because He does not mock people. He never mocks a sinner in this respect. He never gives a person hunger and thirst for Himself to let that person perish. If a son ask you bread, would you give a stone? And, if you ask God's presence, will He deny it? Never, He could not do it. It is not in His nature to mock poor people to whom He has given hunger and thirst for Himself. He has bread to give and water to give. He has Himself to give, and He gives Himself. Himself He freely gives us still. Then what a favour it is to be hungering and thirsting after God. The Lord give us this prayer, put it into our hearts, and give us to see that He can come, that He is full of love, full of pity, full of power, and will never turn away a seeker.

Wilt not Thou...

AMEN.