

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham

at Galeed Chapel, Brighton

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PSALM 102 v 17

“He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer”.

The text is connected with the glory of God; with the glory of God, not in the abstract, but in the appearance of it. “When the Lord shall build up Zion He will appear in His glory”. The text also has an intimate connection with the Church of God – Zion. “When the Lord shall build up Zion”. The Church of God has in it, for ever and ever, the glory of God by Jesus Christ. The poorest soul that has in it the life of God is part of the Church, part of the body of Christ, bone of Christ’s bone, flesh of His flesh and a member in particular of the body of Christ. It is very strengthening when the Holy Ghost makes it manifest, that there should be this intimate, wonderful connection between the glory of God and a destitute person who cannot but pray. If we could but believe this at some times in our destitution and trouble and exercises, it would greatly help us: the glory of God in regard of a destitute soul.

“He will regard the prayer of the destitute”. God has a residence on earth; eternity is His dwelling. The three persons in the eternal Godhead are concerned in this and they are in that tabernacle which comes down from heaven that God may dwell among men. John, in the Revelation, tells us that he saw new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, and we are told that “the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them.” That tabernacle is Christ, the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, and there in that tabernacle is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The Father is in Him; He is in the Father and the Holy Ghost is with them both. There is a wonderful order in the Trinity in respect of salvation. The Father, in the covenant, is the first, the fountain of all good. The Son, in salvation, is the second, being sent of the Father, and the third is the Holy Ghost. This order does not mean that their nature is such; there is neither first, second nor third in the divine essence. I would just like to state that to you, that they is one Essence; one Being, Jehovah,

Father, Son and Holy Ghost; neither afore nor after another; each one eternal, each one equal with the other, and just one essence.

Men speak of God thus: he is a simple Being, nothing of duality in Him, one glorious Jehovah, but in revelation it is different. In revelation we have the Father sending His Son; we have the Son willingly, lovingly coming and, though equal with the Father, willing to be, and really becoming, the servant of His Father; and we have the Holy Ghost descending upon Jesus, filling Him with His gifts without measure. And so the three persons are concerned in the salvation of the Church and each one has a place in this text and context. When the Lord shall build up Zion, when He shall come and shall be building that glorious temple, that habitation for Himself, namely the Church, then He has regard, not to the rich, the high, the noble, the great, the good but the destitute. One may be rich in intellectual power, rich in the love of his family, rich in respect to his associates and yet be destitute in the sight of God; not destitute in the sense of the text. O if God be not your God what will become of you? If you gain the whole world and lose your own soul what will you give in exchange? What will a man do who dies without God, who lives without Him? Who is practically an atheist, a person that is to say, according to the two words – one in English – a person without God – that is just the meaning of atheist. O may the Lord quicken you, who have not God in your thoughts in a proper way, according to His great mercy and power.

We have here in our text one or two considerations:

First the person – a destitute person, a person who really has nothing.

The rule implies a person naked, no covering, no money, absolutely lacking. This is a strange person for God to notice. Destitute of divine life, destitute of the Holy Ghost – (and one might here say, that the second destitution I have named implies everything that is good.) If you are destitute of the Holy Ghost, whatever you are; whatever you may be, whatever you may think, whatever you may design, whatever you may attempt, you are just a destitute, naked sinner, and very, very solemn is that condition.

This person is destitute of will; a will that God works in the elect. “It is God that worketh in you” says the apostle Paul “to will and do to his good pleasure.” “Ye will not come unto me” said Christ to His unbelieving hearers “that ye might have life.” They had no will in the matter except to turn their backs on God,

~~turn their backs on God~~, and that may be the condition of some of you here; you have no will toward God. If you speak the truth, you would say to Him, "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." What a solemn thing it is for a person to turn away from God. We did that in the Adam fall; we do it in our hearts naturally always. "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways". Destitute of will; think of it. A child of God has a will to be saved; have you? He wills to be holy; though he is not holy in his apprehension. He has a will. Destitute of will - O, says a child of God, do not leave me in that state, Lord. Destitute of faith - "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" This is a faith that is the gift and the work of God. Destitute of faith, the Bible is a dead word to you; the gospel is a dead letter to you; the Lord has nothing to do with you at present in your consciences; Christ has nothing in you; you see nothing in Him; no beauty that you should desire Him. But a child of God is not absolutely destitute of faith; he has a prayer that comes out of faith; he has a desire that is the fruit of faith; he has tears that he sows in faith; but in his feelings, he is destitute. He is destitute of prayer in his own judgment often. Can you always pray as you would? Woe unto me, some of you may be saying mentally, I wish I could pray. Destitute of a lively hope, not absolutely, but wanting a liveliness in this hope that will make him cheerful, lift up his head and cause him to say to his soul in trouble, "Hope thou in God". There is such a sense of destitution in this. A new-born soul may feel destitute of righteousness. He looks at that parable - The King making a Supper, a Marriage Supper, for His Son. Bidden guests make light of it; then the King sends His servants into the highways and they compel people to enter and one enters and sits at the table with the others and the King comes in and he sees that one without a wedding garment; he was destitute. If we are destitute of Christ's righteousness, what will become of us? There is no place in heaven for a person who has not the wedding garment, the clean, white linen as it is in Revelation, the righteousness of the saints.

Destitute of purity - O, how impure a child of God may often feel. Impure thoughts, rebellious thoughts, wicked things rising in his mind; he is destitute of that purity which is necessary. He feels destitute of it.

Destitute of strength - strength to pray, strength to believe, strength to live, strength to follow after God, and he feels destitute of all that strength. Destitute of love to God - if a man love not Christ, what is he? Just a heathen man, and this is written of him - "Let him be Anathema Maranatha"; let him be an accursed person.

This is destitution is it not? What more can I say about destitution? It is experimentally a deplorable condition of soul, an emptiness that is painful, and there is nothing in the whole world that can fill that person with satisfaction. How many of us have ever had this destitution? Have any of us got it now?

The prayer is the next thing to regard; the prayer of the destitute. You have it in another Psalm further on. One prays "Leave not my soul destitute". That was a real cry to Almighty God. This prayer is a prayer that goes out of the feeling of a soul; it looks upon its own nakedness and destitution; it feels it; it has faith in God. This person really believes in God in Christ, in the merits of Christ, in the fulness of Christ, and by the Holy Ghost he occasionally gets a view of the fulness of Christ; a full pardon, a perfect righteousness, a perfect holiness. O, how it touches his heart, affects his spirit, draws up his desire, strengthens his prayer. Lord, do not leave me without Christ; do not leave me without a sense of assurance of interest in Him; do not leave me, leave me destitute of imputed righteousness; do not leave me in my pollution. Do you understand this? Some of you do. O, the cries to God - "Leave not my soul destitute". I am poor; Thou art rich. Sometimes this destitute person may have given to him a sight of Christ in that Scripture: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." And does not this warm his heart? Does not it make him cry, O, that the riches of Christ might be poured out upon me, a poor, destitute creature. He gets a view of this fulness of Christ and Godhead in Him; the pleasure of God in Him; the fulness of the Spirit in Him. The fulness of all that merit of His life and His death; the fulness of His Priestly office; the fulness of His intercession in heaven; the fulness of His power, the fulness of His wisdom in providence, the fulness of His purpose. He gets a

view of the fulness of Christ and that stirs up his soul exceedingly. "Leave not my soul destitute". His prayer is, more or less, one may say, an incessant prayer. Sometimes an insistent prayer, sometimes a most importunate prayer. Lord, I am starving; I have no food: I have no water to drink; I have no garment to wear. I am destitute. You understand this; this is labour; this becomes violence sometimes. "The kingdom of God suffereth violence and the violent take it by force". You say, I cannot do without God, I cannot do without Christ, I cannot do without the Holy Ghost, and therefore the fervent prayer is, Lord bless my soul. "Say unto my soul I am thy salvation". This is his prayer. Have you got it? If you have, I will tell you one or two things. First, it ascends to heaven. You have not naturally power to lift up your soul to God, but the destitute feeling, moved by the Holy Spirit leads you to send a cry that enters into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Such was Jonah's prayer and when he fainted he prayed and his prayer reached heaven. "When my soul fainted within me", then, he said, I cried unto the Lord. That is a great point, that prayer going out of a destitute sinner really enters into God's ear. And the other thing is this, it touches the sympathetic heart of Christ; it reaches His compassionate feeling. He has a sinner before Him; He looks on Him; He listens to his cry. Lord, I need Thee, I desire Thee; I cannot be poorer in my own experience than I am now. I am lost and I cannot be more lost in my present sense. Do look upon me, visit me with thy salvation; "remember me, O LORD, with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; That I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance". Has that a place in your heart? Some say, O yes. Then now look, in the next place, at what is said of God. He has to do with this person; He will regard, pay attention, not close His eyes to the person, not close His ears to the prayer of that destitute person. What a wonder, what an amazing thing, that a sinner, whose guilt is as black as the confines of hell; a sinner who has done evil with both hands; a sinner who hates God by his fallen nature; now a penitent, a humble soul, destitute of all that he desires to possess, God looks on him - what a mercy - regards his prayer. This, as I understand it, implies that God has an interest in this person. He is not an uninterested spectator of this person's case; He has an interest in him. O, if God has an interest in us, how happy we are as to our state, though we may

be most unhappy because of our destitution. God's interest is three-fold. The Father's interest is the interest of electing love set on this person eternally. Well, what can be said of this? That God loved a wretch, eternally loved a wretch, an enemy; one alienated from His life; one who, by his sin, lost the very image and likeness of God in which he was created; one who, by his fallen state, does not, did not, like to retain God in his knowledge; yet God the Father in His electing love has an interest in this person. The Son has an interest in him. How did He manifest it? By coming, by descending from heaven, by taking on Him, in His incarnation, the nature of His children; by receiving willingly, lovingly, knowingly, knowing all that it implied, taking on Him the imputation of the sins of His people, the men given to Him by His Father to redeem. Christ had an eye on this sinner in the eternal covenant; He had an eye on this sinner when He walked this earth and obeyed the law for him. He had an eye on this sinner when He was in Gethsemane and saw, near at hand, the cup which He had to drink. He had an eye on this sinner when He was on Calvary and when, having fulfilled all He was sent to do, He said "It is finished". That is Christ's interest, but not all of it. He is in heaven now, the High Priest, the great High Priest of our profession. O, the pity, the sympathy, the love, the mercy of Jesus Christ, as He looks on a coming sinner. When Nathanael was coming to Him, He said "I saw thee when thou wast under the fig tree", and Christ may say, I saw you when you were troubled; I saw those tears trickling down your face and I put them in My bottle. I heard your sigh and cry and groan; I heard you ask for My righteousness and for My precious blood. O, He has an interest; Ah sinner, Christ has an interest in you. You may be despising yourself because of your sins; you may be feeling, what a hell I deserve, and how soon I may be there, but Christ says, No, I am interested in you. And thirdly the Holy Ghost has an interest in this destitute person. "Who told thee thou wast naked?" asked God, of Adam. Who told thee, destitute sinner; who told thee that thou wast destitute? Who opened your eyes to your state? Who opened your heart to receive the truth of your condition? Who opened your heart to the gospel and made you long to partake of it? The Holy Ghost. Who dictated those prayers that went out of your very heart on such and such a day, when you could hardly bear the sight of yourself because you saw yourself in the sight of God? Who caused you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Who made you say, If

He will, He can cleanse me; if He will, He can save me; if He will, He can justify me? The Holy Ghost. And this blessed, glorious Trinity of Persons has regard for this destitute person.

"He will not despise their prayer". You say sometimes my prayer, why it is only chattering. God knows where there is one breath of prayer in the heart though it may be mixed with a great deal of confusion; a praying person may be full of confusion. He sends out a sigh, a cry - "God be merciful to me a sinner"; help me. That is distinguished by the Lord. He knows the difference between confusion of the mind and the living cry of the destitute soul. What does it imply? It implies that the prayer is accepted of God, that God really does accept the prayer; it is pleasing to Him. When He says "Pray without ceasing" does He mean that? Yes. Why? Because it is pleasing to Him. When He says "Cast thy burden on the Lord" does He mean it? Yes, because He is the burden bearer and it pleases Him that there is faith in the sinner to cry and to cast his burden on Him. He intends to answer it; He answers it in love, in mercy and in a good measure. He answers it in love: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt". Thou hast come to Me empty. He filleth the hungry with good things and the rich He sends empty away. O, my poor, destitute hearers, there is a God in heaven who watches every motion of your heart, every feeling of your soul, every desire, and all the suffering you have because of sin; He watches it all and He listens to the humble prayer which you send up to heaven.

What is the answer? It is this, the enrichment of the soul. What is that? The giving of Christ which is called, in the Colossians, "Christ in you the hope of glory". That was eternally decreed, as it is in that passage, that God now makes known the mystery which has been hid from ages and generations but now is made manifest to His saints, which is Christ in you the hope of glory. Christ in you means that Christ is received by you, that He becomes your hope as He is your life. He becomes your righteousness. "This is the Name wherewith He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness". O, what a rich blessing it is. This blessing of justification, what can be compared to it? A polluted, naked soul, now washed and clothed. You will never, having that robe on you, you will never hear God say: "How camest thou in hither not having a

wedding garment?" Never.

He will answer the prayer by letting down, shedding abroad in the heart, His love. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us. The shedding abroad of the love of God is one of the great operations of the Holy Ghost and the sense of it is one of the sweetest that ever a sinner can have in this life. A sense of God's love to you will be so sweet, so wonderful, so melting, so overcoming, that you will say you never had such a sensation before as you now have with this precious love in your soul. You will need a good deal of persuading that it is the love of God set on you, when you are destitute, but when these riches shall come into your soul, then you will say I know it. What an amazing thing that the love of God should ever be in the heart of a hell deserving sinner. And "shed abroad" means that there is an abundance of it; an abundance of blessing. Blessing above, blessing beneath, blessing everywhere, where this precious, eternal, electing love is, where it is felt. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". Also this is implied - the earnest of the Spirit is given. The earnest of the Spirit is that that we call an earnest of the inheritance; something from heaven. The bread of life, the light of life, the shining into the heart of the Sun of Righteousness. These things, put together, or any one of them singly coming, will be in you an earnest of that inheritance that you are to have. O, what a blessing; think of it. If you read tomorrow morning a letter sent to you telling you that you had an interest in a will and that you were in that will possessed of thousands of pounds, what would it be? A great gladness naturally. What would it be? A passing good, a perishing good. If you get a nugget of grace in your soul, ~~you~~ may be quite unable to beat it into life, but you have got it and you are rich, as Toplady puts it "to all the intents of bliss". It implies this, that you are in Christ. The answer to your destitute cry, the answer to your prayers, will bring this to you. "I in them"; they are in Him. "I am the true vine and My Father is the Husbandman." "I am the Vine; ye are the branches". Now when God does regard the prayer of the destitute He builds up Zion; a living stone built on a living foundation. When the Lord shall appear in Zion it is to build her up, and every sinner, in his felt destitution, crying mightily to God is, when the Lord answers his cry, brought as a living stone.



Peter calls it a "lively stone", but it is the same as the word, a "living stone". The life of Christ makes a living child and that child is built on Himself, prepared for glory. What, in conclusion, is this glory? It is the glory that the Father gave to Christ before the world began. What is that? That Christ came to give the words to His disciples which the Father had given Him. It is to give the glory of grace, the glory of justification, the glory of sanctification, the glory of a divine peace with God to be enjoyed for ever and ever. Think of it! The glory of a sinner being made righteous, the glory of a polluted person made holy, the glory of one alienated from the life of God united to the Lord Jesus. This is the glory and it is the building of Zion; stone brought to stone, bone brought to bone, the whole being united to the Head, the Son of God.

Now my friends, if we have this destitution, and the cry of the destitute, there is a God in heaven who regards it; does not despise it; does not turn away from it. An importunate beggar might weary you; the more importunate you are at the throne of grace, the more God is pleased with you. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence", and you may feel so violent sometimes in your heart, you cannot let the Lord alone, must have Him. "Give me Christ or else I die"; that is the feeling. May we therefore have this great favour given to us, namely a sense of destitution, a living cry rising out of that sense of destitution, listened to patiently and interestingly, by God Himself, who regards it. And then the answer comes and that is the building up of Zion when the Lord appears in His glory.

AMEN.