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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Sunday evening, 18th. September, 1921

Text: Psalm 103 v. 10

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

Every child of God who can say this can enter into the spirit and the very language of the Psalm - this Psalm in the beginning of it. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name," and there are moments when the Lord's people get this sweet experience in their souls. When gratitude springs up as from a living spring in their hearts. When some sense of God's infinite mercy to them touches them deeply. When it is contrasted with the sense they have of their sins and iniquities. It is good to give thanks unto God. He takes it as done to Himself and as glorifying to Himself when people offer praise. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Repenting saints become praising saints from time to time. There is an abundant reason why they should praise Him, and that reason is contained in the text, but look a little at the preceeding verses.

From the first - "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Speak well of Him, for that is what the word "bless" means when saints use it toward God. When they heap high honours on Him. When they bring the tribute of broken hearts to Him, then they speak well of Him. They speak well of Him, to Him in secret, and they then each one exemplify the word of Dr. Goodwin, which does not at all comport with human desires and aims. He says, "Jesus is most glorified in secret," and sure it is, that every saint believes that, and does not want to show his religion before men. Each saint follows his Master and among other things is this, Christ's voice was not heard in the street and the voice of praise is heard in secret most. If Christ whispers in our ears, first our sins, then His forgiveness of them, surely we in return shall whisper in His ears

our praises, and this will be the case in the Lord's house too. You will speak well of Him to your intimate friends. You will tell them sometimes of your glooms and then at other times of your happiness. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name." All my powers - let them unite. Let understanding and love and the will and the mind, let all unite to praise Him. There is sweet union of the souls' members, so to speak, in this, as there is sad union with them in their sorrows. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:" and the benefits are as follows - "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases." These follow. O how sweet it is to find them following in your soul's experience. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgement for all that are oppressed. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel." The Lord does all these things, and when you know them in your own experience, when you can say - 'Why, He has forgiven my sins and I cannot forgive myself. I am disposed often to question whether it is a reality, but when He renews the sweet sense of pardon, I know it. Why, He has done all for me that I can say I have experienced. All His goodness and His kindness; His power; His love; why, I have felt His presence with me and had some measure of communion with Him, therefore soul, O my soul, do not forget these benefits. Do not pass them by.' Present troubles may dispose us to forget past mercies. It is not good though, it is not good. Only acknowledge His goodness. It is a praise to Him and He takes it kindly at the hands of His people. "Forget not all His benefits."

Then follows the declaration of the eighth verse. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger," with His people. Not without cause. Is an affectionate father angry with his son? Not without cause. If the son has gone contrary to parental authority and commandment, then there is a kind of proper anger in the parent, and that anger is expressed in the rod. The rod of correction, which as Solomon says, shall drive folly far away from him, and how slow is the Lord to do this. "So ready to abate" is His wrath, as Watts speaks. All this shows to us who come into the experience of it, what a God we have to do with. Infinite in His kindness. Slow to

show any displeasure. Ready to smile again when confession is made; when a child comes to its senses: when the prodigal says, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Then comes the embrace, the kiss, the best robe, the fatted calf, the merry-making and the dancing. "He will not always chide." He never chides without cause. It may be in your family, in your business, in your own person. It is not without cause. I know that, in my own case, but He does not always chide, lest the soul which He hath made, should fail before Him. He will not "keep His anger for ever." He will not always be manifesting anger. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee." Compared with His mercies how transient is His chiding. He does as a father does. A father's heart dictates lovingkindness. Lovingkindness, is love kindly shown and this is what the Lord does. Then comes the text: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," and this means, if one might just wrap it up in a word, it means, He has not sent us to hell, but has given us a good hope through grace. But we will, if enabled, just thrash this out a little in several particulars.

The dealings of God are wise dealings. Rutherford has a word like this - "The Lord's wise love feeds us with hunger, and makes us fat with wants and desertion." It does not look very wise when you are hungry and get no bread to eat. It does not look very wise when you are deserted and cannot get the presence of God: when conscience says you have brought it on yourself. When you make diligent search for causes of controversy on God's part with you, you will find causes plenty, and this is very solemn. It brings people to much consideration, that their ways have been evil. They come under some Scriptures solemnly and sorrowfully. The Lord says - "Thou hast ----- done evil things as thou couldest" and some say, 'Lord we have done that.' He tells us in Ezekiel of His kindness and love to the child when it was a time of love with that child, that He quickened it, washed it, clothed it, gave it wealth, gold, silver, fine linen, wine and honey and He tells us of the base ingratitude of that child so dealt with. Tells us that that child took His gold and His silver and so on and poured all out as a libation to false gods. Perhaps some of you have said - 'Lord that is exactly

my case.' It is not chiefly the sins that we did in unregeneracy. No, base as they were, there are sins which we have done since, that are unutterably baser. Sins against light and knowledge; against love and mercy; against the atonement; against the Spirit of God: vexing and grieving Him. No one could have dealt with us but God, in these things, so as to save us. It is wonderful to be able to say looking back on what you have done, what you have been, what you have rendered yourself, and say, 'Why am I spared?.... Why am I dealt with so tenderly?.... How is it that again and again I am enabled and led to pray?.... How is it that from time to time some Scriptures sweetly bend themselves to my soul as the rays of the sun are bent from the east to the west in the early morning, in the grey dawn; and these Scriptures bend themselves to my soul, and whisper kindness, and tell me of a good God, and of a gracious Redeemer; of the Holy Spirit, and of the mercies boundless; of a covenant unbreakable, of God's unloseable blessings - unloseable!' And you say, 'He has not dealt with me after my sins!' The sins that make us weep bitter tears, which we are ashamed of, when confessed, bring blessings down, if I may so express the matter, a hard unfeeling heart, an unconfessing spirit, an impenitent spirit, you will find, as they prevail, an absent God. But a broken and a contrite heart will attract Him and bring Him down with tokens of His love. He hath not dealt with us as we deserve.

Now take one or two sins, for as you know I like to be particular and close. I have to be in my own case. I do not find myself able to bundle things all together, as if not one was to be distinguished from another. It is good to look particularly at things, to take certain sins that you have done and look at them. Now take this unbelief. Is your judgement of this sin, Hart's? - the same as Hart's:-

"If unbelief's that sin accursed,
Abhorred by God above,
Because, of all opposers worst,
It fights against His love,
How shall a heart that doubts like mine,
Dismayed at every breath,
Pretend to live the life divine,
Or fight the fight of faith?"

If you feel as Hart felt, you are as sorry as he was, and O my friends, when we are led to reflect on the Object of our unbelief and the dishonour that it does to Him, reflect on the truth He has made known to us and the goodness He has manifested, and the promises He has spoken home, and that notwithstanding, the unbelief of the heart goes out and says, 'Can He provide a table in the wilderness? Can He deliver out of this trouble? Can He forgive this sin? Can He do that?' We do limit the Holy One of Israel, don't we? Sorely and wickedly, we limit Him. 'Can good come out of this? Can this be turned into a blessing? Can God glorify Himself in me?' If He dealt with us according to this, what should we get? What would you have? But He has not dealt with us after this sin. He has rebuked us for it - "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" - "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" I wonder if that word has rebuked any of you. I know it has me. "Said I not unto thee." A poor contracted, unbelieving, miserable creature, limiting the Lord. Yet says He, "Come unto Me." He does not deal according to sin in us. He deals according to love in Himself; according to the atonement. Love brings Him again and again, as it brought Him at the first. He hath not dealt with us after this sin. Blessed be His name, "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful" and sometimes He revives faith and enables faith to put Him in remembrance. "Put Me in remembrance." Then faith says - 'Lord, remember Thy holy promise' and you go to Him perhaps, in simplicity and address His Holy Majesty and say - 'Was that a real thing or did I only imagine it. Did that word come from Thee or did I gather it myself?' and He may, as Hart expresses it, "kindly make it o'er again", with new light, life, unction, and goodness, so that you say to yourself, "Hope thou in God - Why art thou cast down? - Hope thou in God." Hope in His faithfulness, in His infinite resources and fulness. Hope in His power. There is nothing too hard for Him. No sin too powerful for Him. No stone that He cannot melt within you. No blindness He cannot remove. No difficulty He cannot bring you honourably through. No temptation He cannot quell. No devil He cannot overcome. "Hope thou in God." What a mercy it is to have your heart fixed here. He hath not dealt with me after the sin of unbelief. That sin that has honoured nature above God. That has honoured, if I may speak so, honoured sin above the atonement.

He hath not dealt with us after the sin of unfaithfulness. My friends, you may have noticed, and perhaps have noticed with trembling, that it is charged upon the ungodly - neither were they thankful - and it may be that you have found yourself charging that upon yourself - 'neither have I been thankful.' Petulant nature says - 'well, what is there to be thankful for? Trouble here, sorrow there, perplexity about me; what have I to thank Him for?' Faith says, 'Where were you at such a time? What were you at such a time?' And you answer - 'I was in a grave, dead in trespasses and sins. I was an enemy to God. I had enmity in my heart to Him. I loathed His word. Spoke blasphemously against His word. I loved the world. Not half of it, but all of it. Not a little, but I loved it intensely.' Nothing to be thankful for! For regenerating mercy; for an effectual call that has reached your heart? Where were you once when far from God, with conviction lodged in you? You say, 'Why, I was at the ends of the earth. Gloomy, depressed, burdened, sunk in guilt, and unrighteousness wrapped about me, until I thought that soon God would exact deserved judgement upon me.' Instead of which, He brought mercy. Mercy's angel-form appeared and kindness divine was manifested and Jesus was seen and He was heard speaking kindly and lovingly; and nothing to be thankful for? What did God do when you were depressed in some heavy affliction? 'Sent relief,' you say. What did He do when you feared falling? Gave you a promise that He would help you and make you stand. What did He do when you had some particular loss? Comforted you on every side. And the sin of ingratitude has flourished in our hearts, though we have had all this mercy shown us. The sin of ingratitude! We are told to give thanks in everything and how seldom have we thanked God. We are told to praise Him and to bring the sacrifice of praise to Him; the fruit of our lips; and how often have we murmured instead, with blessings in our hands; and has God dealt with us after this sin? O, no! Though we have not been thankful for the past as we should have been, He has not left off showing us kindness, has He? No! New mercies; fresh inshining; fresh helps; some reproofs whereby we have been convinced of our sins, and yet at the same time had grace to repent and be sorry; and then the Lord turning again with double love. Perhaps you say, 'O, but this furnace!' Ah, but He may say to you, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Israel was 400 years in the iron furnace, then God brought Israel out of Egypt. And you may be

long in a furnace and yet have kindness shown to you. He hath not dealt with us after the base ingratitude that we have shown Him. He might say to us - "Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?" But instead of that, He heaps mercies on us and makes us ashamed by His goodness; by His love; for love does make the recipients of it very much ashamed, and this is for the conduct they have been guilty of, the ingratitude they have manifested.

Take the sin of some particular backsliding. The Apostle Paul was astonished at the Galatians, that they so soon turned away from Him who called them, to another gospel, and yet dear friends, though we have done that, and O, how some of us have backslidden, what has He done to us? Not dealt with us after that. I have had reflections of my backslidings, many. Some wounded my spirit this day and if they had been allowed, would have taken all hope away, but blessed be God, He does not deal with us as these things call for. He may say to us, He has said to some, notwithstanding their backsliding, He goes through it, as it were, to a previous time in their experience and says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." He may ask you a question that will grieve you and melt you. "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" O when God puts a question like that to a backslider, it fills him with shame. Some things in our lives, we shall never forget. Some things are made points and particular times to us. That is one in my own case, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, we are lords; we will come no more unto Thee?" And what does He say? - "Turn again, O virgin of Israel." Who could call an unfaithful child of God a virgin, but Himself? And this is His kindness. He hath not dealt with us after the sin of our backsliding. We are perpetually doing it. We are bent to it by nature, but He is more than a match for it and He is perpetually showing kindness to us. You take notice of this and may we who fear God be enabled to ask for grace to follow Huntingdon, who had his cushion in one corner of his room and had a nightly reckoning and a straightening of things. O for grace to do this, for when backsliding continues and sins grow and guilt accumulates, then there is heavy work. He hath not dealt with us after that sin.

There is another sin that the Lord has not dealt with us according to, namely, the worldly, corroding, anxious spirit that we have so often manifested, and indulged indeed. "What shall we eat? - what shall we drink? - wherewithal shall we be clothed?" and you begin to count what you have. 'Will this be enough for me?' and forget God when you count it. O the business of this. Did He ever say to you, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, ---- and all these things shall be added unto you?" Did He ever let you know that He knew the things you had need of, and caused you to believe it and say to Him, you believe it, and to profess to others that God had spoken to you and you were now quite sure He would bring you honourably through? And since then, there has been this - "What shall we eat, - What shall we drink?" 'How shall we meet this liability, how pay that bill,' as if there were no God in heaven. Practical atheists by the hour some of us have been, though made real believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and has God dealt with us after this spirit? No, He showed Himself to be a good God and a great God. A great God to whom honour and majesty belong, because of His great kindness to us - opening his liberal hand, and even by His liberal gift, making us ashamed of our carnal and worldly and corroding care; ashamed by His manifested goodness to us. He has not dealt with us after this sin.

He has not dealt with us after our hardness. Hard hearted we have been. Hard to Himself, tender to ourselves. Hard to others, hard to friends. Thinking harshly of this and that person, not ready to forgive any offence done to us. One might continue a long time on this theme - look at it. Here is a base creature, got a heart like a stone towards a good God, and instead of the Lord leaving him to that hardness that he should grow like an adamant, what has He done? Why, He has dropped in some chastisement. The child has been chastised, but God has dropped in some mercy; some tender thought He has put into your thought about Himself. 'Against whom am I harbouring this hardness,' you have said to yourself, 'against whom am I thinking these hard thoughts?' Was not it some such dealings that Asaph got when he was fretting, trying to measure God and understand providence, and finding himself unable to do it? He said, "If I say, I will speak thus behold I should offend against the generation of Thy children," and some tender thought dropped into his mind. We do not know how much God affects,

sometimes, by such a thing as one thought darted into the mind, and you began, when it came, you began to melt, grow tender, and then hard thoughts about yourself and judging of yourself took place, until you found that Scripture true - "If we would judge ourselves." And then, "We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." "He hath not dealt with us after our sins."

Now I will ask a question. What is the reason that we have not been dealt with by God according to our sins? We must fetch the reason from Himself. You will find it in His eternal love. In His unbreakable covenant of grace. In His tenderness to His children. In His faithfulness to His promise. You will find the reason in Himself, for as the prophet Isaiah speaks - the Lord speaking by him - "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." O what a God we have! I wish I could lift Him up before you. O, what a God He is in Christ; full of tenderness; full of pity joined with power. The Lord has a Father's heart; a Father's eye; a Father's tenderness; a Father's pity and mercy and bowels of compassion: so that when a prodigal has come to his senses and his mind has gone back to his Father's house, and gone back to the way by which he left his Father's house with his portion, and how he spent it in riotous living, all this thought in his mind - darted into his mind by his distant Father - brought him back. He said, 'I will arise from this my sad case. I will arise from this my deplorable condition and I will go from this my grievous position with my rags and my hunger and I will go to my Father, and as I go to Him I will make confession.' That is always the case with a returning sinner. 'I will make confession. I wont extenuate anything. No excuse shall be on my lips, even as there is none in my heart now, and I will tell Him I am not worthy to be called a son.' And all this the Father sees and hears. Do you know the prodigal? I know him. Do you know his confession? Do you know the reception that the prodigal got? And the merry-making that followed his coming home? O what a God we have! "What treatment?" Hart asks,

"What treatment since He came?
Love, tenderly expressed.
What robe is brought to hide his shame?
The best, the very best."

All that heaven can give is given to the prodigal. Heaven's best, heaven's sweetest, heaven's most fragrant gift, the gift of Christ, whose love is infinite, the smell of whose garments is heaven itself. This is that, that the prodigal gets.

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins", but He hath dealt with us after His love; after His covenant; after His power and after the precious blood of Christ. Yes, that is the rule dear friends, the blood of Christ. Neither hath He "rewarded us according to our iniquities." "Our iniquities" here, may be expressed by the word "perversity". "Our perversity". And we have been very perverse, have we not? Jonah was very perverse. "I do well to be angry." Did you ever imitate Jonah's wickedness? And perhaps you have been in Jonah's prison. Perhaps you have had Jonah's resurrection and Jonah's comfort and mercy. O the perversity is great and grievous in us. Yet we are not rewarded according to this perversity. "Rewarded!".... Why, if we get our wages - the wages which perversity calls for - what should we get but condemnation! But now, what does the Lord do? Why, He gives into the hand of one whose perversity has been very grievous and offensive to His divine Majesty, some fresh goodness; some new blessing; some sweet appearance of Himself. Now look at Peter. He got a wonderful bit of heaven in place of the piece of hell he had given, for O he had given Christ the greatest dishonour that he could. He had said of Him, "I know not the Man," and averred that with curses. Backed it up, so to say, in order to clear himself, and this perversity of his nature which suddenly broke out into so grievous a sin, got a wonderful reward. Jesus looked upon him! And the look pierced him; filled him with grief and sorrow; and he went out and wept bitterly, and kindness has sent some such mercy to some of us. O bless God for redeeming us from our perversity; our iniquity. He has not rewarded us according to that, but gave a different kind of thing into our hand, a piece of heaven. Heaven's love, expressed in forgiveness. Heaven's sweetness, known in the coming of Christ to the soul. Heaven's light, known in the sight of the cross of Christ, and heaven's life, felt in the moving of the blessed Spirit of Christ in the soul. This has been what the Lord has given in place of the perversity of our hearts and of our spirits, if we look at the conclusion of things in two ways for a moment.

First, if God had allowed the conception and the bringing forth of sin to be finished - "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." - where should we have been? Look at it soberly. Look at your sins and backslidings and perversity. How you have conceived mischief. How you have brought it forth. How you have lived in it in your spirit. Now if the Lord had allowed that to be finished in you; if He had allowed all that to be finished in me; what would have become of us? Hell must have swallowed us up. Now that is one side. Look at the other. His kind dealings with us. His grace, when He has said - "Turn, O backsliding children." 'Come unto Me, poor prodigals.' When He has said, 'Come to the throne of grace', and "I will receive you ---- and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" and "I will walk among you." 'I will be in you.' When this is finished - and it is going to be finished in one wonderful sense, but never finished in another - the prodigal's wandering shall be finished. His guilt shall be washed, but the love that receives him shall never end. That is the way God does show much of His kindness. He breaks the power of reigning sin. He subdues the iniquities, the perversities of His people. He washes away their pollutions, and He gives them comfortably to believe, at times, that the day is coming when they will no more wander, no more sin and they shall never say in that land of peace - "I am sick:" for, "the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." And now, who shall wear the crown of all this goodness? You know. Who shall wear the crown? Who shall be honoured? What will the song be, that will be sung by such people as the text speaks about. The people this is speaking of; their cases. This is the answer - "Worthy is the Lamb." yes, "Worthy is the Lamb." Perhaps some of you, this very day, have said that, in your spirits. You have lorded His loved and lovely name. Wondered at the heaven that could appear for such a wretch, such a piece of sin, death and hell. Wondered that God could have borne with you and allowed you to live, and beyond that, given you a good hope through grace. Perhaps you have said - 'Lord, is it for me? I am so vile. If so, make it over again.' And it may be, that the rays of the Son have bent themselves, yea come sweetly and directly into your very hearts and souls and made you, notwithstanding all your fears, happy in the Lord, so that the language that you have had, is

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this - "Bless the Lord O my soul." Use it friends, as you can. Praise Him as you can, for immortal honours belong to Him and they become Him. Yes, they become Him who took away the hell of sin and condemnation; become Him who quickened our souls into eternal life. They become Him who has pardoned iniquity, transgression and sin, and who will perform the mercy and the truth unto Jacob: Him of whom it is said, "He hates to put away." "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west," - can you measure that? - "so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

Well, dear friends, probably some of you say, I have too much sorrow and too much guilt and too much trouble at the present to follow you. If so, what shall one say to you? One would say this - seek to have the whole matter out with God. Seek to have all your convictions well removed, and yet more deeply fixed. Seek to have the guilt washed away. Seek the sweet presence of the Sun of Righteousness, whose rays, whose warmth will make a summer in one minute in your souls, when the matter is well settled between you and God. Settled by Himself, settled in your heart and conscience. Then you will say - 'The minister did not speak half the truth,' and you will say, 'He could not do it.' No, and the minister will agree with you. Who can express half the worth and the glory of the Lord in His kindness to the worst of sinners. But we will join together from time to time, as a little people, to acknowledge this great truth and thank God that it exists; that it has a place in our experience; namely, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."
