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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel
Brighton Sunday evening 21.4.29

TEXT: Psalm 103 verse 3

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities who healeth all
thy diseases"

This Psalm is a song of praise. This praise may be waiting in some of your hearts. "Praise waiteth for Thee O God in Zion" You cannot at the moment rise to the height of this Psalm, but you possess the principle of life, and the day must come when that life, quickened, increased, and blessed with the presence of Christ, and the sense of His precious blood, will constrain you to break into this beautiful song "Bless the Lord, O my soul" Be not discouraged if now you can scarcely rise above self-condemnation, that will accompany you as long as you live. Self-condemnation is a part of a christian's life. A true experience never is wholly lacking this. The sinner who by precious faith feels his sins are forgiven him, can never sufficiently condemn and hate and loathe himself for his sins. The christian's course is not one unchanging regular dead course, but liable to many vicissitudes, many temptations, many pains, great disappointments, and such and such evils coming, stir up and bring out the very worst of fallen nature. Probably all of you who have any experience worth the name would say that your troubles have ordinarily brought out the worst of your nature - fretfulness, self-pity, reproaching the Lord, not in word, but in spirit, but when He has forgiven your iniquity, then you wondered at His forbearance, wondered that He allowed you to live, wondered at the value of the applied atonement, and wondered at the condescension of God in giving you again access to His divine majesty and speaking friendly and comfortably to you. Songs become us, but the devil mocks at us, and when we are low he may say - sing us one of the Lord's songs, but when there is a little bright inshining, when good hope

through grace again rises, then gratitude comes and there is an attempt to sing this blessed song. You can sing it in faith; you can sing it in experience. It was no quiet sort of comfortable feeling, but an intense feeling of gratitude and praise in his heart, moving him to call upon all that was within him to bless the Lord, to exhort himself not to forget all the benefits which had been bestowed upon him.

The benefit of regeneration. The divine invincible call by the Holy Spirit. The conviction of sin that was lodged in the conscience sent as an arrow by the Spirit. a conviction that you could never get rid of. A sense of self-condemnation, and a justifying of the Lord. An honest, instructed conscience justifying God in that sentence pronounced against the sinner by the holy, just, good and spiritual law of God, the spirit of prayer, the spirit of confession, glimpses of Christ, the announcement in the heart now and again of the gospel, the everlasting gospel, a sight of the open door, the access that Christ is and gives to His people, the cleaving by faith, that is hardly known to be faith. These are among the benefits which at times are in the grateful memory and their benefits. O to be grateful to God for giving them to us. We can never bless Him enough for regeneration. An operation, of the nature of which, we were unacquainted when it came, but with which now we have some acquaintance.

Forget not all His benefits. Poor sinner, you think sometimes you have nothing to praise God for, but if you look into your own case, comparing it with the scriptures, you will see that you have many benefits, and desire not to forget them. Do not forget God's kindness to you in calling you to the throne of His heavenly grace and giving you power to commit yourself, your soul, and all things into the hands of the Saviour.

Then he comes to the text and ascribes praise and blessing to God for that particular thing which he had

experience of "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities" There are two ways of knowing the forgiveness of sins - first, the seeing of the infinitely valuable blood of Christ as sufficient to remove sin from your soul. You may know the doctrine of it in such a gracious way as to be greatly attracted. Not have a mere notion of it, but to see it by faith as meeting your case, as sufficient to cleanse you from sin, sufficient to bring the peace of God to your heart. Sufficient to shut hell against you, and open heaven for you. The sight, the blessed sight of this is given by the Holy Spirit as an invincible attraction. I say an invincible attraction, and it is indeed, for as sin is felt on the conscience, objections innumerable and powerful rise in the mind and the judgment, and the conscience against a sinner having the experience of forgiveness. He is unworthy. His sins are too numerous, their guilt too dreadful, their character too black, the sinner's ignorance too great and the devil presses these things, which are true in the sinner's view; he presses them upon the spirit, so as that the sinner thinks it is impossible for him to have a good hope through grace. Now when such objections are in the mind, I know them all, for I have had them, when they are in the mind, there is this only can keep the sinner from despair - a faith's view, though it be distant, a faith's view of the precious blood of Christ. When that is given the sinner may go with more hope in his heart than he is conscious of, may go to the throne of God's heavenly grace and plead and urge and pray, and press his case before God. There is a kind of knowledge that sin can be forgiven. If free grace, why not for me? and you may find an emphasis that will help you, why not for me, the chief of sinners, the greatest of all criminals in God's sight, the most polluted of wretches, why not for me? O sinner go; O poor tempted creature, go. Go with the chains about your neck; go with the guilt on your conscience. Go with the sin of your nature; go with the conviction of your sins, and do not take one single excuse with you. Excuses never stand. Confessions do. Pleading the blood of Christ stands. That

is a good thing to know.

The second way of knowing it is the way in which the Psalmist in this verse knew it. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities" He had none left. The mystery, the mercy, the conscience so cleansed, so purged, as Paul speaks in the Hebrews that there was none left. "If" says Paul, there in that passage "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh " (If a Jew had touched a dead body or the bone of a dead body, or anything else which God had declared ceremonially defiling; if a Jew in that case, was cleansed by running water, and the ashes of a slain heifer sprinkled upon him, if his disability to enter into the tabernacle service and worship should be removed by that) "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God". What a wonder! That blood, sprinkled on the Psalmist's conscience washed him thoroughly from his sin and cleansed him from his iniquity, all his iniquity. But one may say, how shall I know this? I would ask you a question. How would your body, sensitive to the influence of cold and heat, know that the summer sun was shining on you? How would your eye, receiving light, know that you saw in the light of the sun? So a sinner knows when his sins are forgiven. He knows it, not only by faith receiving the atonement, but by the influence of forgiveness on every power and faculty of his immortal soul. He knows it by the relief given him; the burden is removed from his conscience; the load is taken away from him; the door of hope is opened. The door of access is set open before him and by the Spirit's grace he enters into the sacred presence of God. He gets a smile from God. I am of the opinion, and have long been of the opinion, that no human language can ever adequately describe the happiness of a forgiven sinner; the removal of the load of the sentence of condemnation, of the death that was felt, of the separation from God that was

felt, of the darkness and the gloom and the fear and the sinking and the occasional terror at the thought of being lost for ever, and the sense of being contrary in his nature and contrary in his feelings, as he has hitherto been to God, now taken away, and his heart and his affections and his feelings all in harmony with the Divine Being.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities". You who sometimes were far off yet now hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ. And you who were of the uncircumcision in your flesh, have had your hearts circumcised, and the hand-writing of ordinances that was against you and contrary to you, forbidding your approach to God, He hath taken away, taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross, and the experience that is expressed in Isaiah "O Lord, our transgressions are with us and as for our iniquities we know them. We all do fade as a leaf and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away;" taken us away from God, away from peace, away from holiness, away from all hope in self, away from all help in self. These our iniquities have thus taken us away, and now the same people, the same people, say "We are made nigh by the blood of Christ" Well it is a great thing to be forgiven. A blessed thing to be forgiven. God and a forgiven sinner are friends, friends for ever, for the sinner blessed thus receives the Lord Jesus, and walks in Hart's word "Close in with Christ by saving faith, and He's your friend for ever". O what a wonder. There is a passage in Isaiah that may sometimes have arrested you, or may yet arrest you - "All that are incensed against Thee shall be ashamed" ^{Isaiah 45/24} and you may find an instant feeling in your heart moving you to say "Lord I am not incensed against Thee". Even if you could not say you loved Him, you could say you are not incensed against Him, that the only one desire is Himself; the only refuge you would flee to is Himself, the only hiding place you desired to find was Himself. Instead of being incensed against Him, your whole soul was after Him. Many steps may be and are indeed taken between regeneration and full assurance, but they are steps of

faith, steps of prayer, steps of hope, of desire, of hunger, of thirst, of seeking the face of God, and the end must be sweet happiness. Blessed, grateful contrition, gospel repentance, love to the Lord, and praising Him as here. "Bless the Lord O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities" Now you would think a person thus blessed was made whole, and in a sense it is so, he is whole. As it was said of the man who was healed by Peter, faith in the name of Jesus had given the man that perfect soundness which all the beholders witnessed. A believer when forgiven is a sound person, has got a sound religion, a sound experience, a sound knowledge of God. His heart is sound in God's statutes. His prayer is answered if he has prayed it - "Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes". But this same person has diseases. Jesus went about healing all that had need of healing. The diseases, are the diseases which all sinners have, but which belong as to experience, to the Lord's people, and of these, the forgiven sinner is healed from time to time, and I will as enabled name a few of these diseases and the first is unbelief. This appears to be the sin which so easily besets the saints of God. Unbelief. Faith has no unbelief in it. Faith has no doubt in it, but every believer is plagued with unbelief and troubled by doubt, and unbelief is a disease. It brought a fatal disease into human nature when Adam fell. It was the disease that John the Baptist had. It so affected him when he was in prison that though he had had the distinctest manifestations of Christ, had been honoured to be the forerunner of Christ, to see Him as to open his mouth and make him loudly proclaim on Jordan's bank "Behold the Lamb of God" Multitudes came to his baptism. He was the forerunner of Christ and prepared the way for Him. proclaiming that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and the people were to repent, and after a time John's faithful preaching brought him into prison, and there he lay and his faith got a strong blow, and became depressed, and the unbelief of his heart was like a disease eating away his life and his strength, till at last he was under constraint

to send to the Lord Jesus. If you have got unbelief, do not go to anybody, but just go as you can to the Lord Jesus. John sent two of His disciples to Christ with the important question "Art Thou He that should come or look we for another?" Then Christ gave, shall I say, a demonstration of Himself, of His Person, a demonstration that he indeed was the Person whom John had preached, whose shoe's latchet John was not worthy to stoop down to unloose. He gave him a demonstration - Go tell John what you have seen. You have seen the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and to the poor the gospel is preached, and John got a healing no doubt. The gospel sent to him thus healed him of that disease. Peter got that disease. Christ told him of it that it would spread itself over his whole soul, that wicked horrible thing, that immoral thing, unbelief, and Peter when confronted with the maid who said "Thou art one of His disciples" denied all knowledge of Christ, and tried to confirm his ignorance of Christ with oaths. Who would have thought it? Who would have believed it? Peter did not believe it when Christ told him it would happen to him. He would not believe it. He said he would go to prison and even to death for Christ. Now my friends we have got the same. Every believer has the disease of unbelief. Everyone who has seen Christ by faith has got this devil of unbelief in his heart, and circumstances may arise, temptations may come to stir this unbelief up. Christ may for a time be absent, not send any message, not convey any power, nor give a smile, so that faith staggers, unbelief strengthens. Time helps it if the Lord is away long, and the disease spreads over the soul. Do not some of you know it? Perhaps even now you are sitting listening to me you are saying why I have got that disease present. It is loathsome but it is here. It spreads, it increaseth, and I do not know what the end will be. Now this is what you need, what I need - the healing of Christ's grace. The healing of His blood. The healing of His love. The healing that His good word will bring. That will do it. Christ heals the sick; He is the good physician; He has balm in

Gilead and He is a good physician. Present to heal sinners; present to say "Be not faithless but believing" Present to administer perhaps a gentle reproof "Wherefore dost thou doubt?" What reason have you to doubt Me. What have I done to cause this doubt? What have I done to induce the spreading of this loathsome disease over your spirit? And the reproof will help you. The reproof will go a long way toward the healing. It will convince you of the evil and make you cry, heal me O Lord for I have sinned. Who healeth this disease. He comes near. He comes very near sometimes, so near that the little arms of your faith, to quote Flavel again, as I have done before, "The little arms of your faith open to receive and embrace the Saviour" Again you close in with Him. Again you cleave to Him, and confess with sorrow the dishonour you have heaped upon Him by the wretched unbelief of your heart. Now that is a healing, and a blessed healing it is. You are ready when you have got it to say to your friends "Come with me and rejoice, I have found the piece of silver I lost" "Rejoice with me, Christ has come again, and healed my soul, and now I can believe Him. I will believe Him in the face of all devils, and all unbelief, and every influence that can come against me" Well, sing while you can, sing this glad song. Bless the Lord for healing this fearful disease of unbelief.

Another disease is that lordly spirit of prayerlessness. They said of old, we are lords, we are independent, we will come no more unto Thee. We will get along as best we can, we are lords. O this wicked spirit, this wicked spirit. "Have I been a wilderness to Israel" says the Lord "a land of darkness, wherefore do my people say 'we are lords we will come no more unto Thee?'" and in Micah the Lord says "What have I done unto thee my people, O Israel, wherein have I wearied thee O My people?" What lordly creatures we are. One blessed now in his soul might be saying "O I do not think I shall do that". We little know. Do you believe this, that nothing we profess can be relied on until it has been tried. You may have faith but

you cannot depend on that faith until it has been tried. You may have prayer in your heart, but if you are tried, a proud spirit comes, an independent feeling arises, or you have got something you think is about enough for you for the time being; what will become of prayer? Seldom do we go to Jesus till other helpers and props and supports and comforts and supplies wither, and God does wither them. He sends an east wind to wither things on which we are apt to depend if we are permitted, so prayer dies. I am sorry I know what this means, prayer dies. You turn your back on God, the best of friends. Go here, and go there in your spirit. Hang on this your supposed strength, and that good resolution. O but it is a disease, a foul disease, and when you feel it, when you confess it, when you go to God with the guilt of it, then you will find sooner or later this done "Who healeth all thy diseases" and it brings again a healthy spirit of going to God with everything, a healthy, believing reliance on Him for everything. Seeking His guidance, saying "Unto Thee O God do I lift up my soul Show me the way wherein I should walk. Show me what to do. Show me what to give up. Show me what to lose, what to abandon. Show me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee". The Lord loves dependence; He loves dependence, indeed He has imprinted it, yea, made it into our very nature, an indissoluble part of our nature. You will never get rid of dependence, but when it is moved in the soul by the Spirit, He loves it. "Come to Me" He said "Come to Me; bring your burdens and your troubles, and your disappointments. Bring your needs; bring your weakness; bring your ignorance to Me" O He does heal people of this proud spirit, this lawless, this wicked spirit, a lordly prayerlessness - We are lords we will come no more unto Thee" but He will have it, so you shall come to Him. You shall walk in that word "Call upon Me in the day of trouble" for a day of trouble will make you know your weakness and your need.

There is a third disease to be named. You have it in

the Revelation where Jesus says to the church at Ephesus "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" and when you have left it, it is not difficult to pick a quarrel with Jesus Christ. When you have left it, your ease is much more important to you than His presence. "Open to Me my sister, My spouse" He said "My locks are wet with the dews of night" They are filled with drops of dew. O but she had so left her love that she said I am in bed, I am easy, I do not want to be disturbed. Do any of you know what that is? I do not want to be disturbed. It is a disease, a sickness, a great sickness and Jesus Christ makes a sinner who falls into that disease know it. He does go away, but He leaves something behind Him. He put His hand in by the hole of the door and left some cleansing influence, He left myrrh on the handle of the door. There is always something left by Christ when He will do a sinner good. You will find it so. If you are without exercise for a time, when the Lord Jesus will come and heal you, He will put His hand in and leave something behind Him, and you will say "I will arise, I will open to my beloved" and you are greatly surprised perhaps that He resents your treatment of Him - "Thou hast left thy first love", but when she was moved, when the energy of grace, when the power of the Spirit came again upon her, and she left her bed of idleness and sleep and went into the city with a strong cry in her heart "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" and went about dissatisfied until she found Him, then when she found Him she held Him, for she said "I held Him and would not let Him go" Her affections were again strong and entwined themselves about Him. He was her blessed Lord. She held Him in the arms of her faith and her love. He was her Lord. "This is my beloved". After that, being enquired of as to why she made such an ado about Him, describing Him to the best of her ability and knowledge, she said "This is my beloved and this is my friend" and what about Him? "He is altogether lovely. His mouth is most sweet" She was healed of that disease.

You will get healed of another disease sometimes - the disease of impatience, of saying "What, should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Of saying with Jacob "My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God" Why should I wait any more for Him? He does not take any notice of me. What a dreadful spirit. He said to one church "Thou hast kept the word of my patience" Sometimes if He spoke to some of us He would say "You are very impatient" We need often to be reminded of that eternal truth which may appear occasionally to us to be a mere rudimentary truth. It is indeed the beginning and it is the end, namely "Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day" The husbandman sows the seed and hath long patience for the early and the latter rain, looking for the harvest. O, impatience is a disease belonging to human nature, the contrary of patience, and a patient waiting on God. Does the Lord ever heal this in you? Do you say sometimes "My soul waiteth for the Lord?" Do you say with Isaiah "I wait for the Lord who hideth Himself from the house of Jacob?" It is a great thing when God comes and lets you see by faith that He has you and your things in His hand; under His management, and then your prayer is "Lord take me up; manage me, manage my things. Manage my temper, manage my stupidity. Turn everything to my good and Thy glory. O manage me." You may have felt sometimes like a horse, madly rushing. I wont wait, I wont hear it. Poor creature, as if you can manage. O, but then He comes and you say "Lord forgive that sin. Here I am, take me, manage me, manage my things, my business, my family, my troubles, manage everything." What a mercy it is to have a healthy soul, healthy in this particular, to find patience. "Brethren" says James "count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations" "Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing".

Diseases! who can go through them all? Let me name one more. The disease of practical contradiction of the Lord

Jesus. He says "Take no thought for the morrow, for the things of the morrow shall take thought for themselves. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof". He says by Paul "Set your affections on things above not on things of the earth" and what do we say? Practically, we say, we must be careful. We must think about tomorrow. We must try to do this. We must avoid that. We contradict Him. What does He do? He sends trouble. He makes holes in the bag into which the wages are put and they go through these holes. He sends some affliction in the family or else His hand on the person, or sends some solemn rebukes into the conscience. If He opens the eyes and causes the sinner, under His chastening, to see where he has been, what he has been doing, the evil spirit that he has been guided by, O what a sight. A sinner sees himself as vile as Job saw and felt himself to be. Now what a speck the world seems to him. What an emptiness there is in it. Then faith sees Christ. What a fulness there is in Him. Do we want a little more in providence than He has been pleased thus far to give and is that little more necessary? Will He let you perish for lack of it? Will He let you perish for lack of it? The mind stretches itself out to carnal things. Faith rises to spiritual things, and one who has been worldly, ambitious, carnal, reaching after this world and forgetting the things that are given, one blessed with grace, living so, gets a solemn dealing, like the surgeon coming and making a close examination. He sees and says that the knife is necessary. You shrink from it. He says it must be done. It must be done. He does not consult your carnal sensitiveness, but carries on the great work of healing. He cuts away what was so evil. He sends chastening, but then love is in it. O that is a beautiful thing, love is in it. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten" The branch that has borne fruit shall be purged that it may bring forth more fruit. The dealings of God are the dealings of a Father with a child. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him"

Who healeth thy diseases. The diseases of a spiritual character, belonging to the mind and heart and affections and conscience and will and understanding. The whole of man is diseased. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in it but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.

Now in conclusion, listen to God's word. "I am the Lord that healeth you". "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely" This, this healing causes the healed person to return in his spirit to the freshness of youth and the sweetness of health, of perfect soundness. I wish we did not need such constant healing, but sin is a perpetual motion in the heart. It is a perpetual rebellion against God. It is a perpetual working of a disease in the spirit, affecting the will and the conscience and the understanding and the affections and the source of it is this - the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it? But, when it pleases the Lord to do this great thing, to heal the sinner, he says "Bless the Lord who has done it. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless His Holy Name." "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" So the Psalmist goes on and so may we under divine healing be constrained to continue.