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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Wednesday evening, 30th. Jan. 1935

Text: Psalm 107 v. 20

"He sent His word, and healed them, and
delivered them from their destructions."

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This divine Psalm has many wonders in it; wonders of affliction imposed by God; wonders of sorrow, perplexity; wonders of omnipotence, raising a stormy wind; the sea made to lash, and threaten to destroy all who go down into it in ships. Many sicknesses; various reasons and causes for sickness. I am not intending to confine myself to the immediate context of the text, but as enabled, to look more or less through the Psalm as it may come to my memory, to see the sicknesses which qualify for the healing word of God. We can never know the healing health of the gospel, if we do not know what some sickness is, to prepare us for it. It is a great thing when God deals with a person, to see that person trembling at His word; afflicted in spirit; troubled about sin - some inconsistency of heart - if not of open conduct. Troubled, because you see, in the light of God's teaching, how you have gone away from Him. How you have looked at this and that in providence and feared, when He has shown you you are wrong, that He would never put you right.

The beginning of the Psalm is striking. God gathering people from the four quarters of the earth, and bringing, into where they did not expect to be brought, - into "the wilderness in a solitary way" - "gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south." Abraham was "gathered". He was promised a city, a land, a nation, a seed that should have in it, blessing for all nations and families of the earth. What expectations must have been raised in his heart. When God called some of us and made known His goodness to us, what expectations we might have felt. God has spoken. God has promised. God has said He would be with us. Yes Then, instead of the immediate fulfilment of what was given, there has been the wilderness. Difficulties; deaths; various afflictions; disappointments: God's delays. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way;"

and did not always have God walking with them. There is no solitary way when He is walking with you. You know that, those of you who know His presence. There is nothing solitary, nothing wrong, nothing heavy, nothing bitter, when God is with you. You understand that. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." A city on which their hearts were set. "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." That fainting is very painful. Jonah had it when he was at "the bottoms of the mountains" and "the belly of hell." His soul fainted in him. But for a secret support of faith, standing in the power of God, what would become of people who faint in their souls? But one thing is given to people who faint, or are ready to faint, namely, a prayer. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." You can do nothing else. There is no other remedy. The remedy's before thee - pray. Pray if thou canst speak, pray if thou canst not speak. Call upon God. Real prayer. Why, it is a way of inter-communication between heaven and earth; God and the sinner: a sinner in trouble too. No water, no bread, no rest. Think of these three things in a sinner's experience. No resting place, no refreshment. You may think - 'O, what will become of me if I get no water? How can I stand if I get no bread?' - "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." The best thing to do. The only right thing to do, and the Spirit of God, as it were, says, 'Call upon the Lord. Open thy mouth wide. Make known thy troubles to God.' - "And He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way." Forty years of it. You may have many years of trouble, but a "right way." What is that "right way"? Why, Jesus Christ! "I am the way."

Then, there are people "sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death" and they do not see their signs. When people get spiritually proud, or when, without feeling that pride, they are looking very much at their evidences, God is provoked (because He loves them) to hide these things from them. Do not be surprised, if any of you for a reason God may show you, should get into darkness and sit in it too, because you cannot move out of it. When the Lord commands the sun not to shine, by reason of the cloud that cometh betwixt, how can you get into the light? You cannot do it, so, continuing in it, is likened to sitting in it. Not sitting with contentment, but sitting, because God will not have you come forth for

a time. "The shadow of death." Just as if God, causes that dark shadow that hides the sun; that hides evidences; that hides all that is good from you, and you are just under that dark shadow that says death is coming. Death on your hopes; death on your religion; death on your faith: death on everything. "Then they cried to the Lord." "Bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High." This, I am afraid, is a common sin in the Church of God. Rebellion brings into a dry land. The rebellious, "contemn the counsel of the Most High" in turning away from the word of God, and perhaps, some particular word, that in your beginning, God gave, and you forgot it. You had but a slight fulfilment of it, then you forgot it. You became indifferent to it; went your own way. You did not ask counsel of Him when you took a certain step, did you? No. You go now in secret, and say, 'Lord I am sorry I took that step without prayer. I was counselled to pray, and I did not. I was counselled to wait on Thee and I did not. I was counselled not to take a step in anything without Thee and I took many steps without Thee.' They contemned, turned away from, despised the counsel of the Lord. Ah, you may have many a confession to make on your bed sometimes. 'Lord, I have done this, I have done that,' "Therefore He brought down their heart with labour;" and they did not think that it was His work. You are apt, when in this condition, to think there is nothing of God going on with you. Your trembling, your failing, your darkness, your spirit of confession; you cannot think that God is the author of them, yet, it is so. "He brought down their heart with labour." Put fear, sent an army of fears perhaps, into your conscience. What labour with them! Dried up for the moment, as it were, all that sweet, comfortable access. Ah, what a labour you have, when you are under that condition. Brought it down it was too high for Him. He notices the dunghill. He lifts people off the dunghill. Do not despise that. It is a position and a place not pleasant. O, but He looks at that. He lifts the poor from the dunghill, the beggar He takes off the dust. Ah, people in this labour, little know what a throne awaits them. He sets these people on the throne among the princes of His people and so they are led to cry, to cry "unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses." Saves them. You understand a little of this perhaps. Suddenly, while you are mourning and trembling and confessing, there comes

into your heart a stream of mercy. A touch of the love of God; a sense of His kindness: and you say perhaps, 'O can this be true, that such a wretch who has gone astray, despised the Word of God, - can it be true that he doing all this, is this His peace? You are afraid of getting out the wrong way. Yet, such is His power, such is His goodness that at last, you have to thank Him and bless Him without a doubt about it, for the moment.

"Fools because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat." A good friend may come to you and remind you of what God did at such and such a time, for you told him of it. You cannot receive it. Another may come and read certain passages of Scripture to you, suitable to your case. You cannot receive them. Everything seems bitter to you; all attempts to comfort you may be like pouring nitre upon vinegar; rubbing salt into an open wound. But, as they draw near to the gates of death; are ready to give up everything; no helper, no strength left, nothing at all to lay hold of: "then they cry unto the Lord." It is a wonderful blessing, this. Think of what the Lord does.... He sees a man, a child of His, in this sad condition, confessing that he has done this evil and that, and now he cries unto God, and the Lord hears. "--- And He saveth them out of their distresses." Well, what a wonderful thing it is to be saved out of anything, any sin, any trouble; and trouble may remain, and yet you may be saved out of it. A providence that is painful in the extreme continues with you, and yet you are saved out of it, in respect of its bitterness, in respect of its being, as you think, a stroke of God's anger. "He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." What word is this? Not the law of commandments - 'Do this and live. - Take the forbidden fruit, you die,' - not that. Why, this word is nothing less, nothing else, than the glorious gospel of Christ in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the glorious gospel of Christ, - God sends that. He sends it in a gracious way. Straight it comes from the mouth of Christ to the wound, the sickness, the disease, and heals. Said Jesus Christ, - "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." Ah, if you have got a broken heart, you will be thankful for it. "He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim

liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; ---- to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

Yes, mourning souls little think what is in store for them when the Preacher of all preachers comes with a word of God given to Him to speak. Comes with these divine lips, into which grace has been poured, to speak the healing word. Typical of the spiritual healing, were all the healing works of Christ when here below. The centurion went to Him, or sent to Him, for his servant, and Christ said, "I will come and heal him." The Syrophenician went to Him for her daughter and He healed her. A widow was walking, following the bier of her son and Christ healed him. Gave him to his Mother, a living son. He healed all that had need of healing. You mark that my friends, if you are not spiritually sick, you will get no healing, but if you are spiritually sick, then Christ will send a word. "He sent His word." The "word", is the gospel. Good news from a far country. You could not ascend into heaven to fetch it down, nor descend into the deep to bring it up. You will find in your heart, the word of faith. O brethren, look for the word in your hearts. "He sent His word," - by the Spirit. God sent His word by His Son, which is written in the Scripture. The Son sends the unction from Himself, and the Spirit brings the word of God, and applies it. A plaister of figs to a sore boil. A sore boil that takes your attention away from every healthy part of your body and fixes it on that place, that sore boil, that guilty conscience, that mourning spirit, that confessing heart, these lips that move only in confession and prayer; these eyes that shed tears for sin. What a healing balm Jesus Christ has for such people. He sent it..... If you take it, if you go to the Bible and take it, then you wont be healed by it, but if, feeling at times you must have one more look at the word, or one more prayer, - 'I am so near the end, so near to death, the shadow of it covers me and I shall soon be there,' - then, "He sent His word." O the compassion and the wisdom and the goodness and the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus. "He sent His word," - and He sent His Spirit to speak it. He will bring a word to your memory, or you may be reading it, and suddenly you are stopped as it were, from reading, because the

word enters your heart, meets your case, speaks to your soul, touches your wound, your sore place, your disease, and you are healed. Is not it wonderful, that the Lord does thus bless His people.

"And healed them." They did not know about healing. Then, they know they are healed. You look at that point, - they know they are healed. When some gracious touch comes to you, you know there is an influence, you are not healed fully, but you say, 'I am hopeful.' There is a sacred influence when a word comes into the mind by the Spirit of Christ and though it is not intended to deliver, it is intended to be an influence, a heavenly influence, and you feel it, and I would say it to you who know this point, take very close heed to that influence, watch the tendency of it. You say, 'Well, the tendency of it is heavenward.' Yes, because it came from heaven. You say, 'The tendency is to remove my despondency and it has done it in great measure, and will do it. The tendency is to make me go to God, to make me prize even the hope of salvation, to make me prize the Holy Scripture and that holy word from the Scripture that came to my heart.' "Healed them." It is a gradual work sometimes to remove unbelief, and heal a soul of that; to remove hardness and deadness and indifference and prayerlessness; to remove these things as to their dominion, is a great work, and God accomplishes it. "He sent His word." It heals the soul of all its troubles for the time. It is very remarkable how unbelief and an honest spirit, - and you may not know that honesty is there, - but how unbelief will work in you and begin to object. I have been an objector all my days - objecting to God. I am sorry that I have been an objector, when words have come to my mind. Then, I have objected my sins. It has been a habit in my spirit that wrought much evil in me and kept me in much bondage. Watch the word! You will have to give way one of these days and say, "I believe." O happy moment you will find that, when you are sweetly led, sweetly constrained to say, "I believe," and you will begin to thank God. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, ----- to the children of men!"

He "healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." A strong word, "destructions." If one should say, 'A living soul cannot be destroyed,' that would be true. God has some in this

congregation who cannot be lost, but there are destructions which stop short of that. You may so have "contemned the counsel of the Most High," to the great hardening of your conscience and spirit. You may have so gone into the world in your heart as to destroy spirituality of mind in its efficacy, in you. You may have so gone away from God in the course of this world - "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" - as to destroy the activity of faith and trust and reliance on God. You have brought many destructions. You may have so wrought evil in your spirit as to destroy your peace. You have lost all peace in your soul. Yes, and you may have allied yourself with something or some people in this world, against light and knowledge and divine teaching so as to bring a destruction on your steadfastness and uprightness toward God. Jehoshaphat did this and his works were destroyed. The ships were broken, and if you allow yourself with the world in anything that is wrong, God will bring destruction on it. Now if you have got these destructions, any of you, in any measure, how are you to get to heaven? Unbelief will say - 'you will never get there' and the devil will say 'you will never get there,' and unbelief and the devil will point to these destructions. The enemies come, and with axes and hammers, destroy all the beautiful carved work of God in your soul, and you are a poor destitute creature. What is to become of you? Religion gone, comfort, peace gone, steadfastness gone, living hope, as to all exercise of it, gone.

Well my friends, those of you who may know this experience will be astonished when this comes to pass - "And delivereth them from their destructions." O, He, this gracious Lord Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, is a restorer of the desolate heritages. You cannot restore them. No; some things God never lets His people do. He bids them, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," but He tells them that it is Himself working in them "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." A man who has brought destructions on himself is not the man to repair them, to deliver from them. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, must do this. Your fair project, your beautiful management, the Lord will destroy, blast your fair schemes, - not pleasant! I know something of all this. What will deliver us from these destructions? Just this.... "Thou renewest the face of the earth." Christ comes and takes the case

up. He renews the peace of your conscience. He renews the simplicity and sincerity of your faith. He renews tenderness in your spirit. He renews regard for His word; desire that you may walk therein; that you may take heed to His word, and so cleanse your way. Then you will begin to thank Him. Perhaps you say, 'I never could have thought the Lord would do such a miracle for me, as this is.' - "He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Have you got destructions? Are some of you destroyed in some particular things? - In your family, in your business, in your health, in your friends, in the Church of God? Destructions Scattering, things broken to pieces, like the ships that Jehoshaphat built with an ungodly king in union. Just broken up, everything in disorder, "He ----- delivered them from their destructions."

So, dear brethren, Christ is to be exalted. "Let us exalt His name together." - "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things," - the things throughout this wonderful Psalm - "even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." There are some things in this, that cannot be understood. The peace which passeth all understanding. You cannot understand, can you, how He can be so infinitely kind to you? You who have been so infinitely unkind to Him. You cannot understand how He whom you have contemned in His word, should come and embrace you. Come and take away the shadow of death and be as a morning in your heart, without clouds, as the clear shining after rain. This is beyond understanding. I cannot understand it in my own case, such an uncommon sinner, that God should come and look on all these destructions and just make them as if they had never been touched by sin or the hand of man. You look on His work, you admire His work, you thank and praise Him for His work, then it is almost as if you cannot for a moment doubt His goodness to you. Almost ashamed, as it were, to think of looking once again at anything like a doubt in your mind concerning Him, and His goodness to you. So, dear friends, when God works, He does work. Ah, He works like a King, like a Saviour. He has laid the foundation and He builds on it, and one day, there is to be a wonderful ending. "He shall bring forth the headstone ---- with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." Do you think you will never hear that sound? Do you think you will never see that building? Do you fear you will never be part of it? Is death on

you? Are destructions round about you? Is there a storm, a great storm? Is the sea raging? Are the waves beating in their angry power against you? Cry to the Lord! In all their sicknesses, in all their diseases, in all their backslidings, in all their being as deep, as perhaps Jonah was, then fainting, hungry, thirsty, without a sure dwelling place - "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." Their foolish hearts brought to be wise. Their drunken spirits brought to sobriety and to cry unto the Lord God of Sabaoth. The sigh enters His ear, a groan is pleasing to Him. The language of it He understands, even though you don't. Bless God for his goodness. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works ----." They are wonderful! Wonders of grace. Wonders of wisdom. Wonders of love. Wonders of power. Wonders of patience. Wonders of restoration. Thank Him for them. Hope for more - even for all that heaven has good! Amen.

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