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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 7 August 1929

PSALM 107 v 7

"And He led them forth by the right way that they
might go to a city of habitation"

In another Psalm the Psalmist said: "I am a stranger in the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me". How many of you can say that? How many of you can appeal to God and say that? That here you have no continuing city and do not wish one. That you have no rest here, no rest in self, no rest in self-righteousness, and no rest in religion as that word is ordinarily used. Easy words, easily uttered, but not easily known, not easily lived. But only such as can say so great a word, can at all enter into this passage, and seek to be led by the right way that they might find a city, a habitation, a place of abode, a home for the people who can say, they are strangers in the earth and also pray, hide not Thy commandments from me; do feel and acknowledge that they are blind and do not know the way that they should go. That prayer suits them - "Show me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee". Strangers and pilgrims, and when people say such things, then they are seeking a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. O how soon this congregation will be buried and where will our souls be? Sin makes a wilderness to the saints; sin confuses them, sin binds them, sin condemns them and sin brings trouble. Sin took Israel into Babylon, kept them there for 70 years, Sin has brought some of us into many a Babylon and there we have been from time to time languishing. But grace comes to sinners in these cases and pours a prayer into their souls. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and their cry consists, for substance, in two things. Confession of sin; that they have brought themselves into their trouble. Sin procured trouble when felt closes the mouth. "I am as one in whose mouth are no reproofs", is no self-justification. And then the other thing is a prayer to be delivered. "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord, for it is great". "Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Thy Name." Deliver me from all evil; pardon my mistakes and my failings and my

shortcomings and everything that has been offensive to Thee, and that now is a burden to myself. And this kind of praying enters, as James speaks, into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. It goes up, winged in the power of the Spirit, and ascends acceptable to God in the merits of Christ. So answers come. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses". Deliverances are good; they come and are more or less distinct. Vital religion is not a nebulous thing, but it is distinct, and in every person possessing it there is, more or less, a distinct work. "They cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses." Distress of mind, distress of conscience, distressing fears, distressing weakness, distressing ignorance, all felt; and their cry enters. Yours, some of you can say, have entered. Your cries have entered; ^{and} mine. Many, many, many times have my cries entered and brought an answer down. And this would lead one to say here, at this moment that there is an evidence that prayer was accepted of God, in the answer that comes down. There is sometimes a peculiar sense of being heard before the answer comes, and that sense may be so powerful as to make a praying person say perhaps to his or her friends, God has heard me and the answer is coming. Some of you may have so spoken; I have. If the answer is delayed long after such a profession then trouble comes, but the infallible proof that you were heard by the Lord is the answer. He delivered them. O what a great thing it is to be delivered, guilt removed, sin forgiven, conscience purified, gospel liberty entered into and enjoyed. Christ made precious; His Names, His blood, His righteousness, His offices, His characters, His intercession and Mediation made precious to the soul. He delivered them. And Zion, when thus delivered, laughs at and scorns her enemy. And then, He led them. "He led them forth by the right way." He, the God of grace, the sovereign Lord of their souls, their Redeemer, their precious Redeemer, He led them. Did not leave them to make false and fatal steps at this time. He led them. And ^{they} stumbled not. As it is written, they stumbled not when He led them. How could they when He graciously said, Look on Me, lean on Me, and spoke sweetly and powerfully to their souls. He led them. Mind your leader. God gave His Son to be a Leader and Commander to the people. If you go with God you walk in the light. If you follow Him you walk in the light. If you go your own way you walk without the light, and you do not know at what you are stumbling. There may be a

stumblingblock here, there may be a pit there, and you see neither the one nor the other but become a prey to them both. "I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth in Me should not walk in darkness but have the light of life." O, it is a mercy to have God for your leader.

The Third Person in the Trinity is the Guide, the Leader of God's saints now that their Redeemer is in heaven. "He" said Christ promising Him "shall guide you into all truth". He shall say, this is the way, walk ye in it. He shall guide that faith which He has created; He shall turn the eye of faith to the Redeemer to glorify whom He is sent. He shall do it. Mind who leads you. If reason leads you you will stumble. Luther says, that beast reason has to be killed. If reason leads you you will stumble. Many of your feelings may lead you and you stumble. False hopes may lead you in false directions and so you stumble. If the devil leads you what an awful thing. He may lead you by a false religion, a false hope. He may lead you by false doctrine and make you think it is right. If he is the god of your soul, awful; but if the Lord is the Guide and the Leader, if the Spirit is pleased to take you by the hand in the wilderness and lead you to the Saviour then you are right. Lead you through providential difficulties as He led His people through the wilderness, though there for 40 years, and brought them up from the Babylonian captivity even as Ezra said. He was ashamed to ask of the king a convoy because he had confessed to the king that the Lord was with all that feared Him and so he, Ezra proclaimed a fast by the river Ahava that they might afflict their soul and seek a way for themselves and for their little ones, and God heard them. When you are in perplexity seek the Lord to guide you. When you do not know what step to take, wait on Him. When providential troubles stand in your way, wait on God; do not put your own hand to move them out of the way. Wait on God. He, as I have often said to you, He makes the best speed who moves on His knees. You get on best when you pray. You, all who know that, have a witness of it in your consciences, you get on best when you pray. How often I have stumbled here and gone aside and some of you may have to say the same thing and perhaps you have thought, during the day of some kind of prosperity, that you were getting on well, but proved when the night of trouble and desertion came on that you had quite mistaken the way. Be careful here; mind

your steps; remember what Berridge says - "We may let idols in", we may turn aside into some vain thing. Here it is different; He led them. He led them, took them by the hand so to speak, pointed out the way of redemption, told them how to walk, to walk by faith and not by sight. It is a grand thing for a sinner to be led through the wilderness of sin and this world that he may go to a city of habitation.

The right way; O how important is this word "right" in this connection; solemnly important it is. Well, what is this right way? First it is the way of sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the sacrificing Priest offering Himself without spot to God, and this way the Apostle speaks of in the Hebrews. "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near." He led them by that way. As many of us here as have taken one step toward God in heaven, that step has been taken through the one offering of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never a movement of the soul that is safe and saving can there be apart from the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. This is the way; this is the right way. Right in God's sight, right in the sight of conscience, right in the sight of an enlightened understanding, right in the sight of the affectionate heart. This is the right way. Never forget that. All your steps of faith will be in the Lord Jesus or toward Him, waiting for Him. All the motions of your hearts as these motions are right, will be in this way; the Name of the Lord Jesus. That is a beautiful Scripture which is a promise: "I will strengthen them in the Name of the Lord and they shall walk up and down in His Name, saith the Lord." We are straitened in ourselves, very painfully so at times. We may be straitened in our circumstances, and be held fast in some affliction or God may have seen it needful to put our wandering footsteps into the stocks. But when He comes and gives liberty, the liberty of faith, this is the way, the Name, the blood, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. He said, in reply to Thomas - Show us the way and it sufficeth us - "I am the way". My sacrifice is the way to redemption, My blood-shedding is the way to acceptance with the Father, My righteousness is the way to justification, My strength is the way to safe walking, My grace is the way to overcoming all sin, My wisdom is

the way by which you will walk through difficulties, My power is the way whereby you will leap over a wall. Well, dear friends, if I had nothing more to say and you were able to go home and meditate on this one particular you would have quite enough. "He led them forth by the right way".

Now to go forth means that you go forth from something. You will understand that in a minute, those of you who have been led out of the law into the gospel, out of self into Christ, out of trouble and burdensome things into a sweet rest in Him. You have gone forth and you have looked back sometimes and you have said O what a prison I was in, what a state of heart I was in, what trouble and perplexity, what fear, what sin, what guilt I was held by, and now God has brought me out of all and here I am, free. A freed man, made free by the Lord, and I am walking, as my hope is, to heaven. "He led them forth". And sometimes they look back and say, O from what a devil has the Lord delivered me. Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and you may go into some wilderness that you may learn some lessons, into the wilderness to learn your weakness and the strength of your enemy, to learn something of his subtlety and your own inability to meet that subtlety, and then when the 40 days time of your deliverance comes then you say, now He brought me forth out of that wilderness, and you may perhaps say, looking back, why I can see that it was the Lord who sustained me. He kept my faith when I thought it was going; He kept my hope when I felt I must give it up; He kept my eye more or less on Himself when I was so frequently tempted to look elsewhere. Back looks to places and circumstances and temptations ~~from forth~~, of which God has brought us, are very pleasant back looks. He led them by the right way through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus. There is no safety except here. "I pray for them" is the word of the Lord Jesus. "I pray not for the world", "I pray for them". Perhaps you have said, at times, O if I only knew that the Lord Jesus prayed for me, He had love for me, an interest in me, that He was taking care of me even when I knew Him not. If I did but know that. Well, His leading will bring you to believe it. He led them by the way of Christ's mediation. "He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him". And here human wisdom is of no avail, here the arm of the sinner is withered, and palsied, has no strength in it. Here the sinner finds

himself just a dependant and is enabled to depend. He may say sometimes, I am dependent, and add I am depending, and a great thing it is to be depending on the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He led them by the right way, that is by the way of His power preserving them, protecting them. The power of Christ works both ways. It preserves them from their evils, the body of sin and death. He protects them from their enemies, the devil and the many evils that come. Some evils in providence, they come and if they were not covered and protected by their Lord, what would happen? What would become of them? He led them by the way of truth. "I am the truth"; the truth of the Scriptures and the truth of the promises and they walk in the truth. They walk in the truth; the truth remains in them and they walk in it. They hold it by the power of God as it is explained and applied to them by the Spirit, and they learn the difference between an acquired knowledge and the power of an imparted knowledge in this passage, and that Scripture, brought home with divine unction, light and life. He led them in a way of tribulation. "In the world ye shall have tribulation". Now it is a very particular thing, this, and I would exhort you, dear friends, to be very particular in looking at afflictions not simply as afflictions but as their effect becomes visible to you, because tribulation means separation. Tribulation is the old English flail separating the chaff from the wheat. Now if trouble comes to you and there is no separation of your soul, of your conscience, of your affections, no separation from a prayerless, hard, unthankful state, no separation from the world as to its spirit and ways, then the trouble has not been tribulation. And I beg of you to take notice of this, because man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. So trouble of itself, standing alone, is no mark of God's favour but when trouble, self-procured, sin bought trouble comes upon you and the Spirit of God speaks to you by it, points out some sin or sins, shows you some evils that you have been indulging, points out some way in which you have been walking contrary to God and then gives you grace to repent and come before the Lord and you are delivered from those very evils of which you are convinced by your trouble, then it is tribulation; then it is good. "He led them forth by the right way", the way of tribulation. O, but some of us have had a very different judgement of matters from God's judgement of matters. He says "What is the chaff to the wheat?" and we have said, we cannot

part with that; O, we cannot give that up. That chaff, it was not chaff to us but it was chaff to the Lord and it became chaff to us under divine teaching. I urge this on your notice that you may be particular about it, because, of course, you have trouble, I have trouble, everybody has; sin has brought it to us. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble". But when God, as it were, takes the trouble out of the common category and makes tribulation of it and sanctifies it, then it comes to pass - "No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby". And O, is it not great to have that Scripture made good to you. "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons". What a difference there is there from that spirit that makes a person say, this is a trouble and I must bear it. That is not enduring it. That may be a stubborn spirit that will make you say, I wont complain to anybody, I will just keep it and get through it as well as I can. O, but that is not enduring. I got an instruction in trouble a good many years ago in that Scripture - "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons" Ah the rod is a Father's rod, the chastening is wise chastening; what Rutherford says, God's wise love feeding the soul with hunger and making it fat with desertion.

"By the right way". But this is not the end. "That they might go to a city of habitation". I will speak to this as enabled in two ways. First the habitation we have here. You may say we have not any. Yes, you have. If you are Christians, if you are the Lord's people you will get into it here. You have it in the Psalms; you have it thus - "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee" The Lord the habitation of the sinner? Yes, Jesus Christ is the habitation; He is a refuge and that is wonderful, but this is more intimate, a habitation. When you are in your own habitation you are in that place with which you are familiar, familiar with those who use it with you, and when a sinner, by faith, is brought by the Spirit of God into the Lord Jesus, then he is at home. It is not merely safety, great as that is, but it is familiarity, intimacy. Safety is great; intimacy goes beyond it. Familiarity is something wonderful when carried on between a holy God and a redeemed sinner; when the Lord Jesus

receives the sinner into the habitation; when the Lord Jesus not only is the Redeemer, but He is the Brother born for adversity, is the home of a sinner, and there the sinner finds plenty of room, plenty of entertainment, plenty of goodness, plenty of power, plenty of wisdom and plenty of all the things which he needs in this world. Now that is what the Lord leads His people to - That they might go into a city of habitation . This is the habitation built by the Lord, the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, the very Lord Jesus Christ set forth by His Father in Holy Scripture, revealed by His Spirit in broken hearts. This, this is the habitation in this life. Then the sinner says, now I know a little of that Scripture: "I will give you rest". "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest", and it is rest. I am of the opinion that no redeemed person in this world entering into, and living in, this habitation for a time has ever been, or ever will be, able adequately to express the sweetness, the comfort, the peace, the holiness, and the sweet assurance that matters are all well, well for time, well in trouble, well in tribulation, and well for eternity. The little I know of this enables me to say that. It is a wonderful thing; there is holiness in it, reverence in it, peace in it, powerful peace in it. Worship is in it, comfort is in it. Resignation to the will of God in any, and in all, trouble you will find in this blessed habitation, and here, my friends, may you be brought. Some of you may say, we have never been in this. And that is no reason why you should not be. But I do not know the way to it. But God does. "He led them forth by the right way" But I am a ragged sinner. He said to His servants, Go into the highways and hedges and compel the poor, the blind, the maimed, the halt, to come in. Compel them to come in. They want to come, but they are afraid. They are fit to come but they think they are not. Compel them; that is preach the gospel to them; tell them the gospel is for sinners, that it is free, that it is without money and without price. Tell them that God says so; that He is the author of faith, the finisher of faith; that He is the food of faith, the righteousness of a sinner, the holiness of a sinner. We need compelling; every convinced sinner needs compelling. His will is that way but his legal heart is the other way, and his fears are another way, and his sins point another way; so he needs compelling, and God compels him and the compulsion is the sweetest thing in the world. The compulsion is grace moving the heart, love melting the

heart and the sweet repentance that God gives, and then the willingness. O, says the sinner, Lo, thou blessed Lamb of God, I come gladly to Thee. Here is my heart, here is my case, here is my soul; take me. That is just how Peter was overcome when he said to Christ Thou shalt never wash my feet. What, never wash your feet Peter? If I wash you not you have no part in Me. And could Peter bear that, could you bear it? Have you not sometimes united in the hymn:

Depart from Thee, 'tis death, 'tis more
'Tis endless ruin, deep despair

and so there has been a willing mind. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power". O the sweetness of that that God has let down into some of our souls. "That they might go to a city of habitation", and here are plenty of chambers - as God speaks by Isaiah - "Enter thou into thy chamber". Enter into righteousness divine, enter into a perfect atonement, enter into justification and into sanctification and into redemption. And plenty of room, plenty of provision; eternal life and eternal blessings. O, what a prospect God has set before some of us. It has moved my soul at times to have that prospect that I have looked to and viewed with comfort: Where I am there shall my servant also be. Where is Christ? In heaven. There must His servant be. You who are servants of God, who serve Him with tears in temptations that befall you, you serve Him in righteousness and true holiness by virtue of Christ's grace, and He says, you shall be with me. It may be a long time with some of you; it may not be; with some of us, it cannot be long. Where I am in heaven. I have thought at times of that Scripture and have mentioned it many times in this pulpit. "And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and they shall thirst no more". O, what it will be, I do not know. John tells us "We know not what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." And I believe many a child of God whose days are swallowed up often with sighing and groaning and mourning, because of indwelling sin - that is the greatest trouble - looks again and again with hope and sometimes believes with great comfort that ere long - and the longest time is short - ere long he will be with the Lord. A great thing; O, it is a beautiful prospect, it is attractive; it makes death not dreadful; it makes the grave whose

narrow precincts will hold the poor body till it is dust, it makes even that not black, not terrible. Death has lost its sting and the grave its victory through Jesus Christ, and that is where some of us hang now in hope; that is where some of us are going as we believe and hope. "He led them forth". Now what ought we to do in such a case? Those of you who have had, and have still, this leading and have been brought into the habitation, even Jesus Christ, what ought you to do? Well, the aspiration in the Psalm is this: "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness" O that we here who have known God's leadings and have them still, as we trust, and a prospect of heaven before us, O that we could praise Him. We ought to do so my friends. Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, and edifying one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Oh it is good to praise Him. I wish I could praise Him; who ought to praise Him more? Out of hell, hope of heaven, comforts of love sometimes, fellowship of the Spirit sometimes; who ought to praise Him more than we? My friends, God help us to rise up in the Spirit to praise and bless God for His infinite goodness and for the hope that the wilderness shall not swallow us up, but that we shall be led through it honourably to the end, and then enter the heavenly Canaan, where there is no trouble, no sea, no pain, no night, because there is no sin.

AMEN.