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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 4 February 1925

PSALM 107 v 8

"O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness
and for His wonderful works to the children
of men"

It is an infinite mercy to have something to praise God for. The verses preceding the text show that the people called upon to praise the Lord here have something to praise Him for. I wonder if we were put to it when we sing our blessed hymns, as to how much we feel them when we try to thank God in them, what true gratitude there is in us, and how many things there are in our experiences to praise Him for. To be sure, in temporal things, we all have. Everything that we possess, our being, our health, our daily bread, our raiment, our homes, friends; every comfort we owe to God, and so we have very much to praise Him for every day and every minute. This is obvious. We deserve nothing but hell, and every breath we draw without pain is God's goodness to us. We cannot lay claim to anything that is good in this world. I wish we could thank God more for His kindness to us in providence; that when we sit down to our tables, well spread, we could thank Him who has given us our daily bread. My friends, reflect on what you owe to God as the God of providence, as the God in whom you live and move and have your being, and from whom you receive your well-being. How we ought to thank Him for friends. What friends we have; O what kind, indulgent friends I have. How little I thank Him for them compared with the greatness of His mercy in giving me them. Reflect on the goodness of God in providence. But that is not the subject, the special subject of the text. There is something higher, deeper, better, more enduring than any providential good in the context. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever". And who shall say this? Who shall give thanks? Who should do it? From whom are the thanks due? Who can sing properly that His mercy endureth for ever? O, says the Psalmist in the second verse: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" - let the redeemed praise Him - "whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" - O

that men would praise the Lord for His goodness - "and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. O that men" - that these redeemed men, these men who had wandered in the wilderness and could not find a place of rest for themselves; knew not which way to go and who then were led by the Lord in the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation; that these spiritual men led to the Lord Jesus, to find Him their habitation and their stronghold and their place of munitions and their holiness and their righteousness and their goodness; O that these men - "might praise the Lord for His goodness". Now you see what there is for us if we be the Lord's people. Are we redeemed? Egypt was a house of bondage, a furnace of iron, a destroying sword, an oppressor, a very devil to the Lord's people, and they sojourned, these poor people, 430 years in that iron furnace, in that house of bondage, and for all their oppressions they grew the more; that was God's way. And the sword which hung over them all these years after the death of the Pharaoh whom Joseph knew, that sword was hanging over them all those years, and yet it never killed them. And then the day came when God would bring them out. He sent Moses to them and with a strong hand brought them out of Egypt and they sang when they saw the Egyptians dead on the shore and themselves landed safely on the other side of the Red Sea, which had been made to them as dry land. They sang the high praises of God, and Miriam led the singing and they sang to the Lord "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders". "The LORD is a man of war: The LORD is His Name." (Exodus 15 verses 11 and 3). Have you been delivered out of some Egypt? out of some death? The law death, death of sin and guilt, bondage felt, grievous bondage? Delivered by that wondrous Man Jesus Christ, true Almighty God, and wandered about, wandered about not knowing where to go, or what to do, for you knew not the Lord Jesus was the One who brought you out. And then you cried to Him, did you? so cried that He heard, and hearing, brought you out of the wilderness unto Himself, for there is a union formed and Christ is the habitation, the house of defence to His people. They are in Him. This may be a long past experience with some

of us, but this is to be observed, that the Lord laid it on His people of old to very constantly and thankfully acknowledge that great day. He said, this is a night to be much observed. Yes, and if you have had in your experience days to be much observed, what He did for you, when He forgave your sins, when He brought you into sweet liberty, when He gave you to see the glory of the Lord, and put the image of that glory on your souls; when He brought you to some sweet, humble confidence in Himself; much to be observed is that night. Some may say, but we have never been brought there. Well, and where are you? In the wilderness. What are you doing? Wandering about. Wandering here and there, hardly knowing where. They wandered about in the wilderness. They had one thing before them and you perhaps can say you have that before you. They had a land of promise before them and though their unbelief told them they would die in the wilderness, that unbelief lied against God, and the comfort and right of this people. So you, wandering in the wilderness, here and there, have something before you. What is that? Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And the cry of your soul is, is it not, "Jesus reveal Thyself to me." Manifest Thyself to me, tell me that my sins are forgiven, that Thou hast redeemed me, not with silver and gold, but with Thine Own precious blood. Tell me that Thou art mine, that I am Thine. And when you get it you will want to praise the Lord.

There is another thing, Israel sinned after they were brought into the goodly land. When they had eaten of vineyards they had not planted, when they lived in houses they had not built, then they sinned, and they provoked the Most High; they vexed and grieved His Holy Spirit, they left His good laws, they despised His table, they turned to vanities, made other gods, followed the example of idolatry in the nations that surrounded them, and greatly provoked the Lord. Do not some of us know what that is in the spirit? I do. And what has the Lord done? Sent us into captivity as He sent Israel into captivity, and we have seen gods of wood and of stone, false gods, false religion, false liberty, false ways, and been in the wilderness, another kind of wilderness. What a wilderness was Babylon to the captives. Though they had plenty to eat and drink, what a wilderness it was to them, specially to the Jews whose hearts were toward their own land, and who remembered, in the days of their affliction and their misery, all their pleasant things and their

Sabbaths. So you may be in circumstances not unpleasant to your nature and yet, what a wilderness your souls may be in. And when the day of deliverance came they were sent back, taken back, led back, led by the Spirit of grace and supplications back to their own land, to their own blessed worship. "O that men", that these delivered men "would praise the Lord for His goodness." And have we got this reason? "Yea, many a time forgave He their iniquity and did not stir up all His wrath"? This is something to praise Him for. O that men would praise Him for these two things. Not if you have not them; that would be no worship if you praise God for things you have not had from Him. That would be no acceptable sacrifice of the lips even praise unto Him, if you praise Him for some things He has not done for you and has not given you. This is more acceptable in a living person who has not those things - Lord give them to me; O bless my soul. Bless me with liberty. O reveal in me Thy dear Son; seal pardon on my conscience; make me to know that I am Thine; tell me that Thou hast redeemed me. Then, when you get that that you ask for, you will join with those who already have had the blessings; you will praise Him for spiritual deliverances. What a mercy when a congregation can unite in some divine things, in some spiritual praises, and when, in a congregation, there are those who can unite in spirit to bless the Lord for a revealed Christ, for a manifested Saviour, for Christ formed in them the hope of glory. Then, from those so blessed souls, rise the high praises of the Most High. But no less acceptable are the sighs and petitions and prayers of people in bondage who want liberty and who are enabled to come to the throne of grace and ask for those needed and desired blessings. Come poor, come needy, come loathsome, come bare, and open and lay before the Lord the bad case you feel to be in and the day is coming when you will say, "I sought the Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears". "I sought the Lord and He heard me and saved me out of all my trouble." Then you will praise Him. What a great thing it is to have deliverance to look back on, to have a night much to be observed; a night that is the Lord's memorial in your experience, His memorial for ever and ever. If He thinks so much of it as to say it is His memorial, we may well think of it and try to thank Him for it.

Now I would look at a few other things for which we may call upon each other, as blessed with them, to praise God, and first of all let

me name that which is a daily need, an hourly need, the need of every moment, and which is, from time to time, our experience. I refer to that passage in the Hebrews where the Holy Ghost says by the Apostle: "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" O what a word, what a way, what a door of access. All the troubles, difficulties, snares, temptations, sins, hells in your feelings, all the trials that you may come into, with all these says the Apostle draw near. Let us draw near. No bar; no toll, no tax levied; no difficulties, no devils to keep you away. Quantities of difficulties in your feelings, but none in the way. No lion is there, no ravenous beast shall be found therein. This is the highway. O that we could praise God for an open door, and for a heart to go. Not only to have something to go with, and about, but a heart to go, to feel sometimes just as the Psalmist felt when he said: "I give myself unto prayer". "I am prayer". It is in my heart, bubbling, boiling, rising over again and again, coming up before the Lord, an acceptable sacrifice. You have plenty to pray about, have you not? Plenty of things. You have come away from your houses, left some things behind you, and brought them with you. Much you need to pray about. Plenty of things inside, an unbelieving heart, wicked thoughts, horrible thoughts, plenty of temptations. O the things we have that we need God for, things we cannot manage; the difficulties of our nature, the snares of our heart; how many, how many. And you go home and see the trouble again. You did not leave it in a sense and you go back to it; there it is. What am I to do? Says the Apostle, having a new and living way; this is the way. There is the family, there is the business, there is the care. Says the Apostle, a new and living way. Let us draw near to a good God, a God who waits to answer prayer, who is more willing to bless than we are to be blessed. Do we really believe that? To a God who is full of goodness, full of mercy, full of wisdom, full of power, mercy joined with power. O brethren, what a God we have to go to. What a good God, liberal God, gracious God, a sin pardoning God, a sinner-upholding God, a wise God to deliver and show a new and living way to a sinner. "Let us draw near with a true heart". Now one says, that stops me, for I have not such a heart. Do you know what you mean, what you are saying? What is a true heart? It is not a heart that you

44
have made good. It is not a heart out of which you have cast seven devils. No. A true heart there, as it is also in James, means that your eye, your attention and your spirit and your faith are fixed on God, and are not looking, at that moment, at something else as well. A double-minded man has profession on his lips and his thoughts and mind are somewhere else, but a true heart is a heart that is, as the Psalmist expresses it in one place, fixed on the Lord. "O God my heart is fixed", as if he should say I have nowhere else to go; I have no other friend, and I want no other, I seek no other. So he goes to his God with a true heart, sincere. It is called in the Corinthians an open face. It is called the unleavened bread of sincerity with which the Pascal Lamb is eaten. This is going to God with a true heart. A new way, new to the law. No, it was not known by the law which condemns us. New, as it is revealed in the Scriptures. New to a legal heart, that has been plagued and distressed by legal fear. New to a living faith as it is opened by the Spirit and this new way is Jesus Christ, the rent veil of His blessed Manhood. My brethren, when you get near to God, praise Him for this way. "O that men would praise the Lord". I wish I could thank Him for the throne of grace, and that I could oftener go there.

"The door of Thy mercy stands open all day
To the poor and the needy who knock by the way
No sinner shall ever be empty sent back
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus' sake

The free Spirit is here, the Spirit of Christ. He is a free Spirit; He upholds a sinner in prayer because He gives prayer and He keeps prayer alive more or less in the soul. Next, O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness in giving a spirit to call on the Lord's Name. Is that all, you say. All? O I wish I had it all my days. I have got enmity, I have got aversion. I have a nature that does not want to pray; that would be glad to do without God. O then, when you have got a heart to pray - when the stone and the ice are taken away from you and a soft, warm, tender feeling of desire rises within you; when you can say, Lord I will be sorry for my sin and confess it freely and can take everything to His blessed Majesty - that is the heart that the Holy Ghost gives; is not this something to thank Him for? "O that men would praise the Lord". And what is it when you feel some energy

in prayer and when your faith is so strengthened that you cannot let the Lord alone, when you feel that you must bring, and you are enabled to bring, everything that troubles you? What of that? It is His gift. There are some wonderful things about this as, when we are approaching the Lord, there is the Spirit's grace; we repent of our sins. I am glad when I can repent, and I have plenty to repent of; O I have a great deal to be sorry for; have not you? I am sure you have. If you do not know it, it is so much the worse for you. You have plenty to be sorry for. Then when the Holy Spirit comes and makes you sorry, when you grieve after a godly sort, when you can say, I am sorry Lord; can take the words of the Psalmist up as your own, and say, I said I will be sorry for my sin; I acknowledged my sin unto Thee and mine iniquity have I not hid; O it is great. This is one thing to be thankful for. Look at the difference, the opposite of this, when you are hard, when you could justify yourself in things, when you could again and again feel, and have felt, why am I like this? Why does the Lord do that and why has He permitted the other; what a wretched feeling it is. And then too there is another thing, when faith is called up into exercise, when you can go to the Lord and say, I am at fault; Thou art just. What are we? Fickle, false, and false to Thee. When He stands before you can you say, Thou art right in everything; I am wrong everywhere. Faith does justify God. If He keeps away, faith says, He is right; I deserve He should. If He lays stripes on, faith says it is quite right; I need more than He lays on. "If with my sins compared, how light, and all in faithfulness is sent." Now faith hangs here and she lays hold of the atonement and pleads it. She says there is no other ground, no other hope, for me; no other ground to stand on, no other plea to plead. Faith hangs about Christ; she makes this use of Him. It is given her to do it by the Holy Spirit. Now you know what this is do you not? If some of you were to say, no, you would lie against your right. God has given this to some. O what a gift the gift of faith and the gift of repentance. O that we could press the Lord for it. Think of the sweetness of this sometimes as you can remember it yourself; the relief you felt when you could unburden yourself before the Lord, when a feeling of tenderness came and you could lay every matter before Him without reservation. When His will appears to be a blessed will, a good and perfect and an acceptable will to you, and you would not take anything into your own hands. O the sweetness of this. So praise Him for it.

Let me name another matter, when He lets you feel, in a small measure perhaps only, lets you feel that He is dealing with you in love; that love has moved Him, moved Him to give you to Christ in eternity, moved Him now to send this trouble, and that to you; moved Him to give His gracious convoy to you, the convoy of His love, to spread over you the wings of His divine protection, to send into your heart the blessed light of truth, whereby you are led to His holy hill and to His tabernacles, as you have perhaps often prayed: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles" Love? Why, it is inscribed on everything. And sometimes, as it were, the devil takes hold of your cross and begins to write on it. And what does he write? This; God hates you. If He did not He would not send these troubles to you. He may just write that on it. O, but the Lord soon wipes that out and writes love upon it. As one says, "To see love inscribed upon them all" that is, the troubles: "this is happiness to me.". And God does it. He has done it to some of us. So may we praise Him for this.

And another thing in regard of love; when He lets you a little know His love then you love Him. Is it not wonderful to love the Lord? It is to those who have had their enmity made known to them. O the bitter enmity of our nature. I have known it most painfully. Now to feel, instead of that, that you "love the Lord with mind and heart", that He is the best, the only good One, the "chiefest among ten thousand", that your heart chooses Him for your inheritance, your portion, your wealth, your life, your light, your understanding, your goodness, your strength; when He is to you in the love and choice of your soul the "chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely"; this, this is a great thing. It is a great thing. I wish I could love Him every day of my life and every minute of every day. "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness".

And again, what about this Word, this blessed Book, the Holy Scriptures. Who gave it us? The Lord. Who inspired holy men of old to write it? The Holy Ghost. Religious infidels tell us it is not so, but we leave them, and thank God for Holy Scripture. And when you get a little of it, when one single passage comes to warm your heart, to

guide your steps, to strengthen your faith, to turn your eye and mind to Jesus Christ, O then that portion belongs to you specially; that is a nugget of pure gold put into the hand of your faith by the Lord. Blessed be God, we not only believe the Scriptures to be inspired, but we know some of the Scriptures have been made over to us, and every believing heart that has any Scripture written in it, given over to it, in the hand of its faith, every such person will say, this is more to me than ten thousands of gold and silver, much more. Well, this is what we should praise the Lord for. The Psalmist found the Scriptures to be wonderful. In one place, he says: "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." And that is what it does. It shows you some things you could not see without it. Shows you yourself. What a sight, O what a sinking sight is the sight of yourself, yet who does not live to bless God for that after he has been brought to see Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And has not the Lord spoken to some of us about our matters? Has He not made it good to us to feel this, that as a father chasteneth the son whom he loveth, so the Lord chastens all His own dear children. O that illustrious passage in the prophets: "You only of all the families of the earth have I known". What then? Nature would say, therefore I cherish you and indulge you and let you do as you like. No! "Therefore will I punish you for your iniquities". And then grace comes and enables you to accept the punishment; then relief comes. "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness." And dear friends, what a thing it was for the Jews to be brought back from the north, and from the south, from the east and from the west; brought together after their scattering. And is it not good for the Lord to bring poor sinners together to worship Him, to fear Him, and to walk in His holy ordinances and ways. Is it not good for Him to enable us as we are here to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? These things do belong to the Lord's people. May we praise Him for them.

And now, to conclude, O that we could praise the Lord for His wonderful works in grace in our souls in giving us one thing more, only to name one more, and that is a good hope through grace, that when we have done with time we shall be in a blessed eternity with Himself. Can you thank Him enough for that? Never. What, a sinner who deserves hell made sweetly sensible of this that when his

pilgrimage is at an end he will be at home for ever and ever with the Lord; that when he is done with sin and sinning here, he will have done with sin and sinning for ever; that when he has had transient visits here and has no more of those to receive, then he will go into eternal presence; that when all his changes and weaknesses, and many, many wanderings are ended, ended by death, then he will be where there are no changes, no wanderings, no night, no pain, no sorrow. O what a good thing this is, to have this. Who can estimate its worth? What, have we ever looked, so to speak, into the grave and felt that that would be the softest bed we should ever recline on? Did you ever look at your grave and think well now that will be a good place for this poor body and although worms will feed upon it the day is coming when this last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. "O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men". The deliverances out of trouble, the wiping of tears away from our eyes, the solacing of our sorrowful hearts, the helps given from time to time, the merciful appearances of God in providence and the still more merciful and wonderful appearances of Christ to our souls. The guiding of our feet into the way of truth and the making known in some degree of the mystery of godliness, even God incarnate, to our souls. O that we could praise Him for these things. I know many things come to depress us. It seems sometimes as if, when you look around you, when you look forward as far as it may be possible to do, that you may say there is scarcely anything anywhere that has not a kind of depression in it. That is when you look to the earth. That is what the prophet Isaiah speaks of when he says, if we look to the earth there is nothing but dimness and darkness and anguish. And we have no reason to expect anything better there. But when the Holy Spirit turns the eye another way to Jesus and His blood, then faith says, lift your head up, your salvation is nearer now than when you believed. Hope thou in God, you will yet praise Him who is the health of your countenance and your God. Faith says, this God who has appeared, this God who delivered us from so great a death, who doth deliver, this God who has again and again kindly spoken to us, "this God is our God for ever and ever and He will be our Guide even unto death." And what more can you need? And

"What more can He say than to you He has said
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled"

So brethren, lift up your heads, and lift up your hearts and praise and bless this good God who has done such wonderful works to the children of men.

And you will bring providence in sometimes. Sometimes you will say I was in that distress and the Lord appeared for me. I was straightened and He enlarged me. I needed some things; He gave them to me. He heard my cry. It is good to be enabled to bring in those providential matters that the Lord has wrought. There are some things in providence which the people of God experience that are not to be disconnected with their experience, spiritual experience. The rod speaks. The wise man of the city will hear the rod and who hath appointed it. So may the Lord give us wisdom and enable us to feel, as it is in the last verse of this wonderful Psalm: "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."

AMEN.