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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 18 September 1929

PSALM 11 v 1

"In the LORD put I my trust: how say
ye to my soul, Flee as a bird
to your mountain"

The man after God's own heart was a man of trouble. His early days were days of great affliction, danger, surrounded by enemies. At one time all the wealth and power of Israel rose up against him, and he was alone. At the best he had but 400 men with him, and these were often so discontented as that it was difficult to manage them. On one occasion of great sorrow, to himself and to them, they were so discouraged as to speak of stoning him. Again and again he was in great danger, grave difficulties, insurmountable troubles, and so discouraged and out of all heart and strength was he on one occasion that he said there was only a step between death and himself, and the best thing for him to do, in his present distracted judgment, was to get out of the land, out of the way of Saul. And this was the man after God's own heart. The people of God have, in the Scriptures, much to encourage them in their calamities, and according to Scripture they have no reason to believe that, when God makes darkness His pavilion and thick clouds, that then He is against them. What He says is true, and they are all to prove it - "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose". Providence never contradicts promises, though it seems to do sometimes. Jacob had God's covenant, but that covenant did not secure him from the deceit of Laban who ten times changed his wages and who, if the God of his father had not been with Jacob, would have sent that good man empty away. Abraham had God's covenant, but year after year elapsed and no promise came. O suffering saints, the Scriptures afford abundant proof that dark clouds that God makes His pavilion are not for destruction. This good man in this word read for a text makes a declaration, a declaration that fits every believer, a declaration that every child of God, sooner or later, more or less distinctly, can say for himself. "In the LORD put I my trust". And

the effect of that in the spirit of the good man enabled him to say to those who might be mocking him, even perhaps to friends, whose weakness of faith discouraged them and made them attempt to discourage him: "How say ye" - why do you say to me, a weak man with a mighty God to help him; why do you say to me, get out of the trouble - "Flee as a bird to your mountain". I will stand my ground, I will wait on God. Though He hide Himself from me, I will wait on God. A very important declaration this, and it intimates to us these things. First, that the man had faith, that his faith had got hold of God, that the fruit of that faith was trust. Trust follows faith.

Let us look at the first point, that this good man of God had faith. "All men have not faith". Faith in God is not a natural faculty. Faith in God is the gift of God. True faith is the gift of God. Ye are saved through faith and that, that is that faith, not of yourselves, but of God. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for". Definitions do not profit us particularly and they will never save us. It is difficult perhaps to define faith. Luther said, faith is a knowledge. Hart says, faith is by knowledge fed, and I think both these words are true, for when you know God you believe in Him, and as you believe in Him, He communicates mercy, and by knowledge your faith is strengthened, nourished. This blessed faith is called, in the Hebrews, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen". And strange it is, but it is true, that every man who has faith, finds God to be real in him at times. "Real", it is difficult to express what I mean. but those of you who have faith have known at times what it has been to find God real to you. One you can handle, look on, touch, feel, believe, and there is a substance in your spirit that you could never, by word, express. O it brings God near sometimes. It pierces clouds sometimes. It speaks well of Him always, when it speaks at all. It is like love, it will not hear an evil report of God. Devils speak against God, but faith maintains that He is good. The Lord is good and He is great. He is glorious; He is sufficient. He meets cases; He suits sinners. They see in Him by faith what they need. They believe that He can be, for them and in them, all that they desire; that He can do for them all that they need to have done for ~~the~~ them. It is a great grace, a wonderful grace. It believes in the Trinity; it believes in each Person in the Godhead. It sees each Person at times engaged in the work of salvation; that

the elect people of God are embraced by the Trinity; that the Trinity entered into a covenant; that that covenant was ordered by them - each Person - in all things and sure. Faith is a fighting grace. "Fight the good fight of faith". Faith is to put on the whole armour of God. The nature of that armour is wonderful and it indicates the kind of warfare upon which all who have it must engage. It is a fighting grace. It has to maintain its ground against enemies, powers, rulers of darkness in this world, and principalities. And when the enemy of souls says, there is no God, faith says there is a God and I know Him. And sometimes faith can say, I feel Him. The truth of His being, the truth of the subsistence of God in Three Persons, the truth of the Covenant of Grace, the truth of Christ's Person and work of redemption, faith holds, and this truth remains in the soul.

I wish I knew how to speak of faith as it should be spoken of. It is a wonderful grace. It empties you, it tells you the truth about yourself. It says you are a poor, lost creature, without goodness, without wisdom, without power. It tells you there is a hell of sin in your nature. It tells you that you have broken the law, and that God, if He does what the law threatens, if there be no substitute for you, then hell must be your portion. And faith also speaks for God. It says, He is great, He is glorious, He is pure, eternally pure; that no sinful person, as such, may approach unto Him. It tells this of Him, that He is gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth. It says He has made a new way of access to Himself, and that His eternal Son incarnate, is the door of access to Jehovah, and it says that the death of Christ on Calvary was a voluntary death and that there is infinite merit in that death; that the blackest sinner shall be made whiter than snow; that the most unjust person shall be made perfectly just; that the weakest saint shall overcome the powers of darkness and the god of this world, and that heaven is prepared for those who do not deserve it, but are taught to desire it, and that, though they are weak in themselves, and the way is difficult they have to travel, and the enemies they have to meet with many, yet God will bring them all honourably to the end and at last take them to be with Himself. This is just a little word about faith, and there is one particular centre and circumference of faith that I must mention, namely our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What a centre, the Person

of Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Who, of Himself, says, "I wisdom dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions". Who says of Himself, "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD". Faith eyes this Person, looks to this Person, the Man Christ Jesus. Every look brings some feeling; every look brings relief; every look strengthens the soul; every look brings the sinner nigh. There are differences in measure but no differences in the nature of faith and the operations of faith, for these are by the Holy Spirit.

Well, dear friends, if we are believers, that is to say, if we have this faith, this blessed faith of God's operation, the faith of God's elect, we are favoured people. But then we have trouble; God has ordained it. "In the world ye shall have tribulation". In the whole of Scripture from the first scene down to the last, you see tribulation, tribulation, tribulation. Nor is the Lord Jesus wanting, if I may use such a word, with respect to setting before His pilgrimage what they must expect. "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head". "I will follow Thee", said one to the Lord Jesus, and said He: "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head", and will you follow Me? Now the Psalmist in the text tells us what he did. He had faith, and faith led to trust. "In the LORD", whom I know; "In the LORD", who has blessed me; "In the LORD", who has delivered me again and again, "put I my trust". Ah, he is worthy of it. You believe that do not you, who have faith. How worthy He is of trust. Trust is a leaning upon, hoping in, looking for some good thing, some needed blessing at the hand of the Lord. Trust has several props, if I may say so. It has the prop of God's promise: "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee". "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned". When thou passest through the river, waters of affliction and trouble, they shall not overflow thee. I will be with thee. That is a prop; what Newton would call perhaps a crutch; it is a support. Another prop is God's faithfulness. "Hath He said and will He not do it" "He is not a man that He should lie nor the son of man that He should

repent". When He has said a word to a sinner that word is settled for ever in heaven. Providence may appear to contradict it; unbelief may say, you did not get it from God; the devil may say, you stole it; he may say, you only imagined it; you were excited; you were not sober-minded. He may say, it is too big for such a person as you, and too good for such a wretch as you. But there it is, and it comes in the light and the power of the Spirit as a support to a sinner, and he trusts this promising, this faithful God. The trust has respect to the condition of the person who trusts. This will bring us to an experimental point. It has relation to the condition. David's condition was very dangerous frequently. God was sufficient for all cases. He had delivered him from Keilah when he knew that Saul would come down there. He delivered Saul into his hand on two occasions when he might have killed his enemy. Again and again God appeared to David and for him. And when at last, as it were, David was just within the clutch of Saul, one came and said, the Philistines have invaded the land. So Saul must leave David to attend to his own crown and kingdom. O, what a God there is for faith, and what a prop for trust.

To trust Him endeavour, the work is His own

He brings the sinner to say, sink or swim I will trust this blessed God. He has never failed me and I trust He never will. It suits the soul's condition; it meets it. Here is a poor sinner, and the older he gets, the worse he becomes in his own judgment. The sentence of his repeated experience is this, sin does not get weak and old and decrepit. A very solemn experience that, that some things which, when you were young in the ways of God, you thought you would not be troubled with when you got older, are more troublesome in old age than in youth. Things of which you had little or no inkling in young life, in old age are very, very strong, and very prominent, and a readiness to stumble at every turn, the people of God have some painful experience of. Now when the soul is in that case; when, just to give you a case out of the Scripture, when the Apostle Paul found a law in his members which warred against the law of his mind, which was so powerful as to prevent the Apostle from doing the good he would, and hurrying him, compelling him to do the evil he would not, now in that case, sin and the devil would suggest despair. Faith spoke this

language: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". There was the victory set before him; there was the blessed Lord Jesus, sufficient for his day and for his sustenance, and for his final deliverance. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". His trust was there. He came up out of that dark wilderness of indwelling sin leaning on the arm of his Beloved. He came up from trouble and grief, into a living, comfortable, expectation of deliverance, and that is just what the saints today, as they are led by the Holy Spirit, have some experience of. They come up out of the wilderness; they lean on their Beloved, and sometimes in their conflicts He comes to them and gives them such a sight of Himself as that they say, with the church of old, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste". "In the LORD put I my trust".

Now let me try to beat this out into two or three particulars. First, the trust is in the blood of Christ.

My treasure is Thy precious blood

O, what hope would there be for us but for that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Daily defilement calls for daily washing. A Christian never has the second time the washing of regeneration, but he often needs to have his feet washed. "He that is washed", in the washing of regeneration, "needeth not save to wash his feet". That inward walk, the defilement that is frequently contracted; this we have to do with, and the blood of Christ answers the need of washing, the washing of the feet. "We walk by faith and not by sight". Sometimes the feet of a poor sinner get so defiled. There is no defilement attaching to faith really, yet the feet get so defiled as to need the blood of Jesus Christ. The plain statement, on this point, of the Apostle John, is this. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all confessed sin. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness", so that the precious blood of Christ is the support of faith and the ground of trust. In the Lord's precious atonement, put I my trust. Come poor sinner, is not that true, again

and again, of yourself, that when ready to give up almost because of the difficulties of indwelling sin, the blood of Christ appears and faith enables you to say:

My treasure is Thy precious blood

The blood of Christ, a precious blood,
Cleanseth from all sin, doubt it not,
And reconciles the soul to God,
From every folly, every fault

That is one of the greatest objects of trust; the ground and prop and support of the trust of a sinner, the blood of Jesus Christ, for see what it does. It gives an entrance into the Holiest. If we know what Moses knew and felt, when it is said of him: "And Moses feared to look upon God", we shall need the blood of Christ and the Apostle Paul tells us in the Hebrews that we have "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 sinner, wicked thoughts, hardness of heart, impenitent feelings, unthankfulness, evil tempers, passions, hasty words - and some of us suffer a good deal from these things - these need, these need the blood of Jesus Christ to remove them in the guilt of them, and to break them in their power. I have been glad at times to know just a little of this, that, that that removes the guilt of sin, breaks its power. Every time you get a healing, a cleansing by the blood of Christ, you will get, at the same time, a sense of the power of your lusts broken. Not destroyed - you have got to wait for that till death comes - but the power is broken.

Another particular object of trust is the mediation of the Lord Jesus.

He passed within the veil
Did on His bosom wear
The worthless names that did prevail
With Him to enter there

And O, how He does plead; prevailingly, that is to say. He pleads. "He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him". Well now what a mercy it is, when we feel - we shall understand it I believe - when we feel almost too ashamed to pray, ashamed to call on God, because of our sinfulness and sinning, but then occasionally the Holy Ghost brings the mediation, the intercession of the Lord Jesus before faith, and then faith goes into trust. "I will trust". He opens His mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to death, and faith says, now trust in Him; ask Him to speak a word for you. Pray Him to be your advocate with the Father. In the Lord's mediation and intercession, put I my trust.

Sometimes His wisdom appears to faith and so the soul says, I do not know what to do, but faith says, "My eyes are up unto Thee". "Lord show me the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto Thee". Show me what to do, Lord. Show me where to go. Show me how to behave myself in the church of God. Show me how to behave in this difficult providence. David got this from time to time, so that he was wise as he went in and out before the people, and they saw it. God gave him wisdom, and my brethren how able He is to give us the wisdom that we need in our difficulties. In the Lord's wisdom put I my trust. Saul might have many advisers, but God was David's adviser. David said "I bless the Lord who hath given me counsel". Ah, how often He has counselled poor people when they have not known what to do. Some suggestion has come into their heart, some way has been opened to their mind, some direction has been given to their thoughts, and they have lived to prove that those things came from their wise counsellor. His Name is Counsellor; O, for faith to trust Him as a counsellor. The wisdom of God, Christ is.

And also this is a point of trust, namely His compassions; His compassions. He is compassionate. We may soon get tired of tiresome people. Jesus never gets tired of His tiresome people, never. O, His pity, His compassion. When He sees that their strength is gone, that there is none left, nor any shut up, nor any helper, then

He pities all their griefs
When sinking makes them swim
He dries their tears, relieves their fears,
And bids them trust in Him

Then, His power. Ah, what was all the power of Saul, as king? Saul was in the hand of the Lord Jesus; the kingdom was in the hand of the Lord Jesus; they could only move as He permitted them. And there was this poor, weak man, troubled, hunted as a partridge on the mountain, looking on himself as a flea. He said he was hunted as a flea. Yet, with all that weakness, the mighty God of Jacob was standing at his right hand to deliver him from the hand of him that was too strong for him, and so he said he would bless the Lord because of that. "I will praise Thee", he said "for Thou hast delivered my soul from the hand of him that was too strong for me." Omnipotence is on the side of a worm, worm Jacob, and "if God be for us who can be against us".

Now these points that I have named to you may commend themselves as reasons, grounds and supports of faith which issued in trust. You have found that your faith has issued in trust. Lord, I commit my case to Thee. Somebody may have hurt you; Lord I commit the case to Thee. Some difficulties in providence have come. Lord I commit them to Thee. "My times are in Thy hand". Some devil tempts you and you cannot resist him properly. Lord, do undertake for me. Sickness comes in different ways, troubles in your house, difficulties in your business, and perplexities by sin. Lord, I trust in Thee to bring me honourably to my grave. Have not you prayed that? Many and many a time, you may have said, do bring me honourably to my grave. How often I have prayed it myself. O bring me honourably to my grave. You may not be tempted to gross improprieties in your conduct, but O, the dishonour of sin; the dishonourable and filthy thing sin in your nature. Perhaps you have said, Lord, never leave me. Do not let these things meet in me; do not let temptation, inclination, and opportunity meet in me. They met in David and David fell. They met in Peter and Peter fell. And if they meet in you, you will fall unless, in a remarkable manner, you are held up. Therefore Lord I put my trust in Thee.

Now look at what he could say. He did not say to his enemies, I am as strong as you. He did not say, if you have weapons, so have I. He said, my trust is in God. You do not know Him; I do. He is not with you; He is with me. "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me." So he said to them, what makes you say to me - advise

me so foolishly, so evilly - flee to your mountain. Get away from this opposition. You will not overcome it, get away from it. Why do you say so? I have God on my side. Now I think this is very solemn, and no believing child of God, who has the Spirit in him at any time, will speak lightly of it. The more confidence you have, the more sober-minded you are, the more tender is your conscience, for all things respecting God are very solemn, and when He is near to you, you are very sober-minded, and very little in your own eyes, but humility and strong confidence go well together. Therefore you may look at the enemy and say, I have no power against you, but I trust in God. I cannot circumvent your schemes, but I trust in the infinitely wise God. I cannot break your arm of power, but I trust in omnipotence. And God did not put him to shame, and He will never put you to shame as your trust is in Him. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee because he trusteth in Thee." "Trust ye in the Lord for ever for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". Is not this an encouraging gospel? What should I do without this gospel? What would you do without it? God in Christ; God in the covenant; God in the promises and God coming to you and speaking peace to your soul, sprinkling your conscience with His blood and opening to you His mercies and His covenant. There is great encouragement in the greatest afflictions and trials, to put our trust in this gracious God. "In the LORD put I my trust". Therefore, O my enemy, do not advise me to get into some place that none can reach me, as a bird may fly to a place that no arrow and no hand could reach. O do not advise me thus, for God is for me. Therefore as the Lord defendeth the inhabitants of Jerusalem, let the feeble say, I am strong. May the Lord help us.

AMEN.