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La P 812

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed
Chapel, Brighton, on Sunday Evening, 27 January
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TEXT: PSALM 115 verse 12

"The Lord hath been mindful of us, He will bless us. He will bless the House of Israel, He will bless the House of Aaron."

The context is very beautiful. There are exhortations all founded on the manifested goodness of God, for which praise is given to God. "Not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake." And, therefore, O Israel, trust thou in the Lord, He has been good, gracious, powerful, has sent temporal helps, has wrought wonderful deliverances, has made gracious promises, therefore trust Him. Trust to His blood, that cleanses from all sin, to His righteousness, that justifies from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses, to His grace, that sanctifies, and sets people, in whom it is and reigns, apart for God. Trust in His promise, He cannot break it. God is faithful, by whom you have been delivered and helped, by whom you have had a powerful exodus from Babylon, from death, from bondage to sins. Trust in Him. He will bring the work to completion for His own glory and your eternal benefit. Where faith is and is in exercise, there will be a response in the soul, there will be this - "I will trust and not be afraid" or "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee." Do not you know this. Have not some of you found it to be so in both cases. What time I am afraid of sin, of the devil, of the world, of my circumstances, I will trust in Thee. and also I will trust and not be afraid. "The Lord is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Exhortations and gracious obedience run well together in the family of God and in every child of God. "He is their help". Has He not been yours, mine? "He is their help" O what a help is the gift of the Spirit's grace, yea of His own powerful and blessed coming to help our infirmities and make intercession in us with groaning

which cannot be uttered. Trust Him. He will give it again. The same help will be needed and the same help will be bestowed. "He is their help" O Israel trust in the Lord. What has God done? What has He done for some of us. Has He not made Himself over to us as our portion in the spirit of it? Has He not said I will be thy God? I am thy God. Levi shall have no portion except cities to dwell in for I am his portion. So the Lord has made Himself over to His people. He is the rod of their inheritance. He is their salvation, so trust in Him. Well may we endeavour to follow Hart in his word

To trust Him endeavour
The work is His own
He makes the believer
And gives him his crown

Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord. Behold the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that depart from evil. The moment the fear of God is implanted in the heart, that moment the sinner, thus favoured, begins to depart from sin and there comes into his feeling at times a universal hatred of sin as sin. He would be holy. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It says in the heart God only can be a Saviour, God only can do you good, God only can guide you and deliver you, and help you. It is a friend wherever it is. It is looking constantly after God's interests and after your interests. It is clean; it makes the man clean in whom it is. It is tender; it is filial; it regards God; it regards Him above all consequences. How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God. It takes you to Him; it makes you long to have Him for your friend, your Saviour, your guide, your shield, your protector. It is so clean that it discerns evil in a moment when it is in exercise. It is so clean that it brings you in your heart to say I would be holy. It is a principle of holiness. It makes you careful of God's character, careful of your steps, fearful of being wrong and being deceived. Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, to depart from evil is understanding. The fear of the Lord will prolong your days. The fear of the Lord

will lead you into ways of righteousness. The fear of the Lord will be a spirit of worship and reverence, and godliness in you. So look for this. Have you got it? Happy the man who fears the Lord. Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord. Whatever you need, He possesses and will bestow on you. Trust in His gracious word, in His glorious gospel, in His faithful covenant. Trust Him though He may chastise. Trust Him though He may exercise you with delays. Trust Him though He may not send those answers of peace which you long for. Trust Him though He may lead you into darkness and not into light. Trust Him though He may not fill you with all those pleasant things, those comforts and consolations that you desire and feel you need. Trust Him. The end will declare that it is better to die than to live. "He is their help and their shield" To be a helper is to be a Saviour in this case, as you have it in an earlier Psalm. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper." This is our Lord Jesus Christ, and can there be any greater expression of the help that this Lord will give than we have in the words we were reading just now. "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 broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and 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." That passage is one of the most beautiful in the whole of the scriptures and when Christ entered on His ministry you will remember that the Book was given to Him and He opened the roll to this passage, the 61st Isaiah and read it, closed the Book and said "This day is this scripture fulfilled." I am here. I am the preacher intended to preach. Now He is the help of people. He is our help, our blessed help, giving grace to help in time of need, giving His Spirit of teaching how to pray, giving His Spirit to work the work of faith with power, that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in us, and we in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. This help you will receive from time to

time as you fear the Lord. This blessed help, O how it keeps people on their feet. How it keeps their eyes in the right direction; how it sets their hearts on the right object. How it makes them realise a little of the shortness and comparative unimportance of time and all its things and the blessedness of eternal things. O what a great thing it is to be helped by the Lord. If you get helped, do not say you get nothing. You may be rich and not possess millions. You may be gracious and often be mourning over your ungraciousness. If you get near the Lord; if the Spirit helps your infirmities and brings you boldly to the throne of grace, that ye may be helped in time of need, and obtain mercy, that is a wonderful thing, especially in this day of general declension and carnality and deadness as we see in the professing people and church of God. "He is their help and their shield" The shield was a part of a soldier's equipment. This is transferred to the Lord Himself. He is their help, their shield. He does not give them something to be a shield that is not Himself. He is their shield. This points us to the Lord Jesus. Ah if He compass us about with His favour, that is a shield. If His precious Person is between us and death that is our shield. If His blood is about us, that is our shield. No fatal dart shall ever reach us, if God be our shield.

Then the words which I had this morning for a text come. "The Lord hath been mindful of us" and I showed in some particulars what this was, and the first particular was in the coming of Christ according to the divine and eternal purposes of God in salvation into the precise position, the exact condition, of His people; that He was brought very low, depressed by the guilt of sin into the lowest parts of the earth. Brought very low, so as to be a poor man and a broken hearted man. O what mindfulness this was and so the Apostle says "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Sinners. What is a sinner? A person who has fallen from his allegiance and duty; from his created uprightness and goodness; from his straightness

to the will and law of God as created. He is a person who has missed the mark of his creation and subjection to the law giver; who is polluted and guilty and therefore dead; who is contrary to God; who has a mind at enmity, that is enmity, a will that keeps him from coming to God. He will not come unto Him; and a conscience often seared as with a hot iron of lust and wickedness. A will perverted, affections turned away from God; an understanding darkened and one who shows in all the acts of his heart, if he never utters the words with his lips, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." Are you that sinner, and are you sensible of being that sinner? Listen then "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners" yet these very people, God sent His dearly beloved Son, to die for us. Good people, if they are going to heaven, will be turned into sinners in their own experience as as they are really so in themselves.

Sinners are high in His esteem

And sinners highly value Him

This was mindfulness. This was remembering that His own body, the church, had fallen and deeply revolted from Himself.

God is mindful of us when He gives us His good Spirit by whom the soul is regenerated, born again. He is mindful of us when He sets up His worship in our hearts, the true worship of the living God. Mindful of us when He chastises us, and sends affliction to fetch us home to anchor on His grace. These things express the mindfulness of God as I tried to show this morning. I closed with a remark about providence. Providence is the hand-maid of grace in many places, the servant of the Most High God, to do good to His people. Better be afflicted, O far better be afflicted than with the wicked, the prosperous wicked, to be set in slippery places. It is a solemn passage in the 73rd Psalm, very solemn, for when Asaph came into the courts of God and had divine instruction as to the mysteries of divine providence, he saw things turned completely upside-down in his view. He could not understand the prosperity of the wicked; he could not be reconciled to the adversity of the godly until he went into the Sanctuary and listen to what he says of the wicked "Surely Thou dost set

them in slippery places. How are they cast down into destruction suddenly as in a moment." Listen to what he says of himself as taught and led of God- "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee, Thou hast holden me by my right-hand." He was instructed. Now when God's providence troubles you, may you be instructed to commit the case to God. If envy arises in you toward any person who is prosperous and you feel yourself to be troubled and burdened and balked and hindered by adversity, God give you the grace and teaching He gave to Asaph, and then you will find you have no cause to envy a man who is set on a slippery path and is slipping and slipping, and slipping gradually or more rapidly into destruction, and he suddenly is plunged into it. O sacred providence that hedges the way up of a sinner. O wondrous mercy that builds a wall around a sinner that he may not find the paths of sinful pleasures. O blessed providence that brings a man to see the vanity of this life, and the solid eternal blessings of grace in Jesus Christ. Happy he for whom the Lord cares enough to deal with him and chastise him and bring him again and again to realise that there is nothing in the whole of this world that is worth a thought compared with the blessedness of a place in the love of Christ, of an interest in the death of Christ, of a share in the righteousness of Christ. Watch the hand of God. Remember that it is said of the wicked, that because they regard not the operations of God's hands, they shall be destroyed and also it is said that the wicked have no bands in their death, because they fear not God. No exercise toward Him; no fear of His majesty; no dread of sinning against Him; no longing to be with Him; no desires to have Him for their Saviour and guide and helper and deliverer. The Lord hath been mindful of us. He has often put people on beds of affliction because He loved them. He has often taken away things from His people which they often would have retained, because He loved them. He has often weakened their strength in the way because He loved them and He Himself would be their strength. He has been mindful of us; would not let us destroy ourselves.

O my friends, it becomes us to thank God for affliction. It is an honour to be afflicted by Him, an honour to be troubled by Him, that we may find peace in Him. He hath been mindful of us. May He help us to believe; so may He help us to trust in Him. Trust in the Lord. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding." We shall praise Him one day for afflictions. I have done so before now as some of you have. Blessed be God for afflicting us. Blessed be the God of all grace for chastising us and giving us in chastisement an evidence of sonship, a token of love. The father's love uses the rod on the son.

And now I would like briefly to notice the holy confidence that is in the text expressed. "He will bless us" "He will bless us" Will He? Can you believe it? You, who are poor, and miserable, depressed, dejected, guilty person that you feel to be, you, often sorely put to it as to which way to take and apparently having no guide, no helper and no protector, can you say "He will bless me" Let us notice the ground of this confidence first and then the acting of this confidence. What is the ground of it? I take it to be two-fold. First in the Lord himself as manifesting Himself to a sinner. Ah if you can say "The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him" you can say a great deal. You can say more than the holy angel can say. Look at the ground. Take heed to the foundation of things on which you are building. Is the Lord your God? Has He ever manifested Himself to be yours and gathered up your affections to Him so that you have felt constrained in humble faith to say "The Lord is my God"? One says "The Lord is my portion saith my soul" I have no other portion. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Ah that is a great thing. This is in the covenant of grace. "I will be their God and they shall be My people." It runs thus "They shall no more teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother saying 'know the Lord' for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them,

for I will forgive their sins and remember their iniquities no more." Is God your God? Did He ever own you? Did you ever own Him? Did He ever touch you? Did you ever embrace Him? Were the little arms of your faith ever cast around the Saviour so that you could almost, if not quite, say "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." O how quiet your mind has been at such a moment. How calm your spirit, how truthful your heart, how hopeful of God, how you looked forward to Eternity, when you would be with Him. Now that is the ground. If you stand here, then you can say "He will bless me". The Psalmist stood here. He said "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Next, the ground of this confidence is the manifestations which the Lord has given of His love and mindfulness and remembrance of us. "Not unto us" they sing, "Not unto us O Lord, but unto Thy name give glory for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake." Ah if you can say this "He brought me out of Egypt; He brought me out of Babylon; he brought me to Himself; He showed me His bleeding hands, His wounded side; He spoke peace to my soul by His precious blood; He gave me access to His Father through Himself, through the rent veil of His sacred human nature; if you can say that, you can say "He will bless me". Can He have done this to leave you?

Can He have taught me to trust in His name

And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame Here then is a gracious use that the people of God can, and are enabled to make of His dealings with them. Yes, you may make, and will by divine wisdom in your soul, make a good spiritual use of His mercies and His manifestations to you. "He will bless us" He has blessed us. He will bless us. He has spoken to us. He will cause us again to hear His voice. Mind the ground on which you stand. If it is good, then let this break forth as you are enabled in your heart, and before Him, "He will bless us". O may we exult in Him. He may exalt Him and we may exult in Him and praise Him. He will do this for us.

Now let us look at this blessing. "He will bless us."

The first, and I might say the inclusive blessing, as blessing is to be regarded as a subjective work of God, the first, is the gift of the Holy Ghost. "He shall be in you, as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." He will lift your lumpish heart up sometimes, your heart that could not move after Him, He will lift it up to the throne of God's heavenly grace. He will teach you how to pray, help you to cast your burden on the Lord, realising that He cares for you. He will help you to come to God and commit the keeping of your soul to Him in well-being. That is being blessed. The gift of the Spirit. In several particulars this is expressed in the word of God. First of all as a Spirit of conviction. "He shall convince of sin" and that, not at the beginning, but all through. David would never have returned from his backsliding if the Holy Ghost had not pierced him with conviction of his evil deeds. You will never see sin rightly. Such is the deadening power and benumbing influence and blinding influence of sin in the people of God, that they never come back from their wanderings without the Holy Ghost. So part of His work in the church is to be convincing and convincing and convincing. You go astray; He brings you back. You get your heart hardened; He softens it again. You turn your eyes to the world, and He puts them back again on the cross. You covet this and long for this that is only temporal, and might be great evil to you, and then He sets your eyes on an abiding wealth, durable riches and righteousness. This is His blessed work in the soul. Then He is a Spirit of power and energy in the soul respecting its application for manifestations of Jesus Christ. This only can save us from lazy desires. The desires of the sluggard which kill him and merciful it is for the Holy Spirit from time to time to put that energy into our souls by which we say we will not let the Lord go, we will not slack nor let Thee go till Thou hast blessed us. Do you know what that means? It is a great thing to be so earnest, to be so energised by the Spirit as to follow hard after God and never rest till you find the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart. O

blessed sinner who comes to that, that He has Christ in his heart and this brings me to make an observation here. A part, and a good part, of the Spirit's work in the church, in the soul, is this - to be a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. We have been readers of our Bibles for many years. I have been speaking for many years. You have been hearing. Do we savingly know the Lord Jesus? Was ever any single passage of the Bible made light, life and power in us, bringing good news from a far country, leading faith to look at the land which is very far off, where the King is in His beauty? Faith that brought that blessed King in the revealing light of the Spirit into the soul? This is a great point in vital religion. A spirit of wisdom and revelation. Sometimes God's people do get this blessing when they, passive as it were in their souls, receive unction, mercy, in the coming to them of the Lord Jesus and this is by the Eternal Spirit. This is the blessing. He will bless us. What was Christ sent for but to be a Saviour? And where is He to be a Saviour? In the soul, and of the soul. And how is this brought to pass? By the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. New visits of love are paid; new tokens for good are given, and all this is in this word "He will bless us" with the gift of the Spirit, and if you notice in the Epistle to the Ephesians the Apostle is there inspired to treat of the gifts which Christ received for men and for the rebellious when He ascended on high, and among the gifts is the gift of the ministry and this is to be an effect - the perfecting of the saints, and this perfecting of the saints is the maturing of the saints until they all come into the unity of the faith, into the knowledge of the Son of God, into the stature of a man and all this is by the Holy Spirit as we learn from the Epistle to the Corinthians. I give you to understand that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost and that divine Spirit has many, many operations and different manifestations in the soul. One has this and another that, but it all comes to the same point - the unity of the faith. One body, many members and this body, this one body has its union from the union of every member to the Head - Jesus

Christ.

"He will bless us" O what a mercy to be blessed with the knowledge of Jesus Christ in your soul. What a blessing. Nothing to be compared with it, nothing. Your raging sins will give way to nobody but this blessed one, Jesus Christ. Your guilt will never be removed, but by His righteousness. Your pollution can never be washed away, but by His blood. Sweet union comes this way. Sweet liberty is felt this way. "He will bless us."

The Israelites, when returned from Babylon, returned from seeing and serving gods of wood and of stone, had this great mercy given to them - the worship of God was set up and although that nation fell into formality and much evil afterwards, it never went back into idolatry. Now my friends, when we are brought to this point, brought from Egypt, brought from Babylon, brought to know again and worship afresh the Lord Jesus, this is a great thing, a very great point. He will bless us thus.

He will bless us with understanding in the things of God. "In malice", said the Apostle to the saints, "be children, in understanding, men". How are we to grow in understanding? In two ways. By the Holy Scripture and by the Holy Spirit. Scripture contains everything that we need to know of God, of His ways, His purposes and the need of things and he who is enabled carefully to read the scriptures will gather much information and wisdom. But the second way is that, that makes the first effectual, the teaching of the Spirit. He takes of Christ's things and shows them. It is like as if, now and again, when one is walking with sadness, and having sad communications and communion with one's own heart and a friend, the Lord Himself, comes, that is the Holy Spirit, and He begins to teach and open and explain this scripture, that providence, and the covenant of grace, so as there is an understanding in things. If you are favoured, you know more today than you did a few years ago, in the things of God. If you have been under right teaching, you have grown something. You may say "I have grown in a

knowledge of my ruin, and that is not a little thing, but surely you must say something beside that, You must have grown in some degree of knowledge of the Redeemer. Have there not been moments, when, looking at yourself as utterly depraved, you have suddenly found as if the Lord spread Himself over you, and you saw His infinite merit covering everything, His infinite mercy coming to you over everything; His covenant telling you that God is faithful and will never leave off doing you good? Now that will bring you to a degree of maturity in your understanding and it will always affect your heart. It will, whenever you get a little acquisition of this kind of knowledge, affect your heart. So, seek to be children in malice; bear no malice. Seek to be men in understanding in the things of God, and this will bring you to a measure of establishment. I have said before, there are two ways of being established in the truth and in your interest in God. One is this, when you are enabled to gather up your stones, helps, Ebenezers; this scripture, that passage, that sermon, that time in private; when you are enabled to gather them all up and put them up, you can surely say "If He had meant to destroy me He would not have shown me such things as these." You remember the time when you sincerely repented, and you have never repented of that repentance; when your heart was made soft, as with the sweet love of Christ, and O how you have longed to have it from time to time? You can remember when you got some answer to prayer; remember when you had a peculiar sense of access to God in Christ in prayer; when you were enabled unreservedly to put your case to Him, commit all to Him. Now when this and that and the other things are put together, perhaps extending over several years, you can say "He would not have shown me these things if He meant to destroy me and that is one way of being established. The second way is this and better. Although all God's works are good, this exceeds the other, namely, when on some occasion you find yourself carried away to the top of the mountains where the house of the Lord is, when He blessed you, shed His love abroad in your heart, revealed His Son

in you, forgave your sins, allowed nothing to be between His majesty and your soul. All was love, all was blood. Then you could say - "Now I know that the Lord saveth His anointed." Then you could say - "I am the Lord's." "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine." I believe there are some now hearing me who have never had this and you say, perhaps even now are saying, shall we ever get it? You may look at yourselves and you may say, there is no room for such a blessing. We are too guilty, too hard, too ignorant, too distant, too black, too polluted. Well my friends, I should think that every saint in heaven more or less distinctly according to the time he lived and was under divine teaching has said just what you are saying. Each one for himself would say that, but then it does not depend upon this. The atonement, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, are to remove what you mourn and confess and the Spirit of Christ is to apply these infinite blessings to bring peace. The Preacher, the Prince of Preachers, would have little to preach about if you could get rid of what troubles you without Him, but O when your bondage and your condition of sin and your blackness and your distance from God are your trouble, there is something for this Preacher to preach to you. He preaches good news from a far country. "Behold Me", "Behold Me" He only needs to say that, to fix your eyes on Himself and then to bring the blessing into your soul. "He will bless us."

He will bless us with perseverance. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger". The blessing of holding on. O if we get to the end honourably. I could never tell you what my heart feels about this sometimes. O to get to the end honourably. To keep the faith. To keep the name and faith of Jesus as it is in the Revelations. Not to deny His name. To hold fast that which we already have that no man take our crown. What will it be? Do you think you will get on by being filled once with conscious strength so as not to need the grace of God to be given to you every moment. If you think so you are

deceived. You will hold on in sensible weakness. You will be constantly supplied in your poverty, felt poverty. You will again and again have some sense of being accepted in the Beloved. A secret hand will be underneath you, propping you when you are ready to slip with your feet. A gracious word will be given and fulfilled in your experience when you feel as if you are as poor as poverty itself. O it will be day by day, moment by moment. "I will keep it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." That is how you hold on. The Hebrew children got strength of faith when they were confronted with death, when they saw the burning fiery furnace, when they saw the countenance of the king in all the rage that was in his heart against them and their God. They got the strength just then and when you have got something to go through then you will get your strength, not before. If it be for a painful trial, you will get the strength. If it be for death, you will get the strength just when you need it. "He will bless us". He will bless us in time, yes He will bless us in time. Bless us with answers to prayer. Bless us by favouring us with a few minutes of communion with Himself occasionally. Bless us by delivering us out of temptations for He knows how to do it and is able to do it. He will bless us in these ways in time. Bless us with right reckoning, a spirit of understanding in His ways. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" and so on. That is a blessing. He will bless us by presenting us to His Father. "Behold I and the children whom God has given Me." With a welcome into heaven "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Bless us with the society of the Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Bless us by leading us to fountains of waters so that we shall thirst no more and have all tears wiped from our eyes. He will bless us. We may say it in faith. If

we have faith, we shall say it. "He will bless us". He leads us beside still waters sometimes. He restores our wandering souls. He forgives our sins. He heals our diseases and so we can say "Surely He who has done these things will come" "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." "He will bless us." He will bless the house of Israel and all of them, so that not a hoof shall be left behind. Everyone in Zion shall appear before God. They, in their wilderness journey, shall dig wells and pits and the rain shall fill them with water. "He will bless us". He will bless the house of Israel with His holy presence. He will bless the house of Aaron - His ministers who stand between the porch and the altar and cry "Spare Thy people O Lord and give not Thine heritage to reproaches." Brethren you want a blessing. Some of you here can surely say you want a blessing. You need it and cry for it. Now faith and the fear of God in you will carry you to the throne of grace, will tell you that all you need is there - in the Lord Jesus, and that will put an energy at times by the Holy Spirit into your faith so that you will cry "Make haste O God, make haste. Pluck Thy hand out of Thy bosom and come and save me. Make no tarrying O my God." May the Lord help us. Bless us with a right view of Himself, of His dealings. Bless us with this holy confidence that we may say "He will bless us". May He command His blessing to rest upon us.