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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 23 August 1936

PSALM 119 v 18

"Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold
wondrous things out of Thy law"

We noticed this morning two wondrous things. The just anger of God on persons, communities, and nations - a terrible truth. The anger is just because, as I named to you, sin is the foundation and cause of it. It is a wondrous thing in the wise, holy providence of God, ruling men and causing men who intend it not, to work all things after the counsel of His own will. This affects the people of God as it should do. "Ye are not your own". Providence is not at your bidding or under your control. Men say we will go into this city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain, whereas ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and we shall do this or that. May the Lord impress this on our hearts. You young people, you have your own schemes, ambitions, prospects, designs. Fall before God and commit all to Him. You live and move and have your being in Him. Do not say that your tongues are your own; they are not.

The second wonder named was the gathering by God of all the sins of the election of grace and imputing them to His Son, whom He made sin. What a solemn truth - "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin"

There are many other wondrous things in the Word of God, one or two of which, as helped, I will name to you, and the first is this - comfort. The heavenly Paraclete is sent to comfort, but not indiscriminately is that word to be understood. Christ was anointed to comfort all that mourn. He said in the opening of His earthly ministry - "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted". And this comfort is spoken of very particularly in the Word of God. Thus, for instance, from the fulness of Christ comfort flows by the Holy Ghost into those hearts that mourn, and the mourning is directed to certain characters. Some mourn over their sins, not forgiven;

guilt felt on the conscience, fears of eternity, legal bondage, often hardness of heart, sometimes no prayer, concern for tomorrow and for eternity. They do not know God for themselves, as they judge; they have no good prospect before them. Woe is me, each one says; better not to have been born than to have been born to sin and die in sin. Now these mourners find this, there is nothing in themselves, there is nothing in outward religion, there is nothing in their naked knowledge of the Scripture, there is nothing in holy providence that can comfort them. Do I speak what some of you are feeling? Now if so, listen, if you can listen - "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me". These are the words of the Saviour - "For the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and to comfort all that mourn." What would be comfort to you who are mourning thus? "Thy sins are forgiven" - that would be comfort would it not? You say you have no religion, and not a bad thing. God only knows how many people are deceived by their religion; they rest in it without Christ. May that not be your case; O mourners, wait on the Redeemer. Whenever you can, plead His blood. When you feel a prompting to secret prayer, follow that prompting. Whenever you get a sight of Christ's merit, plead that merit. Go in the face of reason, of guilt felt, of sorrow and enmity, temptations of the devil. Go in the face of all and cry "Save me O God for the waters are come in unto my soul". And if you pray thus in faith I am bold to say you will get an answer. I am not afraid to prophesy that you will get an answer. The proof of that statement is this - "Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved." Cast yourselves upon Him; cast yourselves on the Stone of Israel. Look to Him who is the bright and morning star. Look to Him who says compassionately - "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

The second mourner to whom comfort is preached is one who has known God, felt His presence, had happiness divine in his soul, the purifying of his conscience by the blood of Christ, who has walked with God in peace and equity, and he mourns sometimes. He mourns over two things particularly - the sin that drove the Saviour from his breast; the grieving of the Holy Spirit of which he confesses himself

guilty. Ah solemn mourning, that is. Some of you know that, do not you? You get up in the ^Anight, according to the Canticles, that is, in the night of your trouble, and you go about the city and cry, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" I drove Him from my breast, I behaved basely to Him, and He is gone. I mourn His absence. That is the second thing you mourn, the absence of Him whose presence you did not fully value, whose tender heart you wounded by neglect and sin. Now Christ has suffered for this people. By Isaiah it is written "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wrath; I hid My face from him". Was that not enough to bring him back? "He went on frowardly". What will Christ do to him? This is what He says He will do. I have seen him; I have seen his ways; I have seen that he is like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Now I will restore comforts to him and to his mourners. O the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the loveliness of His Person, the savour of His ointments. Who can fully express them. He comes and comforts mourners. He comforts mourners who mourn over having grieved Him, and says to them "Thy sins are forgiven". And here is often a stuggule, because a legal heart in all of us will dispute comfort. An honest conscience fears false comfort. May we not have confidence that is vain. And yet the Word of the Lord bids us who have had His favour, to hold fast the beginning of our confidence and rejoicing unto the end; firm unto the end. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; say unto her that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of the Lord double for all her sins." Double? What is that? Is it not present comfort in Christ and future holiness and happiness in heaven with Him? You never expected such, did you? I did not; yet He gave that double to you, to me. Is not this wondrous? The whole of the Bible relating to God's kindness to the church is full of this comfort. The comfort of love, the comfort of the gospel - Good news from a far country, brought by the Holy Spirit. Now that is one thing for you brethren who know God to hold fast to. Hold fast the beginning of your confidence with rejoicing unto the end. We do not honour God by unbelief. The moment we begin to reckon after the reckoning of the law and our own legal hearts then sin comes, guilt comes, fears come, and what are we to do. We begin to dispute things, and though we do it not knowingly we do set up our bad things against Christ's comfort. When the Holy Spirit gives to faith a power to leave off reckoning and to come to God to reason - "Let us reason

together" - then sweet comforts flow like a river into the soul. Wonders of love, wondrous things of Christ's patience and long suffering, wondrous things of His goodness beyond all expectation, beyond all we ever conceived of Him, and of His fulness. O but to see these things, the eyes must be opened. This is given to those to whom it belongs - "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear".

Then again there are wondrous things in the Word of God. There are wondrous things to weak people. How shall I stand? A trembling word that may have been to some here - "He that endureth to the end shall be saved". It is hard to get away from the broad way into the narrow way; hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom; very difficult indeed to be weak enough for Christ. You may easily be too strong, but you cannot possibly be too weak for Him. O but I cannot bear this! Then you will want Him to bear it. But I do not see how I can get honourably to my grave. Nor could you if you attempted it. 'Tis a wonderful blessing to leave off trying and to fall in weakness and fear into the hands of God, Jesus Christ. "When I am weak then am I strong". Too weak to pray sometimes, too weak to believe at other times. Too weak to resist the longings and pantings of a corrupt nature for indulgence. Too weak to bear the cross or even look at it. Too weak to say I will take it up. Now all this weakness is just what Christ intends us to have. You may again and again say to the Lord, do take this cross away from me. No, He says, I will not, but I will do this - give you grace to bear it. Then faith rises in the power of Christ's resurrection and says - "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me, for when I am weak then am I strong." Did ever a saint of God here now find himself strong enough to resist one sin? No. But the saints here can say, according to the degree of experience God has given to them, according to the faith they have in the Son of God, they can say, when we have been weakest we have been best. We have cast ourselves in our weakness upon the Lord. Weak faith is strong faith. Then, O the wondrous strength of Christ. That strength is exercised in various ways. One way is this - The Lord rebukes the tempter for you. He sees that your strength is gone and pities you and rebukes the enemy. It is rather a wonderful experience to find this, that suddenly the temptation ceases and the devil has gone; left you for a season, even

as he left Christ. You wonder at it. Where is he? "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan" is the explanation of that. His strength was made perfect there in that He delivered you from the snare of the fowler, from the noisome pestilence that his horrid breath breathes into your soul.

Another way in which His strength is made perfect in our weakness is giving us grace to fall into His hands, and to believe and feel that our times are in His hand, and faith says, I would not have them elsewhere. "My times are in Thy hand". Vicissitudes, the difficulties, the weaknesses, the fears, the turning aside, and the longings and pantings and groanings after God - these are in my times, and these times are in Thy hand.

Wonders. You read these things. You cannot read your Bible and not read them, but it may not be given to you to see them. "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear". Wise prophets and others have desired to see what now I show to you. Wondrous strength for a weak sinner. Wondrous strength for one who has been nearly ruined and overcome by temptation. Wondrous strength for one who in his weakness is enabled to say, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. When you can say that in faith you are strong, you are a conqueror. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God".

That I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law, out of Thy Word; that I may behold Thy faithfulness. Faithfulness has reference necessarily to an engagement. If God has not engaged Himself to you, the question of His faithfulness does not arise in you. But if He has spoken to you, dropped any holy bit of the gospel into your heart, caused you to see the light of His countenance, then He is bound to you. He has bound Himself. God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able but will with every temptation make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it. Have you seen this wondrous thing in the Word of God? Of course we have, people generally say; of course we have. I put the question again. Have you seen it? When did you see it? What was your condition when you saw it? What was the effect of the sight on your heart? Surely the faithfulness of God is like the great mountains,

high above all your fears and weaknesses, all your unfaithfulness - this faithfulness of Jehovah.

Faithful Jehovah must remain
Nor shalt thou seek His face in vain

Wonders of providence. Providence, generally speaking, is God's rule over and in the universe - heaven, and earth, and hell - the universe. "In Him we live and move and have our being". Providence was over Egypt, but Egypt had not the cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night; that was confined to Israel in the wilderness. Special providences are over God's people; each one has that providence designed for him, a particular providence. "Ye are not your own". You design this, and God designed to break it. Jehoshaphat may make a fleet of ships to go with Israel. No - God broke them. When Jehoshaphat was faced with a huge army and his eye was on God, he said, - It is little with Thee to help whether with many or with them that have no might. Help us O Lord our God, for in Thy Name we go against this great multitude. The best armour we can have is what Paul speaks of in the scripture in the Ephesians - the whole armour of God. The breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit. Providence? It is an interesting thing to every child of God who has given to him an observant spirit. Paul, on one occasion, was troubled in mind and God sent Titus to him. God comforted Paul by sending his son Titus. You may be in trouble. Who is not that fears God? In some form there is trouble. In your house there is trouble. In your business there is trouble. In your relationships there is trouble. In the church of God today particularly there is trouble to all who see the state of things. Some providence comes and you say, it is kind of God to do this for me. You see His well-pleased face in some holy providence. Watch His hand. If you have ever been led through these Psalms 105 - 107 inclusive, you will come to the conclusion that the Psalmist arrived at when finishing the 107 Psalm "Whoso is wise and will observe these things even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord". Watch His hand. Watch His movements toward you in business if you have business to deal with. See if He comes into your heart as well as into your circumstances. See if He comes into your house; see if His hand touches your health, restores your strength after a season of

weakness. See if He sends people of God to help you, or if He gives somebody a spirit of prayer for you. It is nearly 60 years ago when I was in very particular trouble. A Dutch correspondent, a very godly person, wrote to me one day and said, I know you are in trouble by the access I got to the throne of grace for you. I had not named my trouble to that godly friend. God may give somebody a spirit of prayer for you and in the providence of His holy movements He lets you know it. He causes you to feel it as a favour from Himself. Wonders - these things are in this Book. The singular movements of God in the world, covering with His protecting hand His feeble church and people. When the day arrived for Israel to return from the 70 years captivity, what did God do as a means? Stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, His servant, and Cyrus did not do it for reward. God moved him to do it. God may move somebody to show you a needed kindness and you will say, this is His hand. I knew a godly woman, who has been in heaven a good many years now, and who had suffered much from poverty, and one Saturday before the Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper, on that day she was in trouble because she had no coin to put on the plate after the Communion. She was kneading some flour, preparing food, and felt a hard substance which, on taking out of the flour, proved to be a small coin and that was for the Lord's Table, His poor people. O, if you watch the providence of God you will find that He will never be wanting to you. You will have plenty of work, sweet work, to watch His hand in His holy providence. Wondrous things - Does your Master pay tribute? Yes, said Peter, and the Lord anticipated Peter's perplexity, for there was poverty there. The Lord had not where to lay His head, Go and take up the first fish that cometh and you will find a piece of money in its mouth. Holy providence. Wondrous things does God work. The Eunuch is returning to his home and to his mistress, Queen Candace; a worshipper of God but needing instruction in the atonement, the Person of Christ. Philip, go to this man; join thyself to his chariot. Look at the hand of God. And these things are, as the apostle Paul writes, for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. You won't look in vain if you look for God in some of your circumstances. No, you may have to keep it all to yourself and it is one of the best things you could have, to have trouble locked up in your breast, kept from everyone but God. Then He says to some man, some servant of His, to somebody who does not fear His Name, go and give so and so such and

such things. I have seen a good deal in the providence of God, both in my own case and in the cases of friends. Wonders of grace to God belong; wonders of providence belong to God. They are all His servants and they are the servants in the church too. "All things are yours", all things. The purse of the world is for the service of the church. The wealth of the world, yea the world itself, is for the church. "All things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's....." A poor person, a pauper, a child of God, has the world to supply his need. According to that need, so does God open His hand. "Whoso is wise" in his own case, in his own generation, his own circumstances "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." I have seen wonders in God's providence in the church of God. I knew a good man who had been injured in business and ruined by a rival, and the good man was troubled particularly one day in the evening when he had nothing to give his children when, with a broken heart, he laid his case before the Lord. Early next morning a servant of his rival and ruiner knocked at the door; his master had been kept awake all night on account of this good man and his family needs. I knew that good man; he was godly, a friend of mine, and has been in heaven many years. Wonders of grace, wonders of providence, belong to our God. You say, we do not see them. No. these things are for those who can receive them, to whom that word may be applied - "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear". Wise men have wanted to see these things and have not seen them, but poor, praying people, may see them. Faith sees the hand of God, faith sees the Lord Jesus, faith sees the Holy Spirit, the Three One Jehovah interested in a poor person. The great ones of the world take no notice of him, know him not, and if they knew him they might despise him, but God says, he is Mine. The sea is at His service, the world is at His service, the cattle on a thousand hills belong to God, and they are at the service of this poor man. The gold and the silver belong to God. We need open eyes to see these things. You may read them and not see them. "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear."

Wonders of love, wonders of power, wonders of patience, wonders of kindness, wonders of the Spirit's work in the heart. And what a

wonder it will be when a saint comes to his end and he says this in effect, the things I have believed I am now proving to be true; the God I have trusted I find to be with me, and to say with good Philpot - "'Tis better to die than to live". Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things in the land of promise, that land in which is no Canaanite, no deceiving devil, no violent tempter, no corrupt nature.

AMEN.