

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday morning 16 September 1934

PSALM 136 v 23

"Who remembered us in our low estate: for His  
mercy endureth for ever:"

The Psalmist in this Psalm celebrates the sovereign mercy of God, exalts it unspeakably, and exhorts the people of God to give thanks for it. "O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for His mercy endureth for ever." This is a song which, as we may be enabled to sing it, will be to the praise and glory of God's grace.

The mercy is exercised very singularly. In this Psalm we are told that He "smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endureth for ever"; slew mighty kings: for His mercy endureth for ever. Actions, these, on the part of God which may well, when unbelief reigns, enmity is not subdued, challenge and bring forth the bitter criticism which men indulge in with respect to Jehovah. Men who do not know Him cannot be reconciled to His slaying mighty kings in mercy, in mercy to His people. A singular thing and wonderful and beautiful is the sovereign love and constant care of God for His people and whoever opposes them will, by His mercy to them, be slain. Whatever stands in their way shall be removed out of their way and He will lead them into plain paths that they may go to a city of habitation: for His mercy endureth for ever. Happy the man who, by the Holy Ghost, can celebrate God's mercy when His dealings are very solemn, severe, cutting off the wicked, defending the righteous, guiding the blind, supplying the needy and all because His mercy endureth for ever. Some of you must have this song, you have had it in your hearts, you have been constrained to sing the song: "His mercy endureth for ever" The Church of God is spoken to by Paul in the Hebrews; grounding his exhortation on the Priesthood of Christ, he says - Let us come boldly, speak freely, open our mouth wide. What

for? "Come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need". We sing sometimes

Mercy, good Lord, mercy I crave  
This is the total sum

It speaks of misery - it is in the Covenant - and an anticipation of the need of all who are in the Covenant of Grace ordered in all things and sure. Needs must be supplied by mercy. Mercy smote the rock and the waters gushed out from it, which rock was Christ. Mercy rained manna from heaven to feed the needy people in the wilderness. Mercy protected them by day, going before them, and by night, covering them. It was all mercy, and God remembered this mercy. He remembers; we are told again and again He remembered His Covenant with Abraham and Issac and Jacob.

He remembers the needs of His people. He remembered them in their distresses when He raised up Gideon to deliver them from their then great distress; Gideon and three hundred men. Mercy protected, mercy made that little army triumphant, and when you get to the end of your pilgrimage you will say, mercy started me, mercy guided me, mercy protected me, mercy supplied all my needs, wrought all my deliverances, brought me honourably thus far, and you will sing - "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy Name give glory for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake." No pilgrim will ever regret the trouble he has gone through when he comes to the end of his pilgrimage, for he will say, the mercy of God was in it.

Think of God's mercy in slaying your enemies. He slew "Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endureth for ever." This is just the exact opposite of the charity of today. All religious people are more or less distinctly talking about Christ. They do not know Him. If they did their language would be changed. Modernism is the masterpiece of the devil today, and these religious teachers and leaders are in a fearful condition. You young people are in danger. My advice to you is do not read those infidel things for two reasons at the least. First you are not in a position to answer them. That is not belittling you, it is just this, that you are not in a position to meet the crafty devil who dictates those fearful statements about God

and about the Scriptures and about Christ. You may live to find this error advanced more than it is today, more extensively advanced, namely that the Lord Jesus was not miraculously born, that there is no such thing existing, whatever the Bible says to the contrary, as the virgin birth. Beg of God if you meet that statement to keep you and not allow it to take root in your mind. And the other reason is this, when you see such things they may just touch, awaken and bring out the infidelity that is in your nature. An old friend of mine who has been dead many years, about 50, had a book offered him to read issued by a dignitary of the Church of England and a notable man of that day, an erroneous book, and my friend said - "Thank you, I wont try how much poison I can take without killing myself". If you know your own infidelity, that is, that you are naturally an unbelieving person, you will be afraid of taking poison. It is a question of proportion when you think of arsenic, just a question. The doctor may give you the right portion but you may take an undue proportion and what then? Beware of arsenic. What, God slay somebody? Yes. What, slay a man, a king, because His mercy endureth for ever? Yes. So may we be enabled to wait on Him, for Him, "for His mercy" - even when it takes the form of terrible retribution, when it takes the form of driving out seven nations from that land which was the land of promise - "for His mercy endureth for ever."

"He remembered us in our low estate". What is this low estate into which men made saints were remembered in? It is the state, the condition, that all are in by the fall. The fall of Adam involved all of us and there is no lower state to be had or known in this life than the state of fallen man. There is yet one estate lower than this in the world to come. Sinner, if you die in this low estate, there is yet another lower and more terrible estate awaiting you, an endless hell. Hell, just punishment in endless perdition. The Lord save us from that according to His mercy. The estate of fallen man is low in several respects.

First, in respect of God. We fell away from Him, away from the source of life and goodness. Nothing worse could be imagined than that fall away from God that took place in Eden when Adam fell. It is fearful to be away from God. It is called "being alienated from the life of God". Alienated from the life of God? That means that we are

all of us by nature the enemies of God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" And, falling from God, we became the servants of sin. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are, whether of sin . . . ." Think of it. This is that spirit that is against God. From this state God calls His people. "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." That is the low estate and everyone walking in this world walks in enmity with God. Know ye not - this great, this awful fact, you who are dead in trespasses and sins - your walk is just enmity against God. If you are a friend of the world you cannot be a friend of God at the same time. "The friendship of the world is enmity against God"

Our low estate next is a state of guilt. Guilt must be followed by death, except mercy steps in. Guilt fits a person for hell. Heaven is a place where no merit exists except that of Christ. Hell is full of merit, the merit that men have in their sins. An awful state. Our low estate is one of pollution, the pollution of this world unfitting a person for heaven, for nothing that defileth shall enter there. A polluted state is a state which is abominable to God. Man in this state is said to be abominable. O listen to the Holy Scriptures which teach these things distinctly. There is not a man in the world who is not by nature, fallen nature, guilty and polluted, who is not an enemy against God, who is not dead in trespasses and sins.

Our low estate is also one that renders us obnoxious to God's just dealings in punishment. "We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ that we may receive every one according to the deeds done in the body, whether it be good or bad." No escape; everyone must be there. O unbeliever, O reasoner against God, O polluted sinner, O guilty sinner, when you stand before the Judge who shall judge the quick and the dead, Jesus Christ, one word only will you hear there, only one - "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." I wish to be clear of the blood of all my hearers and I tell you the truth. The low estate in

which you were born, in which you continue, in which you will continue if mercy come not to you, will put you into a still lower estate as I have said, even into an endless hell. Death and hell shall be cast into the lake.

What is this remembrance? It is the time that God has appointed when one shall be born again. When the time for Israel's deliverance from Egypt came, it is written - "God remembered His Covenant". The time for fulfilling it in the commencement of it, the time when the nation should become a nation dwelling alone, and separated from all others; that had come, and that appears to be what was intended by the word "And God remembered His Covenant". The time had come. There is a time to be born, a time to be born again. A time when God shall pass by a dead child cast out into the open field to the loathing of its person; when He, that gracious God, shall pass by and cast over it His own covering and say "Live". This is the beginning of deliverance from a low estate. That communicated life is of such a nature as that the sinner to whom it is given rises in the resurrection of Christ to heavenly things. That sinner can no longer live pleasantly, comfortably, the life he has formerly lived. That old life is killed yet it lives in him, but it is killed as to its predominance and the new life, being heavenly, raises a sinner into a heavenly life, an atmosphere, sweet atmosphere. He lives unto God. Every new born person lives unto God. In conflict with sin, in conflict with the devil, in conflict with many enemies, in affliction and trouble, he really has a life that lives unto God.

This life is a hungry life, a thirsty life, a hunger and thirst that can find nothing in the world to appease and to quench it; nothing. As Israel had manna rained from heaven - not earthly food; had water from the flinty rock - not a polluted river such as the river of Egypt - so a living soul has bread from heaven, even Christ; water, even the water of life which, says Christ, I will give unto him that is athirst. What a beautiful life it is. It distinguishes the possessors of it. "Lo the people shall dwell alone; they shall not be reckoned among the nations". Their life is different from the life of the nations. It is singular, it is separating, it is sanctifying, it is peculiar in its operations. The resurrection of Christ is in every new-born soul as to its reality and its efficacy and its

holiness. You cannot live this divine life and not have holiness in your soul. Little it may be to your apprehension, but it is there. You cannot have this life and not hunger and thirst after God who gave it you. You will betimes be saying - "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee O God". Only God can content these people. "Who remembered us in our low estate", to deliver us from it. He delivered Israel out of Egypt, brought Israel from among the Egyptians. So He brings His people away from the world and He brings them toward heaven. He starts them on a divine pilgrimage, He makes them soldiers of Jesus Christ, He makes them children, and He answers their desires to be children. He answers their prayers to know that they are children, and their prayer is answered when the Spirit of Adoption is given to them, when what Paul speaks to the Romans becomes their experience. "Likewise the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children" - by this new birth, this heavenly life, if children of God in that way - "then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ". Who need be afraid of poverty in this life if he is but favoured to know that he is an heir of God, heir to the unsearchable riches of Christ. He is raised up to this and for this very purpose. Our low estate, being one of guilt, is met because on Calvary mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other, and then they kiss each other in the reconciliation of a sinner unto God by Jesus Christ. Reconciliation to God by Jesus Christ, that is the effect, the blessed effect, of Christ's removing the sin of His Church and people from them and giving to them His righteousness - "For God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It is an elevation of the soul. No longer does the soul live in death and guilt because death is removed by regeneration, guilt is removed by the atonement. It is a life, a resurrection life. The power of Christ's resurrection is in every believer. You may say you do not feel it, but that does not alter the matter. The Apostle says this to the Ephesians - I pray for you that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead". (Ephesians 1 v. 18/19/20). The very hand

that lifted Christ out of the grave lifts the sinner out of his death, and the very precious blood that Jesus came to shed, is sprinkled on him and he is raised from his guilt. Righteousness imputed when felt and enjoyed constrains the sinner to say - "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". Nowhere else will you have it.

Righteousness to full perfection  
Must be brought  
Lacking nought  
Fearless of rejection

Ah sinner, you wont be rejected if you have this. This will be your certificate at the other side of the river that has no bridge. This will secure you an entrance into the city which God hath built. This will procure for you a welcome into that blessed abode where sin no more defiles.

"Who remembered us in our low estate". A low estate after what I have said may be said to be a state of affliction and it is written concerning affliction, the affliction which people have - "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, but when he cried unto Him He heard." "They cried unto the Lord in their affliction and He delivered them out of their distresses." You get very low in affliction. There are two kinds of affliction the people of God have. The first is their affliction by sin, indwelling sin. We should all judge, I doubt not, that the Apostle's affliction as he speaks of it in the 7 Romans, was the greatest affliction he had. - "The good that I would I do not". Can a good man have anything worse than that to bear that when he would love God, enmity rises; when he would believe without a doubt, doubt comes and almost swamps his faith. Can he have a greater affliction than when he would spend his life in believing and in praying and in fearing God, he finds just the opposite. "The good that I would I do not". Nor did it stop there. - "The evil I would not that do I". Those of you who have that affliction have, I believe, the greatest, the keenest, the most piercing affliction that you can have. Affliction may come also in circumstances, in divine rebukes, in desertion, in the hiding of God's face, in the smiting of His Fatherly hand when he removes some idols, when he breaks them to pieces, when he grinds them to powder,

makes you drink the dust as put into the water.

Affliction makes us see  
What else would scape our sight  
How very foul and dim are we  
And God how pure and bright

It brings us to our knees, it brings cries out of our hearts; it sets us waiting on God; it accomplishes the ends for which it is sent, weaning us from self, so that we can say - My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I seek to enter into things too high for me; do not want to meddle with them now because I am as a weaned child. I behave myself now as a weaned child. The good effect, such as the Apostle Paul mentions in the Hebrews where he says - "No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous. Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby".

O may the Lord give you people who are afflicted patience. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy". So as the husbandman waiteth patiently for the early and latter rain, so may you be enabled to patiently wait on God in your affliction. He will not despise it. Our low estate. There is a low estate waiting all of us. The low estate I mean is the grave, when we shall return to our mother dust. An estate of the body that, not of the soul. Absent from the body the soul is present with the Lord. But the body, the dust, is precious in the sight of God, and the morning is coming - O it will awake - when the dead in Christ shall rise, when the sea shall give up her dead, and the martyrs who were burned to ashes shall again live as to their bodies and their bodies are to partake of the exaltation of Christ, for "when we see Him we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is". Who remembered us in our low estate. Who sent messengers to them in the wilderness when they were there, pilgrims; who still does that to spiritual pilgrims. He speaks to them, He speaks comfortably to their souls, helps them in their difficulties, brings them honourably through all, feeding, nourishing, guiding, protecting and helping them continually. The reason is: "for His mercy endureth for ever". His mercy; His, it is and shall never die. Why mercy alone mentioned? Because the goodness



of God, the justice of God, the anger of God against sin and His people, elect people, spent themselves on the Lord Jesus Christ. An opening was made by justice, by holiness, by goodness, by omnipotence for mercy's sweet streams to flow in their greatness, in their blessedness, in their efficacy: "for His mercy endureth for ever". May the Lord grant that we may be partakers of this mercy by being remembered in our low estate.

AMEN.