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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS
Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 17 June 1934

Psalm 139 v 23-24

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me,
and know my thoughts: And see if there be any
wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting".

Twelve weeks ago was the last time I appeared here. Little did I think that the illness which commenced in the pulpit on that night, the 25 March, would be such a long and painful illness. God was good to me especially in the acute suffering which, for three weeks, prevented sleep. At one time God was very good and very near to me and all I could do for two or three days, when He was so near to me that I felt He had no controversy with me and I had no complaint against Him, was to ask Him to take me to Himself. I wanted to be with Him because then I should never sin, but He has spared me and I have felt to need much grace to be weak, for I am weak. But last Tuesday I was conscious of a change, a removal of a distressing weakness, a tremor that I could not control, and that was removed and the next day I said "If I am as well next Lord's Day as I am this morning I shall go to chapel" and mercifully that improvement continued, though I am more feeble than I can express. Still God has been very kind, but I have greatly needed that patience to be weak, willingness to be weak. And now I want to speak two or three things to you on the scripture in the 139th Psalm. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"

Some of us may be unconsciously more ready to search ourselves than to ask the Lord to search us, and when we begin to search ourselves what do we find? We look for grace and cannot see it; we search for repentance and do not find it, we want a broken heart and cannot find it; we would pray if we were better than we are; we would pray if we were sure of sincerity; we would pray if we felt our prayers were right; we would confess

sins only we are afraid we do not know sin properly. And all these things come from self-searching, and good it is that we should have them discovered to us, but when God searches it is different. He lets a light into our hearts, and we then see them to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. unsearchably wicked. Then in some measure we see sin in God's light. I shall never forget when I saw sin as God sees it. I felt that it would shatter the mind and even destroy human life if one had nothing but that continuing for a little time. O it is dreadful, but blessed. You may see sin naturally, and feel remiss that you have done it, without repentance, without gospel repentance in your heart. You may see what I have seen - the working of reason against God, against His decrees - Why should He choose one and not another? Why should He give His Son to die for some and not for all? And you may find great hardness of heart when you have thus reasoned. You have to come down, if God is teaching you, to be as a little child. When God searches then you see in His light; how right He is and how wrong you are. All this I have seen in myself. God's searching is terrible. He never lets a poor child, or any human being, see to the uttermost depths of the human heart which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? Then we begin to confess. I have confessed and confessed and objected my sins against God and thought they could not be forgiven until He said - "Speak to me no more of this matter" and stopped me by the precious blood of Christ. When He searches you are amazed, shocked, disgusted at yourself, at what you see. He tries me, He tries you, by circumstances until you find you cannot submit to Him unless He gives you submission. Mere professors, like branches mechanically united by a profession of religion, circumstances come and take them away and they are burned. He searches His people by His word. O sometimes what a condemning word will come, but He leads all, whom He thus searches, into the way everlasting. What is that way? That way is Christ. "I am the way". It is the everlasting way because He is Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday and today and for ever", the everlasting way in regard of God's dealings with His people. There is this in the everlasting way - the everlasting righteousness. Yes, that

is the way, and when a sinner has been searched and tried and emptied and killed, brought in guilty in every regard, then, being led into the everlasting way, he is led into the righteousness of Christ. O what a way that is to walk in; dear friends, what a way that is to walk in. God as your Friend, Christ your righteousness; the Spirit, your teacher. You walk up and down in His Name; there is plenty of room in it. Now nobody will go to heaven but by this everlasting way.

"Lead me". You cannot find Him yourself, but the Spirit is given to reveal it, to teach it, to open it. O how I wish for you dear friends, that this blessed everlasting way may be the way, may be the way the Spirit of God may lead you. Now I pray for you on my bed; I have mentioned most of you perhaps by name, and this has been it - Lead them into this way; bring them into Thy righteousness. There, and there alone, you will find acceptance; acceptance in the Beloved.

Then in this way there is that which Hart speaks about - "He lines it out with blood". "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" My friends nothing else will cleanse us. Our unrighteousness will stick to us and condemn us and plunge us into the second death if we be not cleansed from all unrighteousness by the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. That is the way everlasting. "Lead me in the way everlasting".

In this way also is the way of life and teaching by the Holy Ghost. Ah there is no knowing good without Him; there is no knowing good without the Spirit. He is sent; He is given; He proceeds from the Father and the Son and the Son said of Him - I will send Him and He will teach you. "He shall guide you into all truth". He shall be a Spirit of life, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life". He shall spring up in faith, that blessed grace that lives and labours under load, though damped it never dies.

"Lead me" says the Psalmist. He had been searched and tried

He had found himself in the presence of omnipotence. He said "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me". Whither he went, whither he was, there was God. Then he said "Search me". Thou hast searched me, Thou hast known me, my down-sitting and my up-rising and my thought afar off. Then he says "Lead me". I have run hither and thither, I have reasoned, I have objected, I have felt enmity, I have rebelled against Thy omnipresence, Thy omnipotence. I have been as a fool, as a beast before Thee. I have quarelled with Thy justice; I have reasoned and I stumbled in my reasoning. Now Lord, O I am tired of this; I have no rest in my reasoning; I have no rest in anything in this world. Jewels to Thee are but dust, there is nothing here that I can rest in. "Lead me"; take me Thou divine Spirit, take me and lead me in the way of everlasting life.

"Lead me" first to Jesus Christ; lead me to the cross. As I cannot know my heart, cannot fathom its wickedness, its deceit, its hypocrisy and vileness, O lead me to that cross whose light, whose life, whose glory are unfathomable, yet knowable. Lead me to that cross where I may see the Father punishing His Son, see the curse poured out; where I may see the Son of God willingly suffering, giving up His life; where I may read my name; where I may believe that the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me. Lord lead me in the way everlasting. Perhaps some of you are wandering in the wilderness where there is no way; you do not know where you are. You know, it may be, that you are not living a life of faith on the Son of God; you know, it may be that you are not fit to die. You have got guilt on your conscience; you have got sin in your thoughts; you are poor creatures, distraught, troubled. You know these things and you are wandering. Unbelief takes you away from God; unbelief hardens your heart against God; unbelief stops prayer, stops mouth-gate as Bunyan speaks in his Holy War. You are wandering and you do not find any way of escape. I find no way, no way of

escape. The wrath to come may be before you; the grave may be opened to your view sometimes; death has a sting in your conscience; you would flee from it if you could. Now what do you do in this distress? Do you call upon the Name of the Lord? They did of old, they cried unto the Lord in their distress, in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses and He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation. What was the right way, but Christ? What was that right way, but Christ crucified? No other way. I have tried to preach this to you for many years. It was 53 years ago last Lord's Day (it was the 12th of the month then) that I occupied the pulpit as a supply for the first time. If I live till the end of September next I shall have completed 52 years as the Pastor but I cannot look on it sometimes because I am ashamed of the shortcomings, the slothfulness, the pride, the deadness, the lack of seeking God's glory, which have marred my ministry. Yet I would not deny that God has been good and made some little use of me, blessed be His Holy Name.

Now this is what I have wanted to say to you. Lead me, lead you, O ignorant though we be it wont hinder us if that be our prayer, lead me in the way everlasting. May we believe what often I have said here - ignorance is no bar; sin is no bar; guilt is no bar. Come with them; come to Me. To Me The Father committed all rule and authority and all power. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". Rest; Ah nobody knows it till they get it; what it is. O, when there was nothing between God and my soul; communion with God is an amazing mystery and mercy and God gives it to the worst of men; that is to His praise and glory.

Now dear friends, I have no strength to say more. I am thankful I trust to have been strengthened to come once more, and I hope it may please God still to strengthen me. I am here this morning, disobeying two doctors, each independent of the other, neither knowing that the other had said to me, you must not think of going to a service before the beginning of July, but I am here, and I hope to be here again before July, and pray the Lord

may be with me. I would thank Him for giving me the help He has done during nearly three months of absence from you and on the whole, from what I have been told, you have kept together. God grant that you may still do that. Pray for me; pray for one another. O what need we have to pray one for another. What need we have of love one to another. If God so loved us we ought to love one another, says the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle John, and in this we keep His commandment if we love one another. "This is a new commandment that I give unto you that ye love one another." Members of the church and gracious souls in the congregation look on each other with love. Do not expect to find perfection, but look for grace. There is plenty in me to offend, but look at what I trust is the grace of God. You may be saying and doing things that I do not agree with, but look at the grace of God and walk according to that. May the Lord in His great mercy help us. Now you will understand, dear friends, why I leave the chapel early. I would like to speak to you but this illness has so shattered my nerves that I cannot do it, so you wont take it amiss if I quietly leave, wishing you the best of blessings, even the presence and love and goodness of God in Jesus Christ.

AMEN.