

THE PRAYER OF THE DESTITUTE

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 1.12.1926

"But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord: in
Thee is my trust: leave not my soul destitute."

Psalm 141, verse 8

Some of the changes which the Lord's people experience are painful. Sometimes they come suddenly. Clouds obscure their prospects, corruptions threaten them, the absence of God perplexes them, old sins rise up and pain their eyes and hearts and they cry and shout and even then they feel that their prayer is shut out. Nay, they find themselves prayerless, as hard as stone and this kind of change is both perplexing and painful and sinking, bringing the soul down to feel there is much more sin than grace. Yea, it may come to that, there will be a question whether there is grace. The scriptures mercifully do not leave us without some guide in cases of this sort, some description of such cases, a delineation very particular, in some cases, so that when the description meets the eye, the soul says there is hope and God may say "There is hope in thine end" We have in this Psalm a poor man oppressed and troubled, a man who cannot do without God, but seems as if left of God, who needs a defence and lacks it, who is to his own apprehension as one who is just broken, dead, with his bones scattered. "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth as one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth." Utter confusion and death are thus set forth in these words. Bones scattered at the grave's mouth, not even decently interred, but just scattered about and you feel perhaps in your own soul something like that sometimes, as one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. There is nothing could forbid and no one to forbid the destruction, the havoc wrought in this case. The child of God may for a time, not know what to do. Where he is is a perplexing question to himself. What is to be the end of this exercise, or perhaps lack of exercise, what is to be the issue of the temptation and the scattering and the breaking to pieces, he cannot tell. Recent experiences are just shut out from his view but he painfully remembers them, past sins rise up and he looks at them, indifference, hardness of heart, lack of zeal for the glory of God, idleness of

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hands respecting his soul's welfare, All these things rise up before him and he may say "Was there ever any work of the Holy Ghost here or was my religion in the beginning of it vanity and were the experiences which I thought came from the Holy Ghost only imagination?" If any of you ever get, and I should think some of you do, into such a state, you will appreciate, in a spiritual way the text "But mine eyes, destitute though I am, mine eyes, confused as I am, and scattered in my thoughts and my experience, mine eyes are unto Thee O God the Lord." One thing temptation has not done; it has not made an infidel of you. One thing temptation and scattering have not accomplished, they have not turned your eyes entirely away from God. O what a mercy it is to be a believer. You perhaps would give a world, if you had it, for a grain of faith, but the grain must be given, an increase of it must come from heaven, and its victories must be given also. One of its victories is to look to God in the midst of your confusion, to seek His face when you are like a dead, scattered thing. I must say I believe this is one of the victories of faith that overcomes the world, the world in you, the world about you. If you are not exercised in this way, of course, you wont be able to follow me but any one of you who may be, or may have been, exercised like this, you may say, well we painfully understand and also you will feel that this is a great mercy to be a believer. O to say, I believe in God, to say I believe in grace, sovereign grace. To say I believe in Jesus Christ who suffered death, gave His life a ransom for many. O to say in your heart before the Lord - Lord I believe there is balm in Gilead for my loathsome disease, there is a physician who, if He will but take the case up, can heal me perfectly. Hold fast to that; mind that great point. It is great indeed to be a believer, a believer when everything says there is no God, or seems to say so, when all that you look at in yourself should seem to say "There is no God, at least He does not take any notice of you" Then to be able to say to Him "Mine eyes are unto Thee Lord" Through the clouds I would look to Thee, through the confusion I would come to Thee, with the death, with the loathsome disease, with all the scattering of my experience, I come to Thee, for this is implicit in the word, "Mine eyes are unto Thee" who else can do us good? To whom shall we go but to Him who has the words of Eternal life? What other throne could avail us? What other plea can we make but that of Jesus, the name which is above every name? Hart exhorts us well. He says "Look to Jesus, kind as strong, mercy joined with power." He is the good physician; He set forth by His life on earth, going about doing good and healing all that had

need of healing, what He would do in His church; He would heal the sick. He was sent for this - to bind up the broken hearted, to heal wounded sinners, to have the lame, the maimed, the halt and the blind brought unto Him. He has but to look on the case and say "Be whole" and it is done. Therefore O poor distracted saint, a bigger sinner perhaps today than ever, in your own apprehension, if your eyes are up unto God, the end must be well, must be. Whoever trusted in the Lord and was put to confusion, but there is this to be said in this going to God, you will flee in the face of reason and every feeling that you have. Sins will bar the way; infidelity will say it is no good, there is no God to go to. A hard heart will tell you that you are not fit to go to Him, that if you speak, you wont speak feelingly, for your heart is hard, but notwithstanding all this, you will have to do it. God will give your little faith power to go to Him so as you will walk in this word "Mine eyes are unto Thee" and though it would be very hard for you to believe it in such an experience as this there is a fixedness here. You could say perhaps, in a certain way - my heart is fixed. I am driven, but I am not willingly going this way. I am not a willing slave. I want to be what I am not, and I want to get rid of what I have. I would be with the Lord. Then you can say "My heart is fixed" Fixed, not on the world. God has drawn us from the world for a good many years from time to time. Faith in us, though feeble, has overcome the world again and again. The heart is not fixed there, not fixed on getting wealth, nor fixed on enjoying things here below, not fixed on long life that we may see good and many days, not fixed that way; would like to be submissive to God's will in all outward matters, but fixed for salvation, fixed for justification, fixed for Jesus Christ, fixed on the Lord. Many influences come to draw the eyes away, many false voices in your heart which you can hardly discern from good voices. Many Lo here and Lo there is Jesus Christ, many deceivers and anti-Christ's are in the world and they get very near to us if not within us. They get very near to us and all of them move in one direction and to one end and that is to divert the gaze of the soul from the Lord Jesus. Therefore in the midst of the conflict, it is a great thing to say this "Mine eyes are unto Thee O God the Lord" Do not think it is a little thing if you can pray. One of the greatest mercies in this world, in the heart of a sinner is the spirit of grace and of supplications and there is such power in it that it, as it were wings its way to heaven. The spirit of grace cannot live on the earth, cannot live with the earth, but wings its way to heaven, because its home is

there, its origin is there, its health is there, its end is there, in God. Bless God for one breath of prayer; thank Him for the least grain of faith in the soul and the feeblest motion of heavenly life. Though scattered, I look to God, the Psalmist says; though as a dead creature, I look to Him. Mine eyes look to Him; I go to Him, His blood, His righteousness, His grace, His salvation, the cleft rock, here, here, would I be. All this would I experience. Well, that is the first thing in this text. The eyes are on God but they are often on another object which yet does not take them from God in a true and proper sense. The other thing is, we look on ourselves, and of all the sorry, miserable, distressing, gloomy, wicked things, there is no other so bad, so gone, as depraved nature, the root of every wrong thought, of all disloyalty to God, the source of everything that is evil, and we look at this. If you can look back on your lives and not be sorry, ashamed, and confused, I think you must be, even if a child of God, in a bad state. O it is a sad thing to look on a depraved heart and to look on a depraved life. Men have not seen this depraved life, but we have seen it, we have lived it. I have lived it. I know what Dr Watts meant, what he felt when he said - past offences pain our eyes. O the evils, the idols, the unbelief, the saying with the sluggard a little more slumber, a little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. O the dreadful evils of a fallen nature, working, wriggling, lusting, striving, claiming indulgence, but for all that we can say, we do say to Him at times, mine eyes are unto Thee, the Rock of my salvation, the ground of my hope, my plea before God, the ground on which I would ever stand, mine eyes are to Thee. God keep them there; He only can, God keep them on Himself. In Thee is my trust. Where else can you trust, on whom else can you depend? Who can meet your case, take away your rags and give you a beautiful robe of righteousness? Who can help you against your helplessness which is the power of sin in you? Who can lead you in a path that is safe? Who can supply the needs of your souls as well as of your bodies? Who can help you to say In the Lord have I righteousness and strength and who can wash away the dreadful pollution of sin and take away the guilt of it? Only the Lord. He fills heaven and earth to His people's gaze, to their souls. His kindness attracts them; His lovingkindness will not let them sink into despair. The dying lamb utterly forbids despair to all who love His name. Why dear friends, what could keep us out of the pit of despair if we had not this one person to look to and trust in. There is nothing between us and hell save Jesus Christ, nothing between us and black despair but His precious

salvation. We may say this quite easily but to enter into it, to feel a hell of sin in your heart, the power of it moving you and driving you and urging you in wrong ways and things, O then to trust the Lord alone, then, then to keep the field and never yield, but firmly eye the Saviour, this, this is faith, will conquer death, and overcome the devil. Well, you can say this cannot you? Are not there here some who often have conflict and who, in the conflict, come to this point "In Thee do I trust" No arm but His can sustain us; no fulness but His can supply us; no salvation but His can save us. Therefore, this is the one thing, the one thing needful, What a favour it is to believe in a good God. What a favour it is to lean on the plank, the breaking ship, and to believe, notwithstanding that you must suffer the shipwreck of death as to your body, there is a getting safe to land. O what a blessing it is to have a little faith, as a grain of mustard seed, which will grow in your heart and grow so as that you will say "In Thee O Lord is my trust." Now though it is very hard to go as a living sinner instead of a living, comfortable, saint, though it is very hard to struggle to get at God through the mazes of your sin, and very difficult to look to Him when mountains of guilt are between your soul and the Divine Majesty, yet faith will not give in, never. God has given it that life and that power that will never be overcome. Tried, indeed, but overcome, never will this faith be. "In Thee do I trust" That, sooner or later will bring God down from heaven. That, in Jacob, had power over the angel and prevailed and have not some of you had power over the angel and prevailed? Have you not said to Him solemnly, I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me and has He not honoured it and He will again and again. Therefore, trust in Him; He will not deceive you, though there be clouds between and difficulties. Trust in Him and He will honour it. And having made this humble profession, having protested to the Lord that his eyes were unto Him and that he put his trust in Him, now he has a petition. He has got as it were to the Lord. Now, he says, Lord I have one petition; I present it to Thee. I have no help in myself, I have no riches, no goodness, but this one thing I desire, leave not my soul destitute. A great petition; it covers a great deal of ground my friends - leave not my soul destitute. The marginal reading is make not my soul bare. Do not leave me to those who are hacking my soul and as it were just splitting it up as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. Lord, do not leave me to them. They lift up their axes and hammers and they cut the carved

work of the temple away, but O let not my soul, let not my life be at their mercy. Set a limit to their evil works as Thou didst set a limit with respect to Job; only his life, do as you will as to some things, but touch not his life, and this is what it comes to. You have to go as a sinner and I believe it is a hard thing, especially when you are getting old in a profession. Leave not my soul destitute. Lord, I have nothing more to depend on in myself than I had when first Thou didst begin with me and I can see this O God that if left for a little time I am stripped of all the sweet things I have ever had; the comfortable visits of Thy face, the gracious looks Thou hast bestowed on me, the merciful gifts I have had at Thy hand, the repentance and the hope and the comfort, and the access and the promises and the admonitions, these, as to their influence, have gone and I am a poor sinner. Very humbling this, very mortifying to a proud heart to be in this destitution to the end of a long profession but we must come to it.

Now a few words on this point, only a few, there is much in it. First of all then, leave me not destitute of Thy word. Now the word of God is that by which He begets His children by which He discovers to them Himself and His glories. The word of promise, of precept, the word of faith, the word of Christ, the word of forgiveness, the word of justification. Leave not my soul destitute. Now a light-hearted professor may say but you have got it. True, in the scriptures, and may we ever hold it. Never give this book up. Dear friends, may it be given to us as a people to cleave to the scriptures. Never give up the Bible. This is to be the guide of our youth. By taking heed to this we shall cleanse our ways. This is to be the lamp, the girdle, the sword. This is the very word of the Living God, and the more we take heed to it, reading it, the better it will be for us but if it be only in the letter, O to have an empty heart with respect to the word of God, what a solemn thing. The psalmist said in one place - my meditation of Him shall be sweet. Now in the night watches he found himself exercised, waiting for God. If you in the night watches find your hearts empty of God's word, nothing comes to you, mischief in your mind, in your thoughts, running forward to the days that are to come, which you may never see, to the troubles you may never experience, to the joys you may never feel. Oh the gadding of unbelief, the gadding of a bad heart. Now if you get a word of God, if He drops some passage into your mind, if He brings you into that which seemed to me today to be peculiarly

glorious, if He should say as in His prayer to His Father, Christ said "And the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given them and they have known surely that I came out from Thee", what a word! How rich we are if we get a word from Christ. How full the word is, full of heavenly meaning, very little of which we have entered into. Full of gracious power by which, in some measure, we have overcome sin and the world and the devil, Full of a good prospect, because the word of the Lord endureth for ever. May we not be destitute of this. It is a sad experience to wake up in the night and find emptiness of God and His word. Not able to find Him. Not able to think of anything that is good, but just driven with the wind and carnality, to where your soul does not want to go. Leave not my soul bare, or empty or destitute of holy scripture. Make use of the Book as much as you can but may the Lord give the word in power. Leave not my soul destitute of the Holy Ghost. This matter can never be exaggerated. The beginning of all gracious experience He is, for He is the Spirit of Christ. May we ever remember that the Holy Ghost is a Person in the Godhead, equal with the Father and the Son and that in the covenant of grace His position is equal to the position of the Father and the Son, that His position in the covenant of grace is necessary as is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came to give His life a ransom for many, and He sends His Spirit to convey that life. Jesus brought in an everlasting righteousness and He sends His Spirit to bring that righteousness into a sinner's heart, so what a wonderful Person in the covenant of grace is the Holy Ghost. What is our experience when He is absent as to His operations? Is it not that we are just driven, helpless things, like a leaf driven of the wind? Are we not carried away from God by our iniquities? Does not unbelief prevail? Hardness of heart, does not that come? Ingratitude and all sorts of evils. Kneel down to pray, O the confusion, the utter confusion, Read the scripture, just the same, utter confusion, inattention. I need not dwell on the negative side. The Lord give us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to make us free from the law of sin and death; the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; the Spirit to seal us unto the day of redemption, to bring us to answer in our soul's experience to that word in the Song 'A garden enclosed, a spring shut up is my sister. A spring sealed, shut entirely up

to the Lord. This is only possible where the Holy Spirit is; the Spirit, as the earnest of our inheritance, bringing out of that full inheritance which we have as we believe in Christ, something to supply our present needs. Our present needs are great. Need of power, of life, of light, of influence, of instruction, of guidance, and all these needs have to be supplied out of that inheritance, so when He brings the supplies, He is the earnest of our inheritance and the Spirit is a witnesser, a witnesser of Christ, bearing witness of Him in the soul and a witnesser of the sinner's union, and relationship, sonship. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Leave not my soul destitute of the graces of the Spirit. Faith, that great grace. Faith that credits contradictions, that separates us from the world; faith that lays hold of the Lamb and brings salvation into the heart; faith that holds fast by the atonement and that struggles to receive more than ever has been as yet received out of the fulness of the Lord Jesus. Faith that believes all is settled though so much remains to endure, that believes heaven is sure though hell may be very near, working in the mind. Everything that you get that is comfortable you get more or less directly through the power and the workings of faith in your souls. God has put this very high honour on faith; He has given it its great work in the soul; a work which He is not unrighteous to forget. He honoured it in the woman "O woman great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt" He honoured it in Jehoshaphat who, before going out to battle, set singers in the front of the army to sing of the mercy of the Lord which endureth for ever. He honours it my friends, wherever it is, He greatly honours it. Seek the owning of God in your souls; this is the victory and God owns it. This faith overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil. We need this faith. We need the Spirit of hope in us. The God of hope, the object of hope, is also the blessed worker of hope, the grace of hope in the soul; that hope that saves us. We are saved by hope. The grace of repentance - the stronger your faith, the greater your repentance. The livelier your hope, the more sweet will be your living and getting at the footstool of mercy and denouncing self, renouncing sin and everything else. Hope is a good hope through grace that the Spirit gives. Blessed be God for a little hope and love also; Love that is not

offended with Christ. Blessed is he whosever shall not be offended in Me. A meek and quiet spirit, a teachable spirit that does not say "I know, I know" that says rather "That which I see not teach Thou me" If you see a man wise in himself and in his own conceit you may conclude that he is not under divine teaching. A man who thinks himself wise, is a very foolish man and there is more hope of a real fool than of him. O what a mercy it is to have a teachable spirit, that will make you say "That which I see not teach Thou me"; a meek spirit that will make you just a little child, answering to the Lord's word "Except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom." A spirit of submission to the will of God when you are afflicted, a spirit to receive the punishment of your sins, to say - O it is sweet to say it in your heart - Lord I accept this trouble, I accept it, I accept it. You could not be in a more healthy place. You might have more joy, but you could not be in a more healthy place, than when in affliction you can accept what the Lord has sent to you. It may come very near you, very, very near, and the sweeter it is then when you can say that I accept it Lord. Rebellion says - I wont have it. It says so. Yea, it charges God with foolishness and unkindness but faith says He is right. Hope says all will come out well. Love says He cannot be unkind and then the sinner says Lord I accept it. Leave not my soul destitute of these things and one or two other petitions I will name. One is this - it may not seem much to some of you, but it is much to me. Leave not my soul destitute of godly patient friends. You have got plenty you may say, some of you, of yourselves, you have got plenty. When I was a young man I distinctly remember, I have often remembered it with shame and pain, saying, if I can get a friend I can keep him. How sorry I have been for saying that; how ashamed I have been for saying that. It may not seem much to some of you but now this is with me, keep my friends for me, do not let me wantonly offend them or pain them, do not leave me to shame them but keep them for me. They are kept if God keeps them for you; He keeps their love. If He keeps their patience for you so that they are indulgent, and they are kind, notwithstanding all your imperfections, that will be well. Do not think you can keep them and if you had them about thee they might be just as unwise, as insulting, as were Job's misunderstanding friends. Your friends might accuse you of hypocrisy as his friends accused him. Leave not my soul

destitute of godly friends. Leave not my soul destitute of the means of grace. Lord keep me among Thy people. Do not let me go where, or be driven where, or be deceived into going where I shall not have the means of grace. O if we could prize more what God has put into our hands, if we could more value His gifts in this way. He could soon strip your friends. He could soon strip us of these. There is coming a day, and some of you may know it, be in it, we all may, when there will be a famine, not of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of God, and then men will walk all over the world as it were from north even to the east seeking the word of the Lord and not be able to find it. Do you find His goodness in the means? Value them. Pray over them, seek the Lord's mercy to continue them to you and do not offend Him by neglecting them. We never know, if we are left to self, we could not say how and in what particulars we shall offend the Lord. O to be kept from offending Him wilfully. O to be kept from turning aside from the words of wisdom and from turning aside from those gifts which He has put into our hands and into our lives and in some cases into our hearts. It was a solemn charge that you have in the Psalm, of Israel - Neither were they thankful. Plenty of mercies - no gratitude. God save us from that. Now one word and I close. Leave not my soul destitute of persevering grace. Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe. Hang there in all your destitution and weakness and disposition to leave the throne of grace and to be offended with a chastening God and Father. With all that, hang there. Leave not my soul destitute of grace to hold on my way, grace to cleave to the Lord Jesus, to kiss a chastening hand and accept what the Lord sends. Grace never to be offended with the dear Saviour. Kind and good He is; base we are. The Lord keep us from turning away from Him. Now may these few observations made in simplicity be of use to us if it please the Lord. May this prayer, if suitable to us, be in our hearts. Leave not my soul destitute.