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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 8 August 1920

Psalm 146 v 5 and 6

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob
for his help, whose hope is in the
Lord his God: which made heaven,
and earth, the sea, and all that
therein is: which keepeth truth for ever"

We are told in the third verse not to put our trust in princes nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. And this cuts off every help outside God, a truth never welcome to the natural man, but most welcome to a gracious soul, to living faith. "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him". And it does look like foolishness to the natural man to pass by all creatures, all substances, all fountains, all mountains, all wisdom, all human resources and just, by precious faith, hang on God in His Son, and in His naked promise, and believe that all appearances to the contrary, and all impossibilities are as nothing to God. "Put not your trust in princes". However high you may look, put no trust there. Build no nest in any tree, not the highest, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help. Whatever good intentions and kind thoughts the son of man may have, God, unless He will use him as a means, won't let you find help in him. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts, evil thoughts by which you would be harmed if he could do what he thinks; his kindly thoughts by which you might be benefited if he could carry out his kind intentions, these perish alike. Can any of the vanities of the Gentiles give rain? Can the heavens give showers of themselves? We are very apt through our sin to look to the earth and when we do, then God is pleased to let us see dimness of anguish and darkness. Nothing better, nothing more hopeful than that. The more the eye of a child of God is fixed on the earth, the creature, God will break it to him that he may put his trust in the Lord. O how miserable is your state,

those of you who put your trust in the son of man, in yourself or any other creature. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man and that maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord." When you look to an arm of flesh you look to weakness itself. In doing so you provoke the Lord to break that arm or to paralyse it. It shall not be to you what you expect and look for. But happy is he - though he may be weak and wretched in his condition - "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help".

We will, as the Lord helps us, first of all say a few words about the God of Jacob. He is worthy of all attention dear friends, this good God. And first of all the God of Jacob is revealed as the God of love. "Jacob have I loved" and that, not when Jacob was good, obedient, truthful to his father, doing that which was right in the sight of God, but according to the record, when he was at the worst, a deceiver of his father, a liar. Think of it. And he was driven from his home to escape the vengeance of an outraged brother whom he had personated. And on his journey night came and he laid him on the ground and took stones and made a pillow for himself, and he slept - conscience did not disturb his sleep - and God came to him. O the kindness and love of God. He never acts as we act. He has another principle, an end in view. We are attracted to that which is pleasing to us. We are repelled by what is objectionable to us. God goes to the most repulsive people, goes to the dead and the loathsome, and says to them "live". He goes to a guilty Jacob and says, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the ground whereon now thou art lying, all this land I will give unto thee, and I will be with thee in all places wheresoever thou goest, and I will not leave thee nor forsake thee till I have performed all that I have spoken to thee of. This is the God of Jacob. God goes to people He loves, He speaks to them, and this may be a good test for us. Did He ever draw near to us? Were we in guilty trouble? Were we, in a sense, homeless, exposed to death, fearing death, and did we, in that condition, in that case, find God coming to us, speaking to us of heavenly things, while we were looking for hell? Telling us of love when we were expecting hatred, of mercy when we looked for judgment? God does visit sinners. He is a God of love and I am sure of this if He loves you the day is coming, if it has not yet come, when He will come to you and speak to you and speak mercy to you, amaze you, humble you,

get a Name for Himself, and a place in your heart, and be to you as real as He was to Jacob and speak to you as truly, not in the same manner perhaps, not with the like clearness, but in the same reality. "My sheep hear My voice". They all know it sooner or later. They know the voice of their Lord. Every child of God is drawn out of the world into a wilderness and there the Lord appears to him and speaks to him, and makes a covenant with him, and promises to be with him in all places, all the difficulties of his providence, all the perplexities of his providence, all the ups and downs and dangers and privations and troubles that may come in the way. In them, and by means of them, God speaks to people, to His loved people. And so Jacob went on. He had the convoy of love, he had the covering of love, he had the protection of omnipotence, he had the guidance of infinite wisdom. The God of Jacob was with him, surrounding him, hovering over him, sustaining him, and all the ten times that Laban changed his wages, God was with him, turning his losses into gains. And when the time arrived for Jacob to go back to his father's house and to his country, he did not go without divine direction, and if we have the God of Jacob for our God we shall not be always, if at all, left to move without direction. Some way, in some time and manner, God will say "This is the way walk ye in it". We ought to be careful of changes. We may, by unwary, hasty steps, go into trouble. Be very careful of changes my friends. But if you go with God then you are safe. If you go before Him you go into darkness and you know not at what you stumble. And it is a solemn thing to walk without God. But when Jacob was to go home, this was the word - Return to thy father's house and to thy country and I will be with thee. It shall be well with thee. I will order thy steps. And so Jacob starts again. He steals away. His natural character seems to be constantly coming up and asserting itself. He steals away and Laban runs after him. Then God's love comes between him and Laban and God says to Laban speak neither good nor evil to Jacob. And so a covenant is made between them and Galeed is set up and Jacob goes on his way. And soon, as he is coming near to his country, he sends messengers and a present to Esau to pacify, but the messengers come back and say, Esau is coming to meet you and there are 400 men with him. The record does not tell us about Esau's intention, but we may conclude that he had no kind intention. It did not need 400 men to witness a case of reconciliation and of peace. But Jacob had God with him. God came to him and taught him to pray,

came to him and wrestled with him. And in the power of that wrestling of God with Jacob that was communicated to Jacob's faith, Jacob said - when the Lord said "Let me go for the day breaketh" - "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me". There comes a time when a man's name is changed. He is made a prince. A child of God is made a prince, a beggar is made a prince, a poor creature who has been cleaving to the dust and sitting on the dunghill is made a prince. He has power over the Angel and he prevails. Did you ever get prevalence with God? Did you ever get prevalence with God? Some time of peculiar trouble, some time of pressing want, and God came to you and laid hold of you and, by laying hold of you, communicated power to you to lay hold of Him. And see the issue. Said Jacob to Esau - "I have seen thy face as it had been the face of God". He looked for a frown and there was a smile. He expected a sword and there was a kiss. Jacob's God was with him; Esau's mind is changed, no sword is drawn. This was Jacob's God. He wrought for His servant. After a time famine takes Jacob down into Egypt, and there his seed is. But before Jacob died he left a testimony. He said the Angel had redeemed him from all evil. He said "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." He gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his fathers. All this shows what a God Jacob had. A most eventful life, many dangers attending it, many privations by night and day, but with all these things one thing was with him. The presence of God was with him. The Angel of the Lord redeemed him from all evil and he could say, "I have waited for Thy salvation O Lord." Does Jacob's God appear beautiful to you? Is He glorious in your eyes, and do you pant to have Jacob's God for your God? Would you fain say - This God is my God for ever and ever. He shall be my guide even unto death. Do you, by precious faith, close in with this God? O what a God He is. Some of us can say

Thus far my God has led me on

The Angel has redeemed me from all evil. I have never had a want that He has not supplied. When I have been in danger, in some sea, He has sent from above and taken me, drawn me out of many waters. When I have been tempted to sin He has prevented me with the blessing of goodness, and when I have thought I should die of want He has kindly rebuked me and sent supplies. O what a good God we have, my beloved brethren. What a God we have. Well may we say, some of us have

said,

Depart from Thee 'tis death, 'tis more
'Tis endless ruin, deep despair

And the sinner who has this God for his God is here declared to be happy because this God helps him. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help". He needs help. You will always need help. If you say your mountain stands strong and you will never be moved, it won't be long before you say "Thou didst hide Thy face and I was troubled". You will need help my friends. You will be in heaven before you need no help from God. Now what is the help that God gives? First of all it is the help of His Spirit. Let us put the Spirit's work first. The first moving is on God's part. I said unto thee "live". And all through it is the Spirit's work. He comes, He breathes, He teaches, He leads, He reproves, He rebukes, He comforts. He shows us our need, and then shows us the fountain of supply; our weakness, and then brings the strength of Christ's grace; our blindness and then shines in His own glorious light; our emptiness and then discovers the fulness of Christ. It is the Spirit's work my friends. He all the motion gives by springs of fear and love. We do owe every gracious feeling, every heavenly thought, every warm feeling of love, every bright shining of God within us, to the Holy Spirit. All knowledge of Christ, all access to the throne of grace, we owe to the eternal Spirit. All the feelings we have about Christ's glory, and cleaving to Him, and begging of Him to be with us, and asking that He would give to us the glory we see Him to possess, and which He gives to His people, we owe to the Spirit. That beautiful passage in the Romans, to which I have often called your attention, let me do it again and speak a word about it. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:....." We are too ignorant. If you pray for 50 years you won't know what to pray for before you go to rest tonight without the Spirit. You will pray, perhaps, naturally but you won't know what to pray for, and you won't get access. You owe everything to the Holy Spirit. He takes hold of faith, He guides faith, He whispers in the heart - Ask for this petition, for that. Lay your case open to the Lord. He helps our infirmities, He comes alongside of us with the burden of sin that we have, and the trouble and the

perplexity, and the necessity and distress, and takes hold of us, as it were, and on the wings of His own omnipotent love He carries us to the throne of God's heavenly grace. What a good thing it is to be taught of the Spirit. What an infinite mercy it is to be led of the Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." He anoints, He softens, He enlarges, He leads, He teaches. O my dear believers, praise the eternal Spirit, praise Him for every touch, every influence. The sweet soft wind that wafts your souls heavenward comes from Him, and this is a mighty help. It is too much for an unbelieving heart, this is. It is too much for a tempting devil. It is too much for depressing circumstances. It lifts the soul up, carries it upward, to God. May we be observant of this in our souls. Watch the motions of the Spirit dear friends. Open your hearts, watch His sweet influences which you cannot bind and which Satan is not able to deprive you of. Watch these influences. Sometimes a strange softness will come over you, sometimes a singular yielding of yourself to God. Sometimes a peculiar submission to the will of God now bringing you to be nothing but what God would have you be. To be empty where He will have you empty, and weak where He will have you weak and perplexed where He will have you perplexed. How many operations of the Spirit are not obvious in their direction and in their end just at the beginning. But if we are enabled to watch we shall see the trend of them. We shall see that they are in exactly the opposite direction of our own disposals. We shall see that they move us to God. It may often be imperceptible in the beginning. So gentle - Hart speaks of it - is the flame that we, if we take not heed, we may unkindly quench the same, we may my friends indeed. But now as you are helped to look and see if the motion that is on you, the influence that you are sensible of, carries you Godward, if it makes sin filthy and hateful, if it endears the Lord Jesus, if it shows some of His beauty and glory to you, you may conclude that the God of Jacob is helping you. Ah He puts the wind of heaven into the back of a poor sinner who has felt the wind of adversity to be in his face. He puts His holy influence on the soul that has felt the influence of sin carrying it away from God. Happy, thrice happy, is the sinner who gets this help from the God of Jacob. I will tell you one thing you will never experience when you are under these motions, this influence, you will never experience a repulse. There will be no repelling of you, but a greater and a greater and a greater

attraction to the throne of God's heavenly grace. Well, that is one way in which the God of Jacob helps poor sinners.

A second way is this. He helps them by His Word. The Word which He dictated, the Word which fell from the inspired pens onto the sacred parchment, the Word which generally we love, has in it some outstanding passages, that is outstanding to us for they have been made spirit and life in us. One such passage in a lifetime would secure that soul for God and heaven, for the Lord will never, never sever you from the Word he has united to you and you to the Word; never. O, if He has said a word by the Holy Spirit upon your heart that makes you, weak as you may be and feel, it makes you firmer than heaven and earth. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My Word shall not pass away". "For ever O Lord Thy word is settled in heaven". And if you get a word like that from the Spirit you will take it to you as a heritage for ever, and you will find it to be more to you than your necessary food. You will esteem it to be right in all things. "Thy Word is very pure". By it you will have more knowledge than the ancients and be wiser than your carnal teachers. It is a great help if the Lord comes to you in trouble and says "Fear not". If, when you are afraid of want, He comes and says: Thy bread shall be given thee and thy waters shall be sure. If He says to you, when you have some discontented thoughts: "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content for He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". If you are like Asaph wondering why somebody is promoted and you are kept back, if you get the Lord's teaching, then you will be content to forego all honour but that which comes from Himself. It is a great thing to be helped of God by His Word. "He has magnified His Word above all His Name". O what a great thing it is to put your finger on a passage and say, this was given to me, this was made mine, this was made over to me and such and such were the effects of it in my soul at the time, and though I have often forgotten it yet it comes back again and yet again to me. The Lord does help. He helps by reproof, by an invitation, by an exhortation, by a promise. He helps by putting the gospel into your soul and before your eyes as the perfect law of liberty into which you can look and see yourself, in which you continue and see a good God, a great Saviour, a glorious Redeemer, and you continue looking. And sometimes the glory beams on your soul and changes you into its own image. Happy is the man who gets such a

help from His God as the Word made known. The kingdom of God is in power. The Word came to the Thessalonians in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. It helps you to fight the good fight of faith, it helps you against despondency, it helps you to believe that if you are shipwrecked you will get safe to land. It helps you against the corruptions of your nature, it helps you love Christ and hate yourself. It helps you commit your way to Him and to follow Him in every way in which He may lead you. It helps you to be meek and quiet, to be patient and to wait on God for the fulfilling of His gracious word. A word spoken in power has an effect. Blessed be God for this help.

Thirdly the Lord helps in providence. If He empties you in providence in some way, it is a help. It means this "Set your affections on things above not on things on the earth". If He mortifies you in some providential dealings, it means this, you are to have an honour from Himself. If He makes you feel more and more needy, it is for this reason, that He may hear from you the more, the oftener. Providence unites with grace sometimes. Providence brings people to their knees, makes them feel that they are dependent and helps them to depend. If we are enabled to watch God's providential dealings with us we shall never want some interesting object and subject. We shall never lack a subject to look at. Blessed be God if He does help in His providence. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help".

In the next place I would say a word on this happiness. What is it? What is this happiness? Well, first of all it is the happiness of a man's estate. His state is good, really everlastingly good. Subject to changes, troubles, burdens, losses, crosses, afflictions, the man's estate is never affected or altered by them all. "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them to the end". Said He, of Jacob, "Jacob have I loved". I have elected him, he is Mine, and though I shall punish him for his sins, I will go on loving him. The state of a man who has the God of Jacob for his help is a good state. Heaven shall pass away, earth shall be destroyed, but this estate shall know no change. "We", says Paul to the Hebrews, "receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved". He speaks there of things which are shaken and of being removed. He speaks of things

that cannot be shaken and that must remain, and this is one, the changeless condition of an elected person. Loved eternally, loved out of self into Christ, loved out of a broken covenant into a covenant ordered in all things and sure. Loved out of an evil stock and cut out of it and joined into the living Vine. O what a great thing it is to have a good state. Heaven is sure to the man whose state is made good by God, the land of pure delight, the place where there is an undecaying temple in which to worship, a never setting sun in whose light to live, a well tuned harp, an endless song, and power to sing it, the land where Christ is, that blessed Emmanuel's land. And the estate of one who has the God of Jacob for his help is such that this is included in it. Chosen e'er time began, loved though all time and loved into heaven. Happy, O unspeakably happy, is he that hath this good estate made his by electing love, by redeeming grace, by regenerating mercy. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ, the Headship of Christ, the fulness of Christ, the love of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the sanctification of Christ, the heaven of Christ, these make up the good state of the church of the living God. Brethren this is your happiness. The happiness is this that a sinner thus blessed is under the care of his Father and his God as long as he lives. "I will guide thee with Mine eye". I won't let thee go astray, and if thou goest astray I will send after you a correcting rod, I will send after you a swift affliction to bring you back to anchor in My grace, in My love. O it is a great thing to have a good God to watch over us who loves us too well to let us destroy ourselves, loves us too well to withhold the chastening rod, and this some of us know. Blessed be the Name of God He has given to us the great honour of divine chastisement, and turned divine chastisement into a token of His love, into a sign of our sonship. Is not it happy? It may not be comfortable, it is not comfortable often. It is not comfortable to be bereaved of this and that, not comfortable to be rebuked in your conscience, but O the bitter is turned into sweet, the medicine is turned into food, the chastening is turned into good. God is good. We should esteem ourselves happy, as many of us as have not missed the rod, and may we be enabled to praise God for this.

And "happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help" in the issue of all the things that he passes through. Yes, O so blessed is the issue. Look at Jacob who lived 130 years. He went

through many changes, many afflictions, many mortifications, but he came at last to say: The Angel redeemed me from all evil. To say: "I have waited for Thy salvation O Lord". Have not you coveted such an end as that? Have not you thought sometimes of Philpot's characteristic words on his dying bed: "Beautiful, beautiful, it is better to die than to live". "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof" and better is the day of one's death than the day of one's birth. O look my friends, see this, here are poor sinners, groaning, groping, troubled, miserable often, and look at them in heaven. He shall set the sheep on His right hand and shall say to them "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". So may we look at things in the light of God and hope to say: Farewell time, with all its troubles and changes; farewell mortality with all its pains; farewell sin with all its reproach and shame. Welcome eternity, welcome life, welcome sun, that glorious sun that never sets. O happy is he that is in such a case here below to be under God's guidance and protection. Happy is he in his prospect and happy shall he be in the issue of all things. It will be heaven itself. Now I will leave it; may the Lord help us to wait on Him. Just think of what brings up the rear in this text, the first part of which only I have touched. It is "which keepeth truth for ever". What led the van? Love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". What brings up the rear? Divine faithfulness, divine faithfulness that enters into every promise and every dealing of God and every untoward providence, and every pain and all affliction. Faithfulness divine enters into all these things and protects the object and subject of them, and says, touch not his life O devil, touch not his life O trouble. Touch not his life, he is Mine, I bought him with My blood. And I verily think the day will come when all the providences we have gone through, as we may look back on them and remember them, will, as it were, unite with all the comforts we have had and the mercies we have felt and the support God has bestowed and given to us. They will unite to say these came from heaven, these came from love. They had their birth in love and in wisdom. And so they will exhort you to sing: Praise Him, "praise Him fire and hail, praise Him snow and vapour", praise Him all things (Psalm 148 v 8) And then you will say "Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless His holy Name". He has pitied me as a father pitieth his children, and he has forgiven my sins and as far as the

east is from the west so far has He removed them from me. May the Lord, my brethren, help you and help me with you to say this happiness belongs to us. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help".

AMEN.