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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 24 March 1935

Psalm 2 v 6

"Yet have I set My King upon My Holy
Hill of Zion"

This Psalm opens with two vehement, penetrating, searching questions. "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" Rage means tumultuously assembling, gathering together of enemies; the heathen Gentiles, the Herods, Pilate, and other enemies, and they raged against God's King. Why should they? Had God given them reason to be angry with Him? Had He not given some evidence of His invisible things in creation? Had He not always given them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness? Why should they rage? Why should people be angry with God. People - the heathen here, Israel, the Jews. And they imagined many vain things. They imagined that the promised Messiah would come and be a temporal, a delivering Prince. Beside what else, they expected that He would deliver them from the yoke of the Romans. And because He did not answer to these vain meditations concerning His coming, they were angry with Him. They imputed evil to Him; they attributed His miracles to the agency of the devil. Because He ate and drank they said He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. And because he denounced their hypocrisy and unveiled their wickedness, they hated Him, without a cause really. And the Gentiles and Jews in their raging, their assembling and their evil imputations, sought to kill Him. And, in due time, that is God's time, they did that. By wicked hands they took and crucified Him, but it was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Do any of you rise up against Him? Do you rage against Him? He is revealed in the Bible. What do you think of Him? He shows Himself in providence. What do you say about Him there? Why? Have you any reason? No. Had the Jews reason? No. Listen to His appeal to

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them - "What have I done unto you O my people; wherein have I wearied thee, testify against Me." And yet for all that they vainly thought about Him, wickedly thought about Him, and took Him and with wicked hands crucified and slew Him. "The kings of the earth set themselves, the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying - 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.'" They were weary of Him, and so are you, and so am I, after the flesh. "Let us break their bands"; let us crucify Him and get rid of Him. O the infidelity of men, the enmity of men, the bitterness of men. There is no person in this congregation who would not, after the enmity of his nature, if he could, tear God from His throne. You may think I ought not to say that, but I do say it. Every one of us has that bitterness against God about which these words speak. What then? Is God affected by this, weakened by this? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: The Lord shall have them in derision." If a superior of any of you in business, or any relationship, should laugh at you, it would hurt you much, provoke you perhaps. O but if God laughs at you; if having turned a deaf ear to His word, and turned away from the paths of righteousness, your calamity comes, and instead of your praying, your heart is shut up, and God laughs at you, mocks you when your fears come; what an end you will have, if God should mock at your calamity. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex, or trouble, them in His sore displeasure; deal with them solemnly. He dealt with King Saul and with Balaam and with others of whom you read in the Scriptures; troubled them, vexed them, dealt solemnly with them in providence and took them away. Yet for all this, this opposition, this assembling against Him of men, this raging against Him, and this council - the Sanhedrim and all others taking counsel against Him - for all this, "I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion". The world rises up against Him, but He is not turned from His purpose by that. "Yet have I set My King" "My King" means the Son of God had become the servant of His Father in the Covenant and the Father had given Him authority, the possession and the power of a kingdom. First in the counsel of peace this was between them, when Christ was set up in the covenant of grace to be the head of

His body, the church; to be their High Priest. And this Priest is crowned; He sits on His throne, a crowned Prince; a King and a Priest in one. This dates back to the counsel of peace in eternity, when the electing love of God was fixed on Him; when He was chosen out of the people as to His human nature; when He was made the Head of the body, the foundation of the church; the High Priest to make an end of sin by offering Himself. God made Him a King.

Secondly, He is set up in the Old Testament, first of all in Genesis. The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. Revealed to Noah, to Enoch, then to Abraham in whom the promises were - one promise embracing all - "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed". A kingly man, the God Man, in whom all nations shall be blessed. You remember that when Christ joined Himself to the two sorrowing disciples as they walked to Emmaus and were sad, and had sad communications, He reproved them and then began to preach to them, and open to them the Scriptures. "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." And that testimony made their hearts burn, and your hearts and my heart would burn if the same Lord should come and open to us what the Old Testament contains concerning Himself. He is a King set up by God His Father in the covenant of grace, and set up by God His Father and the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, in the promises and prophecies and the types and shadows; All of them set Him forth and set Him up.

He is a King in the third place in His incarnation and His blessed life upon earth. He was a King when He raised the dead; King of death. He was a King when He healed the sick, when He opened the eyes of the blind, when 5000 hungry people were fed with five loaves and a few fishes; Kingly power. I have set up My King; I have chosen Him out of the people; I have exalted Him above all others. He is a King. Ah, He was a King on the cross. How? By dying He slew death; He destroyed death and the devil and all his works and made an end of sin. Brethren, this King whom I have thus briefly spoken of, is set up in other

places. Speaking of Israel, as having destroyed himself, He said "I will by thy King; where is there any other that may save thee". O death, I will by thy destruction; I will plague the grave.

Now if we carefully and prayerfully read the Holy Scriptures, we shall certainly see this King in the particulars I have named and in others. Is this an end of it? No. It comes very close to sinners. He is to be a King in them. That is a kingly promise you have in the Romans. "Sin shall not have dominion over you". I promise it to you. "Ye are not under the law", that provokes sin, "but under grace", that subdues sin. And sin, I promise, shall not have dominion over you. Let us look a little at this as enabled. Christ first of all is King in His people. Second He is a King for them in His holy providence, and third He is a King for them and in them when He destroys death and takes them to be with Himself.

First He is a King in them, and we need His kingly power. One of the first acts of His kingly power in a child of His is this, to give a new heart and a right spirit. It is a work of creation. Every Christian, as such, is a second creation. Christ created the worlds, and He creates His people anew. "Created in Christ Jesus". "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature". There are new creatures here; there are new creatures over the whole world; twos and threes. It should be a matter of gratitude and praise to God from us to believe that even today, bad as the day is and dark, there are people scattered over the world meeting in twos and threes who are new creatures. The old creation remains to plague them, but the new creation is in them, called a new heart, a heart of flesh in place of a heart of stone; opened eyes. He opens the eyes of the blind; the ears are unstopped that they may hear, and they are given hearts of flesh to feel. What an amazing mercy it is to be a new creature, for old things to pass away as to their dominion. Old pleasures to become pain; old pursuits to be forsaken; old desires crushed again and again, and a new heart panting for Him who has given it. A new creation to be supported by Him who is

the author of it. "I will be thy King". No, says human nature, I will not have Thee. "We will not have this Man to reign over us". O but says God "I will be thy King". And He comes and when the new creation is here it breathes after Him and says, as some here have said again and again - "Reign o'er us as King". What has Christ to do as a King in His people? First to wash away their sins. The work of creation, if one may so speak, was little or nothing compared with the removal of sin from a sinner. The removal of sin from a sinner is making him holy, pure, acceptable to God; making him fit to be the guest of God. If we are led to consider this point we may see the greatness of it, the wonder of it, and the glory of it. It is the glory of a King to hide a matter. It is the glory of King Jesus to take away sin and cast it behind His back into the depths of the sea. Kingly power is here. On the cross He slew death; He conquered it. In the heart of an elected, redeemed person, there is that same power exercised, and the King of Glory comes in. It is also an act of omnipotence by our King to constitute a sinner righteous. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Who can make an unjust person just? Only God. Do you rise against it? You will be in hell if you have it not. If you are not constituted righteous by Jesus Christ, you will never be in heaven. "This is the Name wherewith He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness".

He is a King in coming from time to time with certain blessed operations by His Spirit. For example, when one is carried away by some lust, pride, vanity, infidelity, hardness of heart and all manner of evil, is it not the work of a King to come and subdue these dreadful things; to take away these deaths; to bring the subject of them into a nearness to God, a likeness to God, a panting after God, a feeling that none can help, none can save, but this blessed One, Jesus Christ? Ah it was a great thing for Christ to say "I will by thy King. Thou hast destroyed thyself; in Me is thy help". And when the fearing one looks at his iniquities and his self destruction he says what will become of me. He is buried as it were beneath his sins and cannot rise. He is distracted utterly and cannot think quietly till the Lord,

the King, comes and says - You have destroyed yourself; you have dishonoured Me. What next - "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips". Think of it - the offended One saying to the offender take these words and pray them "Take away all iniquity". Perhaps some of you at times look at your whole lives and what do you see? Faults? Yes, worse than faults. Sins, iniquities, uncleanness of every sort and kind; infidelity, hardness of heart, unthankfulness, forgetfulness of God. O, if I were able, I could give a wonderful, black, long, grievous catalogue of sins, but you know them for yourselves. You who are convinced of your sins can fill up for yourselves and you say - O these iniquities. And yet the Lord comes and says to the fearing, sinking, distracted soul - "Take with you words". You do not know what to say; say this. You do not know where to go; turn to the Lord and say unto Him - "Take away all iniquity". Is not that kingly work? Is not that the work of One who has made an end of sin by His death, and will make an end of sin by His grace? He is King here.

He sits as a King in the next place and shows the way, chooses the way. If Christ has chosen our inheritance, is it much, is it too much that He should choose the way to it for us? What would you choose if you had to choose for yourselves? Say you had to choose your own cross, would not it be what William Tiptaft said, a few shavings, yea, perhaps a few feathers? Our King must choose the way, and He describes it in the Scripture. How? Thus - "In the world ye shall have tribulation". This is the way He has chosen; and what with that? Why, He has given a promise - shoes of iron and brass. And the Scripture speaketh thus of the shoes - "the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace". And if you have the gospel of peace in your heart you have got good shoes and you can walk in tribulation. Better walk in a path of trouble than to attempt to walk over burning coals. Better a clean path of trouble than to take pitch into your bosom. O, but none can like this after the flesh. But the Lord gives grace; He is King over all trouble in the soul.

And secondly, He is King in providence. Providence? Well, whether we believe it or not, whether we feel it or not, it is a very serious thing to be a creature and to be living; a very serious thing to be a human being. We were made in the likeness and image of God, and we lost that likeness and that image by sin. "The hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" and they choose it; their own way. There may very easily be a Babel-builder in this congregation now. You would build something that would reach heaven. If God loves you, He will make a Babel of your building. Providence? It is very particular with regard to the Church of God. There is a general providence in the whole world which is implied by the word concerning Christ. "He created the worlds and He upholds them by the word of His power". They are there and His hand, His eye, His power, are exercised constantly. There is a particular providence over the saints of the Most High God. "I chose out their way" said Job (Job 29 v 25) speaking of his early greatness. You may take these words, without violence, and apply them to the Lord Jesus, and He says I choose your way. Yes, He has chosen a cross for you; He has chosen an affliction for you; He has chosen an emptiness for you in some particulars. What then? Nature rebels. There comes a touch of divine power, of heavenly grace and love, and the King is here in that touch, and you say - "Thy will be done". That is wonderful, solemn, remarkable, that you should say from your heart concerning the thing about which you rebelled - "Thy will be done" in providence. What an example we have of this in the Apostle Paul. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh,..... lest I should be exalted above measure". He wanted to get rid of it, that is, he asked the Lord to remove it. The Lord gave him what was better, better in itself and better in the judgment of Paul himself, grace to bear it. "My grace is sufficient for thee". See the effect on the subject of that kingly authority. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me.....When I am weak, then am I strong".

I have set My King, My King. Read in Isaiah of this great

King. "I will make darkness light and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them". In affliction there is room often made by the devil for the devil. He may say in your heart - this is a great evidence that God is against you. Then God may say this to you - "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him". As if the Lord should say - you are not to judge of My heart by these things that are done by My hand. You cannot tell my love for you by prosperity; you cannot tell that I hate you because of adversity. Neither, in itself, can be an interpreter of God's affection and purpose. O when He comes and says "In the day of adversity consider". In the day of prosperity consider. When adversity comes consider. Consider who sent the prosperity, and be thankful. Consider who sent the adversity and be submissive.

This King in the next place is King over death. We must needs die. The time is appointed, the means, the way is appointed. But there is a King.

Till He bids I cannot die
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit

And when the time comes, and soon it may come, what a wonder it will be if we can say from the heart - the day of my death is better than the day of my birth. 'Tis better to die than to live. That is true of every child of God; it will be better to die than to live. What will this King do? Carry you to heaven. "I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion". Who shall dethrone Him? Death is a subject of the King; the grave He plagues and it shall not hurt the child of God but be the safest bed that he ever will repose in. Death is a sweet day to a child of God. He is King over the devil, that foul, violent, deceiving spirit. Yes, as sin rises to plague you, so the devil may come, aiming to destroy you. You will never overcome him by yourself. Your feelings will be sad; your meditation will be often bitter. A poor, depraved creature with a fallen devil, and both together will make sad work with the soul. Yes, but it is not the worst

thing you can have to be tempted. It may seem the worst to you, but it is not the worst thing. There is one awful thing that you may well fear - I often fear it - and that is the deceitfulness of the devil. He knows how to deceive. Who will deceive Ahab for us? A lying spirit came forth and said "I will go". Nothing can be more dreadful in the meditation of a child of God than that, to meditate upon the fearful thing it is for God to permit a lying spirit to come to deceive you. O, my friends, if it ever comes to you to consider this, you will find it work in you, great trembling and fear. The lying spirit, the enemy, will make you quiet about your state, even though you are not satisfied by God that your state is good. A lying spirit; I do not wonder that Toplady wrote

But more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests bursting o'er my head

"Upon My Holy Hill of Zion". What is this? The Church of the living God. Isaiah was inspired to say that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains". High above human imagination; above all human calculation; above all natural religion; upon the top of the mountains. I cannot reach that says one. Listen - "And all nations shall flow unto it". Flow, not fly, nor creep, but flow unto it. What is this? The motion of faith; the life, the action of faith in the soul. Each one says - "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways....." Ways of holiness, ways of truth, ways of life, ways of peace, ways of comfort. "He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths." "I will run" said the Psalmist, "in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart". O sinner, if you get a sight of this high mountain, this holy mountain, you will want to get to it and your faith will flow to it. Notwithstanding all the difficulties that may be apprehended and felt by you, your faith will flow to that mountain. Another figure is used in the Scripture about this movement - "Who are these that fly as doves to their windows?" Who are these that hasten to the Lord Jesus?

Who are these that are willing subjects of the Lord Jesus? Who are these? These happy subjects of divine grace, they shall flow to that high mountain; it attracts people. The law of the house round about is holiness, and I am sure that holiness is an attraction to every child of God. Each one says - I would be holy. Out of a feeling that he is not so, he says - I would be holy. I have set My King upon my holy mountain, my holy hill of Zion. Flow to it, go to it, poor child of God troubled, afflicted, hindered though you may be day by day. Go to it by the movement of faith in the heart and cry mightily to Him. O, but I am at the ends of the earth; I am far off upon the seas; I am afraid of God's tokens; one says. Well, what then? He comes in the night watches; King of the water, walking upon the sea; Kingly power everywhere where He moves; authority in all movements that He makes in the church of the living God. "It is I be not afraid". "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." Did He ask for you? Did He ask for me? Did He look down the long stream of time and see this sinner in Brighton and that sinner and say - I want that one; I want that one? O happy people whom Christ chooses for His inheritance. King of kings. O sinner, whatever comes - you have bitterness, sinfulness, hardness, forgetfulness, temptation of every sort and kind - this King can manage, as you can put your case into His gracious hands. And the end will come when you will say - "Lo, this is my God; I have waited for Him. This is the Lord, I will rejoice and be glad in His salvation."

AMEN.