

Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham,
on Wednesday, evening, 21st September, 1932.

Text: Psalm 25. verse 20.

"O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be
ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee."

Every child of God is brought to agree with the psalmist
in another place, who declares that "A horse is a vain thing
for safety." also with another word, "None can keep alive his
own soul," and with another scripture, "Cursed is the man that
trusteth in man and that maketh flesh his arm, whose heart
departeth from the Living God." Very solemn scriptures and very
solemn it is to prove them, but they must be proved to be really
believed. It is one thing for us to believe in the written
word, this beautiful word, the word of God, which He hath magnified
above all His Name, but if there be only a natural faith in
this word, then we do not really believe in the truths that
are couched in the word, the deep that coucheth beneath, the
Spirit of truth, the intention of the truth. And if we are born
again and are under the teaching of the Spirit, then we know.
We do not think, or imagine, or only naturally believe, but
we know that it is true. "A horse is a vain thing for safety."
We know that the Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man,
that He taketh pleasure in all who fear Him."

This psalm is based on knowledge, knowledge of God. If we
do not know God we shall never understand this Psalm, or any
scripture. The psalmist opens it by saying, "Unto Thee, O God,
do I lift up my soul." He knew God. If you do not know Him you
will never lift up your souls to Him; and on this knowledge
of God is based what the psalmist has to pray for, the profession
he makes concerning God and the petitions he offers.

The text is a very comprehensive one. "O keep my soul." My
soul, Lord, is in danger. I have enemies, and many of them hate
me with cruel hatred. I am in danger of slipping. I am in danger
of infidelity, in danger of apostatising. Lord keep me from
these enemies, from these evils. Every well-taught and exercised
person understands his natural tendency toward apostacy. Every
sin that we commit knowingly, wilfully, has in it the nature
of apostacy. It is turning away from God; and if we turn away
from God, there is only one who can bring us back and that is

the God from whom we turn. We abuse His goodness and we should never never get back if He did not bring us back. What an awful thing is the natural tendency to sin. A tendency that every child of God has some painful acquaintance with, and hence this petition becomes very suitable to all who understand that tendency. It is a strong tendency. It is a vile affection. It is a turning of the eyes unto vanity. It is a looking to cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water, instead of believing in, and turning to a living fountain of water. O, child of God, if you are not sensible of danger, you are in danger. You are in grave danger. One of the greatest mercies we can have is a sense of danger, hourly. God is good to give that sense of danger to us, that we may cry, "O keep my soul." I wish I may be kept to my end from the evils to which I have a tendency in my nature. A tendency is an inclination, and you must know, if you are taught of God, that you have an inclination to sin in some form, and it is a very solemn thing to sin wilfully. The Apostle Paul did not sin wilfully when he said "The good that I would, I do not." His heart was bent to goodness. The tendency of his spirit through faith, was to God, but he could not move in that direction as he desired. He did not sin wilfully when he said, "The evil that I would not, that, my heart is not inclined to, that my will is not disposed to, the evil that I would not that I do." Therefore he could say with understanding, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in my." When you sin, can you say that? Do you discover a real living, moving tendency to God? When evil comes and threatens to destroy you, it is a grand thing to have that God-given tendency, inclination, bent and trend of the mind toward God. When you would have commerce with sin, can you say, "I would not have it. I would have, if I could, communion with God in Christ." When unbelief disposes you to turn away from God, can you say, "I would be near Him, live on Him, live to Him? It is a great thing. May you, may I, be enabled from time to time to press this petition before the Lord, "O keep my soul."

Keep me from unrighteousness. The man that doeth righteousness, taketh hold of it and walketh in the way of it, is the man who shall live; the man who does otherwise, dies. Mark the footsteps of your spirit. Mark the tendency and trend of your hearts. See how you would be, and where you would be, and what society you would have, whether God or the world. "O keep me." Well kept

are the people whom God keeps.

Nobody can keep his own soul. None can keep alive his own soul. Vital religion very much consists in calling on God for help and for teaching and for preservation. The man who trusts in himself is the biggest fool in the world. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." says the word of God, and surely there is no greater folly than to trust a rotten prop, to trust a perverse Will, to trust a depraved nature, to trust in good resolutions. "In Thee do I put my trust," said the psalmist, and may the Lord help us to say the same. All ther sorrows that come to the people of God are morre or less connected with the turning away from the Holy One of Israel.

Keep my soul from infidelity. The world is becoming infidel. The religious world is becoming more and more infidel, and the influence of infidelity is not small. If you go unnecesarily into the world and come in contact with infidelity, you will find there is an influence. Yea, you will believe sooner or later that without grace keeping you, you will become infidels.

"Keep my soul from living in sin." Sin lives in us and will do as long as we live in this world, but what a mercy if we can say we do not knowingly, wilfully, persistantly live in sin. Keep me from sinning. "O", said one, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. Incline not my heart to any evil thing nor to covetousness." What a mercy to be kept in the clean fear of God. You will never knowingly live in sin when the fear of God is in exercise in your heart.

O keep my soul from being satisfied with anything short of Christ in me the hope of glory. Christ in the saints the hope of glory is the great end which God had in view in promising to send His Son. He hid the mystery from ages and from generations, but the day came when He would do it, perform it in Gentiles, even Christ in you the hope of glory. Legal bondage is the opposite of this. Legal bondage turns us into ourselves, is stumbled at every failure, stumbled at every wrong feeling, and says you have no religion worth the having, if you had you would not do that, and you would not do that; but that is legal bondage, you are under the law. All who are under the law are more or less constantly stumbled at what they see and feel in themselves. Having no rest; some of you have no rest, you know that. No rest in self: God won't let you rest there; and no rest in God because

He is not as yet revealed in you as your Saviour. You need to be kept from these stumblings. Look, poor creature, now under the law, at this point, and you will find that I do not half discover it; it is much more than my words, this constant stumbling, it is a stumbling-block. The law chastens you. The law binds you. It tells you what you ought to be and shows you that you are not that. It tells you that you ought to love God and shows you that you do not love Him, and cannot by the law love Him, so that whenever enmity comes, or when you turn aside through ignorance, or when you feel you cannot pray because you have got a hard heart, that is all from the law. It does not say you have no grace, but it does say that you are short in this particular. Though safe you are not sound, you have to go further; and God will lead you I hope; and if it were His will, I would be glad if this should be the favoured time to bring you into liberty, the glorious liberty of the children of God, liberty from the law in the way Paul speaks of in the Romans. He says, "Know ye not for I speak to them that know the law, how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? for the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth." Now the husband is living in you in the law; you are under the law and you are as much bound to it now as the wife is bound to her husband and as long as the husband lives the wife must only live with him. If she leaves him and goes to another, she is an adulteress. God keep you from breaking out into a false liberty; keep you from forming the wrong judgements of God. You often may be disposed to-: that He is not good in making you under the law that you cannot obey. Pray as well as you can for a manifestation of the Lord Jesus, because you feel the law will say you are damned, because you feel the law will condemn you: it is called the ministration of condemnation. The liberty is by Jesus Christ.

O keep my soul at the throne of grace. Ah, we little know what we lose when we are away from the throne of grace. "O keep me praying, Lord." is the language of a living man, "Keep me praying." No man can pray of and by himself as a fallen man and no child of God can keep prayer alive in his own soul. Chastisement of itself will not do it. Only the Spirit can keep a person alive in this particular. Keep me praying, praying without ceasing, praying in the Holy Ghost, praying with all prayer and supplication

in the Spirit, watching thereunto; praying for a manifestation of Christ, as Paul prayed for it for the Ephesians; praying that the cross may not break you but that you may have grace to take it up and follow Christ; praying that the chastisement of the Lord may be a sanctified chastisement; that no chastening being for the present pleasant but grievous, may afterward yield to you, in you, the peaceable fruit of righteousness. O, the benefit of prayer is unspeakably great. The loss we sustain for the lack of prayer we can never reckon up. God keep us praying. Said the psalmist, "I lift up my soul." "On Thee do I wait all the day long." When you believe God can bless you, then you pray that He will bless you. When a man has got the stronghold, that sin can be forgiven, he prays for the forgiveness of sins. When he believes God can do for him what he needs, then, by the Holy Spirit he says, "As the eyes of a servant look unto the hand of his master and the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord, until He have mercy upon us."

"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait." Now what a mercy it is to be kept. What a mercy it is to travel, if I may put it so, to travel on our knees. You will make the best haste then. I have often said it to you, you will make the best haste then. "Come to me." says God, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee." Come to Me with your needs and your weaknesses and your follies and your failings. "Come to Me." "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

Keep me from mixing myself unnecessarily with wrong things, or people. It is not for nothing that God has left it on record that Israel failed terribly when taken into the land of promise, for they did not drive out all the nations, but they sinned in taking the daughters of the Hittites and the Jebusites and so on for their sons, and giving their daughters to the sons of the people they were commanded to drive out. If you mix with wrong things and wrong people unnecessarily, you will do just that one sin and that will be a snare to your souls. My friends, how careless have some of us been in this particular. O, the sad result of our carelessness. Whenever we have commerce with wrong things, then we sin; that is a forsaking of the living fountains of water and hewing to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Once born again, never, never does the soul die, but O, how it dies in respect of the fear of God, and the comforts

of the Holy Ghost, by sin. You who have had experience in this understand what I am saying. You have brought barrenness and bondage and leanness into your own souls by wrong mixing. "Ephraim he hath mixed himself." Hosea vii.8. O, what a sad mixing it was for him.

Keep my soul cleaving by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, said Paul "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now what a standard this is! How short some of us come of it: Christ crucified, Christ's glorious cross, ignominious in the eyes of men natural men, glorious in the eyes of faith. All the attributes, all the blessed things of God are there: the love of God, the forgiveness of sins by God, the justification of sinners by God, the sanctification of sinners by God, the perseverance of saints to the end by God's grace; all, all, you will find in the cross of Christ.

There are many things to bewitch our eyes. "O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth.?" What is it that has bewitched you? Some tinsel, some legal thing just brought to you by a false teacher, a false spirit, a lying spirit, a false gospel. O, foolish Galatians, Jesus Christ was crucified among you. You saw Him. Who has bewitched you? These legal teachers; O, beware of a false spirit. Remember that the scriptures speak of the spirit of truth and of the spirit of error. We may be very much attached, I hope we are really, to the letter of truth in a right way; but we may miss its spirit, and whenever the eyes are turned away from the cross of Christ, then we are bewitched by something. "God forbid," said Paul, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now what can keep our eyes there, our hearts and souls? The Spirit of Christ alone. Only the Holy Ghost can do it, and so suitable is this prayer, "O, keep my soul. Keep me from having my silly heart turned away from the cross of Christ."

O, keep me in my weakness. Thorns in the flesh, afflictions, chastisements make us weak. When Paul sought the Lord again and again for the removal of the thorn in the flesh which was sent to keep him humble, the Lord told him a great truth, even that His grace communicated was sufficient for him and that, had a wonderful effect on his heart. It had a wonderful effect from taking away the pain of the thorn and from removing a desire to have it removed from him. Said he, "Most gladly, therefore, will

I.....glory in my infirmities. (2 Cor.12.9.) You will be more glad to be in trouble with grace helping you, than to be out of trouble without grace. It is better to have affliction with grace than to have no affliction and no grace. Sanctified affliction is far better than unsanctified prosperity. A yoke on your neck may seem to bend you, but grace will straighten you, and help you to walk in the fear of God. O, to be kept in our weakness. "Trust in Him." said good Hart, "and by thy weakness, thou shalt prove that Christ is strong." and Christ is very kind to acknowledge a little strength; He said to one church, "Thou hast a little strength." How glad I was at that word, to think that God should regard a little strength, hardly enough to keep you from fainting, hardly enough to keep you with your eyes on Himself, yet He said, "Thou hast a little". and moreover, He speaks about helping his people with a little help. "They shall be holpen with a little help."(Dan.11.v 34.) We must be weak to prove that Christ is the strength of God. Individual christians must be weak to prove this. Christian churches, gospel churches must be weak to prove the strength of Christ. If we here, as a church, get strong in any other way, we shall sink, but if in weakness we cleave, by the Spirit's power to the Lord and look to Him for strength, we shall stand. Trust in Christ. Look to Him. Go with all the weakness you feel and He will strengthen you with strength in your soul. O, keep my soul then in weakness.

Lord keep me humble. Were you ever painfully aware of the evil of a proud spirit? Was pride of heart ever loathsome to you? Pride shows itself in many ways. One way is a spirit of independence. One way is the drying up of prayer in the soul. Another way is that the scriptures are very cursorily read, if read at all for the time. Another way is to look to your own schemes and do your best to get them realised. O, pride, that haughty monster, that keeps the soul from God, that works by fraud or force, that lives in any atmosphere but the atmosphere of grace. It thrives in everything but grace. But God resisteth the proud; do you know what that means-God resisteth? I do. He may resist you by not allowing you to pray. You may stumble at that, but when you are led into it you will understand it. He may say in your spirit, not by any word, "Do not come near to Me." God resisteth the proud, resists him in his schemes. Resists him in his heart. I know it; I have been resisted. Ah, my brethren,

it is no little danger to us, this proud spirit. But now look at the contrary: humility. "Be clothed with humility." What a shining garment it is, for a humble spirit is of great price in the sight of God. Be a plain man. Be plain, my friends and do not strut about as if you were something, as if you were somebody. Yea, you will never get too low, but you may easily get too high. You will never be too small, but you may easily be too big. God keep us low in our own eyes, little as it were, nothing, that Christ may be all in all and fill us. "Be clothed with humility." That grace in you will make you see the beam in your own eye. O, you will see it, if you have got a humble spirit. There is a beam, only pride won't let us it. We see it in other people then, but when we are truly humble, we see the beam, the fault, the foolishness, the waywardness, the pride and the wickedness of our own hearts.

Keep me feeble, keep me humble, keep me from evil. Let it not grieve me. Deliver me from my enemies. A man's foes are the things he carries in his own heart. Nobody hinders from being here this evening but a spirit in us would keep us from worshipping God. The spirit in us lusteth to envy. The flesh lusteth against the spirit. We brought enemies with us when we came into the building this evening. O, deliver us from them. A gadding spirit, a wandering mind, a gazing thought, looking here and there instead of to God.

We do need to be delivered from an irreverent spirit. Deliver me: Can you say it? You will if you have got enemies oppressing you. There may be a natural acknowledgment of enemies without any sense of oppression, but if you feel oppressed, if the enemy who has captured you refuses to let you go, you will then need One to rise up and throughly plead your cause. You will say, "O, deliver me," I cannot deliver myself, Lord deliver me. Deliver me from evil, from evil thoughts and evil ways.

Let me not be ashamed. What! a sinner to be without shame? Impossible, says one. Yes and No. Yes, you can be without shame when God causes you to know that He is not ashamed to be called your God. Ah, if He is not ashamed of you, you will say, "Let me never be ashamed of God." Let me not be ashamed in the presence of mine enemies. David found God spreading a table before him in the presence of his enemies. The unbelief and the wickedness of your hearts may have to stand aside while a good God, a good

Shepherd, provided a table for you in their very presence and they cannot prevent you eating. No!

O. let me not be ashamed of waiting on God, of waiting for God, of waiting for deliverance, waiting for teaching, waiting for sanctification, waiting for help in trouble, waiting for God to bless. He may quench the fire and leave you in it, and you won't be ashamed when you come out. These noble confessors were not ashamed to be cast into the furnace, neither were they ashamed when they came out. They were not ashamed in the presence of an angry monarch, not ashamed in the presence of a multitude of people worshipping a golden image, neither were they ashamed when Nebuchadnezzar called them out of the furnace and said, "Your God has changed the word of the King." Let me not be ashamed of a good God, an omnipotent Friend, a faithful Jehovah. Let me not be ashamed. Let me not be ashamed of my prayers. O, but one says, I am ashamed of them. So am I. But what if God lets you know that your stammering and chattering and your groans and your sighs and your tears and all your sorrows, if He lets you know that these were put into the golden censer with much incense, you won't be ashamed then. "Verily," said the psalmist, God hath heard my prayer, and hath not turned away His mercy from me."

Let me not be ashamed of my hope. "Hope maketh not ashamed;" but between the conception of hope in the heart and the realisation of hope in your hand, there may be much trouble, long delays, much affliction, many disappointments and some apparent impossibilities; so the enemies say to you, "Now where is your hope.?" Ah, when God gives you the realisation of it by His love in your heart, by His precious blood on your conscience, by justification in your soul, then you won't be ashamed. You will say, "This God is our God for ever and ever." You will say, "This is the Lord, we have waited for Him." No shame.

For I put my trust in Thee." "Whoever trusted in the Lord and was put to confusion?" Oh, you who may be in bondage, when you cast a believing look distant though you may be and feel, and fearful, that you have got no interest in the Lord, yet, casting a believing look, such as the publican cast, when he said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Trust is there. You say, "If ever I get to heaven it will be by the Person and blood of Jesus Christ." You will enter into that word: "They overcame by the

blood of the Lamb and by the word of His testimony." "My trust is in Thee." You will never be ashamed of that. God hears the prayer of poor sinners and He knows their trust is in Him, though they do not realise it themselves at times.

The Lord give to us to pray this, "O keep my soul. It is of everlasting worth Lord. "O keep it from sinning. Keep it from the curse of the law. Keep it from a deserved hell. You do not know, no man knows, rightly, accurately, the worth of his own soul, Lord keep it, Keep it from evil that it may not grieve me.

Amen.
