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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 5 July 1922

Psalm 27 v 14

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage
and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say,
on the LORD."

What a mercy it is to know that there is a God to wait on and to believe His word - that no waiting soul shall be ashamed. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me". And what a mercy it is to want something which only this God can give; to seek something that He has to give, that He is willing to give, determined to give, and which, when He gives it, shall be an answer to prayers and supplications which have gone from the soul. What a mercy it is to have power to stick to this point - "Give me Christ or else I die". Grant me eternal life. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation". Bring me through my difficulties, establish me in Thy ways, conduct me in Thy fear. My dear brethren, we shall never be able properly to estimate the mercy of God given to us in our possessing faith to believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him; in giving us an appetite for those things which belong to Him; for enabling us to mind the things of the Spirit. In this Psalm the Psalmist tells us that he desired one thing, that his desires now were content to be comprised in one, and that one thing was, that he might dwell in the house of the Lord for ever and that, being there, he might behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in His temple. And this one desire was such a burning desire in him that he said he would seek after it. It was not the lazy desire of the sluggard that killeth him. It was not that kind of thing that left the man free to say, a little more sleep and a little more slumber, but it moved him. "That will I seek after". And that was an all-embracing, an inclusive desire, because it took in the house of the Lord, his dwelling there, his viewing the glory of the Lord and laying his matters before the Lord, enquiring in His temple. What he should do, where he should go, whether the Lord would be with him, whether the Lord would prosper him in this way and in that way. O it was a great desire, an inclusive desire that he

had. And it was this blessed thing in the man's heart that led him to cry to God. "Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation". It is a great thing to have something to look back upon, some experience of God's goodness, some sense of His presence, some help given, some deliverance commanded and wrought, and for such an experience to be brought to your memory when you are in new trouble. Hide not Thy face; Thou hast been my help. And though I deserve that I should be put away in anger, O do not put me away in anger. Lord remember not against me former iniquities; O put me not away in anger. Can you unite with the Psalmist in this? I can. Put me not away in anger. I deserve to be so put away, but O do grant me Thy presence. It is my life, my strength, my hope, my comfort, and if I am denied it then I am without hope; therefore, put me not away. "Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation". And he looked forward to a natural event, a contingency so to speak, that must befall him, when his father and his mother should, by reason of their removal from the world, forsake him; or, it might even be in another way, yet even though it should be so, then the Lord will take me up. Ah, did you ever feel that it mattered nothing who should leave you if God would bless you? Did you ever feel it would not matter if all the world stood against you, so God was with you. The Lord will take me up, and that is enough; who can hurt me. What harm can reach me, what death can enter if the Lord be with me. This was a beautiful thing to the Psalmist; a good God in a time of trouble; a good God to come to him. When all the world might forsake him, then he wanted God to be with him. "Teach me Thy way O Lord". Do you feel able to know what way you ought to go? Can you find out of yourself what to do? Then you won't have any sympathy with this petition. But if you feel too ignorant to know what is right, what step will be best and good for you, and for the glory of God, then you will join with the Psalmist. "Teach me Thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path because of my enemies." And then he went back again and said "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living". I have been there, Lord, as if he should say, when nothing but the hope of seeing Thy goodness sustained me; when nothing but a forward look of faith kept me up. I should have given way and fainted altogether if this had not been before me; that Thou wouldest come to me and help me; that I should see Thy goodness in the land of the living. Faith

does look forward. Faith in her trial has her eye fixed on God. In all the staggering of the soul, in the weakening temptations, in the distressing of indwelling sin in its working, faith has a look to the Lord. You will never be able, really, to divert faith from her one point and end. For a time she may seem as if the end has come, that her eye is closed, but in truth this will ever come to the front, faith, and she says - None but God for me; none but Christ for me; none but the Spirit for me. And the goodness of God endureth continually; therefore faith says to the soul "Hope in God"; give not up.

Yield not then to unbelief
Courage soul there yet is room
Though of sinners thou art chief
Come, thou burdened sinner come

And then the text. "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart." And so important was this to him that he doubled the exhortation. "Wait, I say, on the LORD". Not on self, not on the world, not on your own wisdom, but wait on Him who has not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye Me in vain, and never will. Waiting on the Lord means this, speaking for the moment generally, that the soul's eye is on God. "As the eyes of a servant look to the hand of his master, and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait on the Lord until that He shall have mercy upon us." It is the soul following after Him; it is faith's refusal to go anywhere else. Even though the Lord should in His dealings seem to discourage faith, saying, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs", faith still will argue and say "Truth Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table", and therefore I will wait under the table; I will wait anywhere, only be it on the Lord. Now I would like, as enabled, to say two or three words on this important point. The first is this; there is a divine warrant for a poor, new-born, afflicted, burdened soul to wait on God. There is a divine warrant and that sometimes is given in to a waiting, weakened, troubled, child of God. What is the warrant? It is in the blessed gospel of the grace of God as "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"; as in the prophecy of Isaiah "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me", saith

the Lord. "Eye hath not seen" says the same prophet, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that wait for Him". Paul quotes this and changes the word "wait" into "love" - "For them that love Him" - and a waiter for Christ is certainly a lover of Christ, and he has a warrant in Christ's blessed word. Who ever sought in vain? This is the word - "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you". "They that seek shall find; to him that knocketh it shall be opened". And can these words prove false? Can He that uttered them prove faithless to them? Must He not fulfil them? Therefore, he, who with this blessed warrant, is enabled to go to the throne of God's heavenly grace, with his eye on the Lord's mercy and trust in the gospel, shall never be ashamed of his waiting. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me". O sinner, this is a thing outside a poor wretch and yet put within him by the Holy Spirit. That is to say, outside him as to all reasons. There is no reason in the sinner, as a sinner. It is quite outside him; in God's heart of love, in election, in eternity, but it is put within the soul by the Holy Spirit giving encouragement, and so it becomes an internal, an experienced warrant, to a waiting soul. Seek the Lord; He is good to them that seek Him, to the soul that waiteth for Him. You who have felt this know that I am speaking a great gospel truth, and this is the ground. The blessed Lamb of God appeals in His word to a poor wretched creature, and lets that poor thing know that he cannot wait in vain, that he has the ground to stand on that Christ Himself has given. And this waiting on such a warrant has this thing in it also, namely a real earnestness. It is not sleeping; No, it is expressed in the words I have before mentioned "As the eyes of a servant look to the hand of his master, and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord". The master may not immediately answer the servant's question - What am I to do? The mistress may not immediately give the maid a direction, but the eyes of them both are on the master and on the mistress. And you may go again and again and not get any immediate answer, but faith's eye will be on that blessed One. Yes, faith's eye will be looking to Him. Can you follow this? When it seems as if no answer is coming, when to reason no answer can come, when to appearances there is no ground to expect an answer to come, can you then find in your soul something

that says, do not leave the throne; that makes your faith say, "I cannot leave Thy throne unblessed". Ah, the old enemy may slyly say, but you know the Scripture tells us that the Lord does not hear vain repetitions. He may say that the Lord heareth not sinners, and give you such a staggering that you will with difficulty recover your feet. You may find that in your experience. But then the Word of God will come to your help by the blessed Spirit's power, like as it is said of the disciples more than once - "Then they remembered His words", and something will drop into your heart and recur to your memory through the Holy Ghost that will enable you to say - My soul attend, wait on the Lord. As it is in another Psalm, the Psalmist says to his soul "Hope thou in God". Why art thou disquieted? Why art thou cast down? Why he had given reasons for his disquieting feelings; he had given reasons for his being so cast down, but faith came against these reasons and said the Lord is above them, the Lord is above them. So, my friends, when faith's eye is on God there is a real waiting and there is something definite in this. What do you wait for? A beggar can tell you why he knocks at a certain door; he can tell you what he wants. And sometimes, notwithstanding our confusion of mind, we can tell you why we go to the throne of grace and what we go for. Yes, even though the enemy should say you are only a hypocrite because your hearts are so full of deceit and of wickedness, yet the man can say, but I am not a hypocrite when I cry to God for mercy; I want mercy. I am not a hypocrite when I ask the Lord to bless me, for I want Him to bless me. I am not a hypocrite when I say, O save me and say unto my soul I am thy salvation, for I really want what I ask and feel I want it. Yes, there are several things in particular that people go to the Lord for. They want Him to smile on them, that smile that creates heaven in the heart, that smile that will dispel darkness and gloom and discouragement and fear and sinking, that smile that will make a summer in your heart in a moment. Yes, until you get it you cannot be at rest, truly at rest. This is something to go for. O says faith, the Lord will give it. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." And faith now and again has such strength imparted to it by the Eternal Spirit that it really is diligent in seeking the Lord, saying - None but Jesus can bless me; only His atonement can deliver me from bondage; only His righteousness can save me from shame; only His power can sustain me in the way I go;

only His grace can make me strong to fight the good fight of faith. A man sometimes does know what he goes for. You know this - some of you must acknowledge that you know this - like as when a man goes to market to do business he has got a definite thing in his mind, so sometimes you can say you have got a definite thing in your spirit, a request, a particular request. One says, I have never been set at liberty. Well, now, when the Holy Ghost moves that person specially to seek liberty, he says that is what I am after. He wants the liberty of God's dear children. Sometimes one feels that one has never had much of the love of God shed abroad in the heart and that is a thing to seek, and it is sought. O say to my soul what Thou hast said to many souls "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". And perhaps sometimes some of you feel as if you must be overcome. These inveterate sins of your hearts, these wandering, gadding desires of your minds; these are a trouble to you, and how can you overcome them. O, you feel as if you will be overcome by them. Therefore faith is stirred up, moved by Him in whose power it stands, to seek that God by His prevailing grace would subdue your iniquities according to His blessed word - "He shall subdue our iniquities". Some temptation may beset you, some peculiar temptation may beset you, and by its persistence you feel as if you will be carried away, taken off your feet, plunged into deeper distress than you have ever before felt. Yea, perhaps you may have feared that you would deny the Lord; have thought that you would prove a Balaam or a Judas, and the devil wont let you stop to reflect that Balaam sought seven times over to curse the people of God and that Judas sought opportunity to betray his Master. I say the devil, if permitted so to work and harass and perplex you and drive you, wont let you stop a minute to consider these points, but just to put before you the awfulness of these characters, but he overshoots the mark for his temptations drive to the throne of grace and then we one day shall sing

Meantime that foe can't boast of much
That makes us watch and pray

So there is something to go for, and on this point one word more. You want - yes, a goodly number of us I hope can say we want - to reach heaven to be where Jesus is, where the Trinity is, where holiness reigns, where sin is not, where there is no temple made with hands, no

sun created to rise and set; where God alone is glorified and the soul is supremely happy in being filled with the presence and bliss and glory of God. And what does this want do for us? Does not it inspire us with many cries and petitions - Lord, open and take me in; fit me for the place. Carry me honourably through the difficulties and sins of this mortal state of mine. Give me faith to believe, and love to love, and hope to hope, and patience to wait till the day shall come when sin and myself shall be for ever separated. Now with these requests we go.

Now another remark I would make is this. Faith sees a God to go to. In Christ all the good pleasure of God is. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. No stint, no scant supply; eternal life, everlasting righteousness, eternal redemption, faithfulness, goodness, love, pity, wisdom, and power. O what a fullness there is in Jesus Christ. Nobody would wait on poor men to be supplied with something. You would not think of going to a person whose poverty you knew even to be greater than your own to supply you. You would not go to one who had not a shilling to call his own to ask him to pay some debt for you. But if faith sees a precious Christ with fullness of eternal love and redemption and mercy and grace and pity, O then says a poor sinner I will go there; the Lord helping me I will go there. He has a full supply for my constant needs, a full supply of righteousness and of holiness and of redemption and of wisdom for me and I need these things continually. Yea, says the sinner, I am every moment in danger. But then God has promised to supply His children every moment with protection. "I will water it every moment; I will keep it night and day lest any hurt it." As sure as faith sees this way she posts to the throne of grace. Yes

Thou art coming to a King
Large petitions with thee bring
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much

None can ever ask more than Christ is determined to give. "He giveth more grace" More grace. Grace on grace, supply on supply, mercy on mercy. O what a Giver is the loving Lord Jesus Christ. And now these points, if they are made out to us by the Eternal Spirit will be great

reasons why we should wait on the Lord. There is a warrant, a great, an immovable ground to stand upon and to believe. This is very important to every child of God - he who really wants to know if he may go, if he may hope, if there is ground for him to hope - and if he perceives that it is so, then he goes, he believes that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. So then waiting is a soul's resolve as the Psalmist has it in a Psalm further on. "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." You have proved Him, have not you? proved His goodness, proved His fullness, proved His faithfulness, and having that, then you say, by the help of the Spirit I will wait on Him as long as I live. There are a good many difficulties in the way though, a good many difficulties. Carnal reason; O what difficulties are here; how they are presented to the mind. You, you are too inconsistent, too vile; you will pollute the place. God heareth not sinners; you have gone, and gone, and gone again and often when you have been seeking, as you have thought and professed, you have been gadding away, running hither and thither in your spirit until at last God has shut you up and He wont let you pray, He wont give you prayer, and this is a distress. Temptations come and, uniting with that feeling that is in your heart that you are so exceedingly wicked, it is difficult to wait on God. But then, as Pilgrim has it, Mr Interpreter's house contained, among other mysteries and instructions, this; he saw a fire by a wall and he saw one pouring water upon it yet the fire was not quenched. He could not understand this until he was taken to the backside of the wall and there he saw one pouring oil on the fire. That was the interpretation of the secret, the opening of the matter to him; that was why the fire burned and overcame the water. So a child of God finds sometimes there is poured in life, new life, new grace, new mercy, new touches, new teaching, new operations, and these beget in him this blessed feeling - My soul wait thou only upon God, for my salvation cometh from Him. Yea, the sinner can say sometimes, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God", as if he were now in such a state of certainty as to his exercises, there was not a shadow of a doubt for the moment on his mind - "Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation". Now this encouraging word then will fit; it is an exhortation, and the soul unites with it. "Wait on the Lord".

And I will speak another word on this point, namely where else can you go and where else would you go? The disciples by Peter gave the answer "To whom shall we go; Thou hast the words of eternal life". I tell you poor, seeking soul, there is a connection between the blessed God and your soul that neither sin nor devil nor time shall sever. Peter, if I may use the word, was tied up to God; God had made the knot; God had fixed Peter and there it was he said, "To whom shall we go; Thou hast the words of eternal life". And now when you can say that you can say another thing, not only - To whom shall I go, but to whom would I go? and your heart answers to nobody else. And here the Psalmist will come and interpret your experience - "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". Thy society, Lord, Thy friendship, Thy salvation, Thy communion to communicate of Thy grace, my soul desires above all else. Well, may the Lord help us to thank Him that it is so with us. May He help us to thank Him that, though we have not yet got what we want, yet we have got this in our favour; not only none can help us but the Lord, but we know that He can do it. And knowing that, there we are fixed. "My heart is fixed; O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."

Now why should a sinner wait? Well, first of all because the Lord has made a promise. He says "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." What does that mean but this, I will give them what they come for; I will do for them what they ask Me to do. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it". O what a reason there is for poor, needy sinners to wait on God, a promising God, a promise-fulfilling God, able to do it. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think". So great is His goodness, so exhaustless is His love, so wonderful is His mercy, so omnipotent is His arm, that a poor sinner, receiving intimations of Him in a promise, says I will wait; I will wait on the Lord. Yea, my soul doth wait and in His word do I hope. Why the Psalmist, as you know in that wonderful Psalm, the 130th, says "With the Lord there is mercy that He may be feared and with Him is plenteous redemption," and all this is what He has promised. We have not a silent God to go to. He has said "Come to Me." in our hearts and we have gone to Him and will He bring to disappointment the hope He created? Is He a God who will disappoint a coming sinner? Waiting is coming. "To whom coming" - as if the whole

life were that - "To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as lively stones are built up" There is this constant moving of the soul, not always to the soul's satisfaction, but there it is. You cannot make your soul settle down and be at rest away from God. You cannot do it. You may sleep for a time, get very far off, become a mere miserable professor, more like a dead stick stuck in the ground than a tree of righteousness of the Lord's right hand planting, but He will come again, and there it is, you have got a promising God to go to and faith says, I will go to Him.

Lo, glad I come and Thou blest Lamb
Shalt take me to Thee as I am
Nothing but sin I Thee can give
Nothing but grace shall I receive

And there is yet another reason for waiting, and it is this, the faithfulness of God to His word. "He is not a man that He should lie nor the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said and shall He not do it?" If ever any intimation of mercy fell on your heart, O sinner, an intimation that God would do you good, heaven and earth can sooner pass away than you lose that that God gave you. He is faithful. "Faithful is He that calleth you Who also will do it". "The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance", so when a sinner comes and begs for salvation, will the Lord deny it? Why, Christ appeals to natural affection and says, Will any of you, having a son, when that son comes to you for bread, mock him by giving him a stone? You know how Christ names several things as instances of natural goodness in a parent, and then says, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him?" "He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things" Put Him in mind, poor believer, however weak and timorous you may be, put Him in remembrance of His Word. He says "Put Me in remembrance", and the Church says, in one place, "Remember Thy holy promise", and again "Remember the covenant". And when you have got something from the promise, something from the covenant, something from God's gracious Word in your heart, vision, intimation, then you have got something to go on. "Lord do as Thou hast said"; and He will. Therefore wait on

Him. Well, one says, I have waited and have not got it yet. What says Peter, rather the Holy Spirit by Peter. "Beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." We are very apt to take a delay for a denial, very apt to think that when prayer is not immediately answered, it has never been accepted; that God has taken no notice of it. But the Psalmist anticipated, as it were, a delay, when on one occasion he says "Put my tears into Thy bottle". If the time to avenge me of my adversaries has not come, Thou seest my weeping, Thou beholdest my tears; put them into Thy bottle; let the day of reckoning be long, still Lord take notice of me. Can you put Him in mind of things? Can you ask Him that though He may long delay He may in His own time bring to pass His gracious word. He says "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee", and if you have His presence in some way, you will at times know it, as when your heart is influenced to seek Him, when your conscience is made tender, when your affections are drawn out after Christ, when you feel your heart fixed on Him, when you can claim, and if you cannot claim, yet can plead His blessed promise, and ask that, vile as you are, He would make it good in your experience. All this is in this word "Wait", "Wait on the Lord", and it implies that steadfast feeling of the soul that says, by the help of the Lord I will stop here. If I perish, let it be at Thy footstool. If I have long to wait, do keep me waiting, and do not let me judge Thy time by mine, Thy hours by mine. Help me to believe that with Thee one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. "Be of good courage"; plenty of reasons for the contrary apparently; "Be of good courage". O, the Apostle Paul was a great example of this good courage. He had God's blessed word, and though he knew by the divine word of God that the ship must be broken, yet he said to all who were with him, who did not know that secret, "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me". So when the Lord will graciously help you to wait on Him, then it will be this. "Be of good courage"; He is more than man, more than devils; He is more than weakness and emptiness, and everything in us that we see and feel to be of a discouraging nature. He is more than them all. Our deficiencies, our lacks, our weaknesses, our fears, our sins, our giving way to sin, our yielding to temptation, these hurt us, but they wont alter God. "He is of one mind and who can turn Him". We shall be made to feel the evil of these things, but we shall be made to know that they are no reason why the

Lord should change His mind. "I knew thee, that thou wouldest deal very treacherously", but that is no reason why He should forget His promise and forego His great inheritance, for His people are His inheritance. "Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart" by dropping some mercy in, by giving some token for good, by letting out some intimation that He has not forgotten you. "He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." There is infinite reason in Him for our waiting; there is no reason, real reason, against it. We may think there are many, but it is not so indeed. May the Lord help us to walk in this gracious exhortation and hold fast, hold fast the beginning of our confidence to the end. And though discouragements may abound may we remember that - "Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward", because the Lord is good to them that seek Him, to the soul that hopeth in His mercy.

AMEN.