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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
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PSALM 3 v 8

"Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, Thy
blessing is upon Thy people"

There are three points in this text which I would desire to speak of. There is first, the author of salvation, the great Object of faith. There is secondly the happy subject of salvation - a depraved person, a lost sinner. There is thirdly salvation itself. What that means the saints must die to know fully, but in some measure it is known here.

First, the author of salvation - God, the Trinity. Each Person in the Godhead is engaged in the infinite matter and business of salvation. With your Bibles in your hand, you cannot well doubt that, for the Scriptures declare, distinctly, that God the Father, whom the Apostle Paul blesses in the Ephesians, did predestinate unto the blessings of salvation, whom He foreknew. Says he, in that wonderful Epistle - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." This is infinite love; it goes down to the gates and the pains of hell and the sorrow of death, and reaches to the throne of glory. It takes in, it makes ample provision for, every necessity. It embraces providence, fixing the position of each person, allotting the trials and tribulation of each one; ordains the means of deliverance, temporal deliverance and spiritual deliverance. What has infinite love left out of the account. In the Romans the Apostle Paul gives us a full statement of the matter of salvation. "Moreover, whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate, and whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified". And if you can find any necessity, weakness, trouble, sin, fear, affliction, any blindness, and disease, any reproach, any temptation, any burden

that God has left out of the account, whereby people, so blessed as are the people of God in these verses, are in danger, you bring these things forward. Infinite love set up a sufficient Head, Christ; made Him the Head of all principalities and powers; gave Him to be the Head of the church; loved Him and loved His body equally, and gave Him grace, as Paul says to Timothy: "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us before the world began." God the Father set up His beloved Son and He invites attention to this great One in the prophecy of Isaiah, saying: Behold My Servant, Mine Elect whom I uphold. The best sight, the most wonderful sight, the most awe-inspiring, love-begetting sight, that a convinced sinner can ever have in this world, is the Person of Christ, and this part of salvation is the Father's. It belongs to Him. He did what He would with His own in disposing of His gifts; did injustice to none, since none, as sinners considered, can claim anything at His hands. The part of the Son is this, first becoming incarnate, to be "made of a woman, made under the law", in order that he might "redeem them that were under the law" That was a great business, an infinite stoop, a condescension beyond our conception, that the Son of God would stoop to take into union with His divine Person the body prepared for Him and become like unto His brethren in all things, sin alone excepted. And when He had become a Man, then He had a work to do, a work which had been assigned Him, given to Him to do. He had a commandment to obey. He had words to utter which He had heard uttered in Eternity, in the Covenant. He had works to do which He had seen His Father do in heaven, works which must of necessity be immanent (indwelling) acts in the Godhead, and these Christ came to do and to make manifest. He had to bear sin. He did no sin, He had none in His nature, and yet He consented to be made sin, to receive the iniquity of His children by an imputation so just, so complete, as that it became necessary that His Father should punish Him. He received this burden, intolerable to all other shoulders, He received the guilt into His soul and He was thus exposed, justly to the wrath of God, to the curse of the law. Hence that took place in Him which brings heaven to the church, namely the curse of God fell upon Him, as it is written: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us". He swallowed up death in victory; He had the fullness of death in Himself. Death is God's curse. Death is separation from God, and

Christ had both in His soul's experience, and vicariously He had them both. I would say it, I would impress it on your attention, Christ had death and separation in His experience vicariously, not as a private Person, but as the Head and Saviour of His body, the church, and when He knew in Himself that all was accomplished, He said "It is finished" and bowed His head and gave up the ghost, no man taking His life from Him. He yielded it voluntarily, He gave it up lovingly, He took the curse willingly. He drained the cup to the very dregs willingly and when He had done all this, then He gave up the ghost, and took His happy bride to heaven, where now He is at the right hand of God. O blessed Saviour of sinners, blessed salvation, thus wrought out for sinners. Sinners who, feeling their sins, are welcome at the throne of grace to plead what the Saviour did.

The third part in salvation is the part that the Holy Ghost has to do. There is a Holy Ghost; there is a Holy Ghost, and according to Scripture some people know Him. Says Christ, promising Him, "Whom the world seeth not, neither knoweth Him, but ye know Him, for He shall dwell with you and shall be in you." Take that as a mark my friends, and see if you have anything like a true Christianity in you; see if you have in you the Holy Ghost, for if you have Him not, if you never possess Him, better for you never to have been born. Ye, says Christ to His disciples, know Him for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you. His work is to regenerate; it is called by Paul the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is called by Christ, being born again, born of water and of the Spirit. He is that clean water in His operations, promised by God in the Covenant. The beginning of all true religion is in the new birth. The progress of true religion in a person is by the operations of the Holy Spirit. The knowledge of Christ, which the saint has, is given to him by the Spirit. His growth in grace is by the Spirit. The purging of his conscience from dead works, of all dead works done in unbelief, is by the blood of sprinkling, the Spirit being the sprinkler in that case. All saving acquaintance with the truth, as the truth is in Jesus, is by the Spirit. This is a very brief and feeble word about salvation. The author of it is God. He gives it, reveals it, applies it. He appoints the Saviour. The Saviour comes and obeys His Father and fulfils the law, bears the cross, and swallows death. Jesus, the Saviour, having done all that, goes to heaven in the interests of His

children and pleads for them, sends the Spirit to them, shepherds them, supplies their needs, helps them in their difficulties, delivers them out of their troubles, brings them at last to Himself, to present them to His Father, saying "Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me." And the Spirit applies all. Now my friends, you must in some measure know this God if you are to go to heaven.

Secondly, I am to notice the subject of salvation. Well, the word itself tells us something about him, for he who is saved must have been lost. "The Son of Man came to save that which was lost". This is, to proud man, an unwelcome sound, but while you lend your ears to me you shall hear it, for O, it is a truth, sad and solemn beyond all expression, that man is lost. Man has ruined himself, brought on his own helplessness, is responsible for his helplessness, as for all other things for which he is responsible to His Maker, and his Lawgiver. And you will never be able properly to account for your helplessness, except in that respect, that one way, that you are responsible for your own condition, responsible for your own ignorance of God, and for your sinfulness. Man was made upright. Yes, a wonderful creature, noble, beautiful, exalted, capable of, and enjoying, before the fall, communion with His Maker in Eden. His understanding, as one has said truly, was a lamp of light and his heart was set upon God. His will was straight and in unison with God's commandment. This was man's original state and he fell from it, he fell. That is not a figment in poetry that you have in Genesis. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" and he, that subtle one, came to a simple person, Eve, and whispered and caught her attention, gained her ear, and breathed the spirit of unbelief into her mind and she took of the forbidden fruit, and gave to her husband and he did eat, and they knew at once what shame was. Shame never would have existed, but for sin, and Paul inspired by the Holy Ghost tells us thus: By man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. That is the truth of the matter. Our mortality is brought by sin, procured by our own sin. The doctor writes on his certificate of death a specific disease that took away a person from this life. Across all that, across every certificate given, this might well be written - sin. Sin. Sin will dig your graves, will dig

my grave. Is there any hope? Yes. Jesus died. Is there any means whereby a person may come to know there is a hope? Yes, the Spirit is given. Is there an end for a sinner who is convinced of his sins to look to, a God to pray to? Yes. God the Father is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. As I said this salvation goes to the gates and the pains of hell and the sorrows of death. But what a subject. Let me give you an account of this subject of salvation in Scripture language, lest you should say that I exaggerate. It is found in Ephesians - "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". Also, says the Apostle: "Ye were sometimes darkness". Again the same Apostle in another Epistle says: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be". Again he declares that the saints "were sometimes disobedient". He declares in another Epistle that certain persons shall not enter into the kingdom of God. But O, mercifully, he adds, "and such were some of you, - drunkards, murderers, idolators - and such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God".

Now I may ask you too, a question. Do you know this sinner? Did you ever meet him, ever see him in a certain glass, realise painfully what the Scripture declares of this person? Happy the man who knows himself. Happy the man whose eyes are turned to his self. When you find fault with other people, and perhaps you often do, and perhaps with some justice, when you turn your eyes on other people and see their faults, their moles, may you afterwards have the glass turned in upon yourself and I think soon you will have no stone to throw at anyone except it be yourself. O sinner, may you know yourself, lost and ruined, deep in debt, a fraudulent bankrupt, a helpless criminal, hopeless in self, distant, infinitely distant from God. May you know yourself guilty and, as you have it in Ezekiel: Cast out to the loathing of your persons. What will cause anyone so to view and know and feel himself? Well, I will tell you in one word. A sight of God. O, but one may object. Well then, listen to the Scripture that you may not object to that. Isaiah said: "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." And what was the effect? "Woe is me", said the good man. "Woe is me for I am undone, for I am a man of

unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the Lord." If you ever see the Lord you will know yourself to be a sinner. It is the dimness, the blindness of our own minds, that leaves us at liberty to think we are better than we are. When the glass of God's Word is set to our eye, opened by the Spirit, turned into this wicked thing, our own heart, then we know what we are - lost people. You will never point out a criminal - whose crime you will justly abhor - point to a murderer - whose murders you will hate and whose execution you will believe, and own to be, just - and say, now that criminal did something I could not do; that crook did a deed I could not commit. Rather you will feel with John Bradford - "There goes John Bradford" he said, looking at one taken to be executed, "but for the grace of God". And is this man a fit subject for God? Is this man to get to heaven? Is he to see with joy a holy God? Is he to receive glory from God? Yes, this man. Said the Lord to Israel in that wonderful word I read just now - "But thou hast been weary of Me O Israel". What, weary of a good God? Weary of the throne of grace of the symbols of God's presence, of the kindness of God in the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; of the promises made on obedience. Weary of that God. Yes. weary of Him who drove out the inhabitants of Canaan to give the land to them. "Thou hast been weary of Me". See the word of the Lord: "Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness? Wherefore say My people, we are lords, we will come no more unto Thee". You say, that belongs to Israel. And if you are taught of God you will say, it belongs to me. Is this man, I ask again, to go to heaven? Do you think he can get there? The answer may be, in some one thing, and in some another, but I will give you an answer. This man, convinced of his sins, mourning and confessing, seeking the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, this man is to go to heaven.

And so, in the third place, let me speak of salvation itself. It is none other than God Himself coming to a sinner, forgiving his sins, imputing to Him the righteousness of Christ, giving faith to believe in Christ, purging his conscience from dead works to serve the living God. And I will take up two essentials to an experience of salvation and mention them to you - you have them in the Acts of the Apostles - "Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ". Take these two things. I believe no person grown up and born again will

ever be destitute of these two things. "Repentance toward God". When you see the turpitude of your nature, the turpitude of your heart, the wickedness of your thoughts, the blindness of your understanding, and the perversity of your will, and perceive that the whole bent of your nature is against God, you surely will repent. You will turn quite round, and from justifying yourself, you will justify God in your condemnation. From saying, you never were in bondage, you will say, you were born in bondage. Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. You will say you have gone astray speaking lies from your birth, and you will repent. I beg your close attention to this point. A man does repent who is born again; he turns round. His face now is toward God. It was to the world before, now it is toward God. He sees in some measure of heavenly light what God is. He sees in the same light what he himself is and he repents toward that God. He is sorry. I said I will be sorry for my sin and my iniquity have I not hid. I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgave the iniquity of my sin. If you never thus turn round you will never see God with joy. Then "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" which is a belief in His Person, in His work of redemption, in His presence in heaven, in His intercession there; and, sooner or later, faith strengthened sufficiently to enable you to cast yourself, with all your sin and guilt and ruin, on that Person, on that work. I would be glad if I could make the matter plain in simple words, but I know that the Holy Ghost alone can open it to any person with saving effect, but that, in my conception, is what faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ means; that it looks to His glorious Person and it sees in Him everything that is needed by the sinner for his salvation. Blood to cleanse him from his guilt and pollution. Righteousness to justify him in the sight of God and make him a just person, and the intercession of his great High Priest to bring him off in that law suit that His Word entered against him by the law in his conscience, and he whose faith is then thus toward Christ Jesus shall never be rejected.

In the pit of endless ruin
Let it never, Lord, be said
Here's a soul that perished, suing
For the boasted Saviour's aid

Never will it be said so. O bless Jesus Christ for His great mercy. Think of what He so sweetly said when on earth, and says, now that He is in heaven, by His Spirit. It is recorded here - "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". Now the eye is turned to Him. One can only speak of it thus for the moment, the eye is turned to Him. That is, faith is turned to Him. Faith sees Him, O sees Him, the Man Christ Jesus - invested with glory, full of mercy, full of compassion - at the right hand of God. Full of authority, asking with authority that a sinner on his bended knees, whose spirit is weeping if his eyes be dry; on his bended knees, craving forgiveness, asking that he may be blessed, that he may be saved. And this Jesus receives him. That which was uttered as a reproach upon Him is part of His great glory: "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them". Believing is a great business. Faith is the gift of God and is wrought in the heart by the very same power that was exerted when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. And the business of faith is very great; it has to do with God. It has to do with eternal matters. The weight of your own being, your unending interests, your timeless necessity; faith has to do with these things and it finds that they are all met and answered in the Lord Jesus. And now the one thing, the one thing that this person is after is to have those blessings, so seen to be in Christ, brought in, applied, like a stream of life flowing into the soul, like a word of heaven spoken to the heart, like a beam of light darting into the understanding and a heavenly touch bringing the will into sweet unison with the will of God in salvation. This is the salvation that belongeth unto the Lord, and this is the subject. A poor sinner is called in the Scripture a vessel of mercy, by which this is hinted, that as a vessel must receive, and receive passively, what is poured in, so God pours forgiveness in. Forgiveness, you know, is an act of the offended, and the offender receives that quite passively. He may be very active in some ways after it, but he receives it passively. He is the subject of salvation, he is the subject of an act of God. This is the blessing that is on the Lord's people. "Thy blessing is upon Thy people", that blessing of which we read: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith." When you get it you know it; as surely as if a man with a burden on his back and staggering up this little brow outside the chapel would know if somebody came and took that burden off his back, so when you get forgiveness, salvation, you

will know it, because sin is a burden; O it is a burden, it is a burden. The Psalmist said that his sins were too heavy for him to bear. He had got a burden, such a burden as the eastern burden-bearer well understood - today perhaps understands - larger than the person, put on his back. If he falls he will be crushed. O, if you have an experience of sin either at the beginning or later, you will understand that burden that the Psalmist felt was too heavy for him. Now when forgiveness is spoken, it takes it away, and whereas hell was feared, now heaven is expected, and whereas God was a terror, now He is the greatest attraction. Whereas Jesus Christ was not known, now He is seen in the light of His Person, and in the light of His gospel, and in the light of His Spirit, and O what a sight, the sight of Christ is. What a sight, the dear lover of a sinner, the Saviour of a sinner, the God, the Guide, the Redeemer, the Righteousness, the Hope of a sinner. O what does not the sinner feel who receives such a Saviour into his heart. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord".

We might take the word in respect of temporal things. Many a time the Psalmist proved that salvation from trouble belonged to the Lord. Salvation from Saul's persecution; salvation from Absalom's rebellion and its effects; salvation from various afflictions; all, all came to him from the Lord. He could sing of them all, and did. He sang, as you know, in one Psalm: "I will sing of mercy and judgement; unto Thee O Lord will I sing". Well, let the world wander after its own things, go after its gods; be it given to us to know this God, to know this salvation. We must needs die; we must needs die and be as water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. The grey hairs of some of us say that we cannot live long, and perhaps some of us would not if we might. Why, salvation has come to our house, to our heart, as we believe, yet we must die to know what salvation means in the fullness of it, for, while the conscience is purged from dead works, the sin of our nature remains. And, like as when the body is unhealthy, eruptions may be breaking out on the skin here and there, so the awful eruptions of sin, or bad temper, or hypocritical disposition, or worldly mind, or fretful heart, or perverse will, O how these things break out. What shame they cover us with, what grief they fill us with. What wonder we feel at times as to the issue of our long profession, some may say. And yet, this is it: "Kept by the power of God, through faith, - faith toward our Lord

Jesus Christ - unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.
Kept by the power of God unto the very end.

What better thing can I wish for you who are dead in sin than this, that God will give you eternal life; that you may feel your ruin, that you may confess your sin, that you may repent toward God, and have faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN.