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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 8 January 1936

Psalm 34 v 6

"This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and
saved him out of all his troubles"

A wonderful example is set before every tried child of God in the suffering Saviour; hated, despised, rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; burdened with imputed sin, tempted of the devil, led into the wilderness to be tempted. Some of you, may I say in a parenthesis, some of you may get your worst times immediately on your best times, and if you do God help you to believe in the Saviour who went before you in so trying a path.

He cried unto God. There were two things remarkable in the Man Christ Jesus. First, the Holy Ghost was given to Him without measure in the fulness of all the gifts of the Spirit, enabling Him to rely on the promises of His Father and to plead these promises. These all marked the way of a suffering Saviour. And the second things is this, that in all His troubles, afflictions and sorrows, He prayed whole nights. Cold nights and the midnight air witnessed the fervour of His prayer. The Lord gives His people these two things in measure. He gives them His Spirit who helps their infirmities. He gives them the Spirit of grace and supplication that they may pray and they do pray. If we have these two blessings in our souls we shall have trouble but we shall have sustenance, the help of God. May the Lord give us grace to remember Jesus Christ was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The Psalmist here is David. This is the title "A Psalm of David, when he changed His behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed". You remember the occasion; he went and feigned madness before Achish, which is the same as Abimelech, which is a common name. The particular name of this king was Achish. And David saw his danger before and with a heathen king and he feigned madness and was driven away, his secret exercises, his affliction, being driven out of God's heritage by Saul, in violent and constant persecution. David fled and complained that they had driven him out

from his inheritance, God's inheritance, and in this condition he cried unto God. "This poor man cried". He looked unto the Lord, through them, the conflict with himself; looked unto Him. One of the greatest mercies you can ever have in this world is faith to look unto God. "They looked unto Him". You will always look to Christ when you are under the teaching of the Spirit of Christ. You will have your eye fixed on Him from time to time. His Person, His work, His death, His resurrection, His Priestly office and work in heaven. His kingly power, His fulness of grace, and love. These things, these perfections and graces in Him in infinite fulness, will from time to time be opened in some measure to every tried child of God, and that leads to this - "they were lightened". So was Asaph when he looked to the Lord, being led into the temple. He was lightened. He saw two things, very solemn things. First he saw himself as a beast before the Lord. He saw the vanity and the wickedness of his cogitations, his regarding God's providence so crooked and wishing to make it straight. And that made him, in his feelings, when he was enlightened, to be as a beast before the Lord. And O, he was so blessed that he saw in heaven One who alone filled his heart so as that he said "Whom have I in heaven but Thee". He saw an empty world and one who was before him and in his faith, so that he said "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". Emptiness God will have His people find here below. He turns the world upside down as a man turns a dish upside down when he has washed it. So God speaks by Isaiah. Do not be surprised if God empties the world to you. You must find, or more or less see, your own world, whatever that may be, will be an empty thing and place to you when God intends to fill you with Himself. Asaph saw the condition of the wicked. He saw the solemn and awful sovereignty of God in putting them in slippery places and their prosperity was a snare to them, a slippery place. And suddenly, while they were marrying and giving in marriage, and feasting and rejoicing, suddenly, they slipped into eternity, into hell. May the Lord bless us with a right spirit in these things.

This poor man cried. He must cry for two reasons. First that he was in need. He needed protection and none to protect him but God. Saul, king of Israel, was murderously hunting him, seeking his life daily. O what an awful condition poor David was in from time to time. He needed protection and he received it. Sometimes he must have seen

these divine wings spread over him, the glorious righteousness and the mighty power and the goodness of God covering him, protecting him against his enemy, Saul. He prayed; he needed this protection. It must always be so. Then the second thing he had was this, a casting of his care upon the Lord. What else could he do? What else can you do when any affliction thus comes to you? You cry mightily to God. There always is a trembling in affliction. When the Lord's people are afflicted, they do tremble. The majesty of God in affliction makes them fear. Their need of chastisement they realise and they tremble. In the Psalm I read just now, we read of going down to the sea in ships, doing business in great waters. In another place we read of the mariners being afraid at God's tokens. Storms, lightning, thunder, waves - God's tokens - tokens of His sovereign power. The utter helplessness of these poor mariners, afraid of God's tokens; you may be, when some trouble comes on you, some affliction is laid on you, some providence seems to be against you, and, worse than all, the wickedness of your nature rising up like waves, beating against your faith; then you have to pray. God teaches you to pray. "This poor man cried". I believe there were some particular things in this prayer. Does ever a child of God in affliction go without a sense of deserving it? Does not faith say, in his heart, God is exacting of you less than your iniquities deserve? Have you not said, when in trouble, Lord if I had my deserts it would not be this trouble; it would be hell. God's people do not, they are not allowed - the Spirit does not allow them - to forget their sinfulness, and some particular sins. Some of you may have particular sins, propensities, and you have indulged them secretly, and when the Lord brings you into real trouble about your condition, you remember that. You remember that particular thing that led you astray, that hardened your heart, that brought you into barrenness and bondage and evil. So when you cry out of trouble and in trouble that will be one thing with you. It is hard to pray sometimes when you are just full of a sense of what you deserve, and yet the Spirit comes and makes intercession with you, in you, with groanings that cannot be uttered. This is the work of God, a solemn work, but a saving work, in all who are partakers of it. And when you cry there is a plea made; all real prayer has a plea in it. We ordinarily close in prayer, use that plea, for Christ's sake. If we use it in a particular way when we are in a particular trouble, that is a prevailing prayer, a plea which God will not, cannot,

disregard. He is pleased with His Son, and He is pleased with His people, seeing them in His Son, and He is pleased with that faith that pleads the precious Person, blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have no complaint to make about yourselves. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it". But you have got this one thing at times, and O the strength of it, and the consolation of it, when you can say in faith, for Christ's sake. Thou canst not look on me with any delight, but Thou canst and Thou dost look on Thy Son with infinite pleasure; for His sake, hear me. One who so cries is pleasing to God, and each child of God may say to another in affliction, "Let us go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord for He will teach us of His ways." He does teach us of His ways and this is one of the best ways, prayer, real prayer.

Prayer can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates

In one Psalm the Psalmist said he cried unto God, and this followed - then the earth was moved - and God will move the earth for you when you cry to Him. Mountains will be levelled, valleys exalted, filled up, when prayer is made. The prayer of faith saves the sick. We read of the disciples when they were persecuted and then let go by their persecutors, they went to their own company, and prayer was made of the church, and the place shook. You will find a shaking sometimes when God helps you particularly to pray. Sweet and solemn exercises you will have when you call on God in your affliction. "This poor man cried." Poverty will make you cry to the Lord, and, remember this if you can - the Lord help you to - "Blessed are the poor in spirit". This poverty is poverty of spirit, and poverty of all resources. Poverty of that kind that brings you to say, with the disciples, "To whom else shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life." And this life of praying is a blessed, honourable life. The trade of begging, I have said and I will repeat it, is an honourable trade, and O what a favour to have the spirit to trade with God, to come and deal with God. "This poor man cried". He had no strength, he had no resources in himself. There was Saul following him and now he was in the presence of a heathen king. He scrabbled and let his spittle fall down on his beard - a disgraceful thing for a Jew - so they said he was mad. He cried unto God. Whether this was written immediately after

that deliverance or whether it was done later does not appear, but one would think that it was some time - it might be a short time or longer - when he penned this wonderful Psalm respecting God's dealings with him on that particular occasion. "And the Lord heard him" - a great thing to say. There are two things regarding this I would name to you, first, when in prayer - "prayer indited", as the hymn has it "by the Lord"; liberty, sweet peculiar liberty in your spirit, in your prayer - there is a sense, a feeling that your prayer is not rejected. Many times you may have prayed and said, when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer, but on an especial occasion like this, an occasion in your own conscience, it is different, far different. No repulse, no putting you back, no shutting you up; a feeling that you are accepted, that you are helped, that God is not displeased with you in this, your present condition and your crying to Him. The Lord heard him; his cry entered into the ear of God. It applied to Solomon's prayer that the Lord would regard His people in their various troubles. The Lord said "Now shall My eye be opened and My ear attent unto the prayer that is made in this place." That place was a type of Christ, and Christ is before God, and when you pray by the help of the Holy Ghost, surely that is the Lord having His eye on Christ, His ear open to your prayer as ascending by the Spirit through Christ.

And the second thing is in the last clause of the text. "And saved him out of all his troubles." What an experience. There are two ways in which God's saints get saved out of their troubles. The first is when faith gets it. Faith may have a deliverance long before the actual deliverance comes. I know that; some of you know it. As if the Lord said, "I have heard your prayer. I will answer; I have answered." The answer, the actual work of deliverance may be delayed, but it must come. Faith gets it. You may have said, I have got a deliverance. You may have said it to a friend, and yet that friend knew what you knew, that you were still in your trouble, in the very thick of the battle, carrying the burden in your heart and in your circumstances; yet faith said, I am delivered. Blessed be God, that is not an isolated experience of one person. It more or less belongs to the Lord's people who have prevailing prayer. O what a wonder it is to get an answer to prayer; one of the greatest blessings, one of the best parts of your inheritance. You can perhaps

look into your house, into your person, into some friend, and say there is an answer. I got that first, you say, in my heart, in the hand of faith, and God, in His time, wrought it actually. "Saved him out of all his troubles". All of them. Yes, all at that time. New ones came, as we know from the life of the Psalmist, but at that time, the troubles he was in, he was saved from. Saul's power, died; Saul died. Persecution in that way died, and David was saved out of that trouble. Heathen kings saw God with David and revered him and brought presents to him, so in that regard God saved him out of that trouble.

Now look at this in your own cases, You have had an "all deliverance", an "all salvation". You have said, perhaps, that trouble has gone. God sanctified it to me; He drew me to Himself by means of it. He made Himself precious to me by means of it. He made my conscience tender; He gave me wisdom to observe His dealings with me, and therein I understood His lovingkindness, and I am delivered. Other trouble comes, but this is the deliverance which is here mentioned. You are saved out of that trouble. All his troubles at that time. We are warranted to say that by his own history afterward, for he fell into much trouble. So may the Lord help us to look at it thus. Saved him out of his troubles.

There is a trouble that you will never get rid of quite, though the Lord may make the storm a calm; the trouble of indwelling sin. O, it is a trouble, but there are moments, yea there may be days, when this devil of indwelling sin is subdued. When, as it were, God lays hold of him and puts a great chain on him and a great stone over the mouth of the pit, and that devil is not allowed to come out for a season to you, and a wonderful deliverance that is. Saved him out of all that trouble, that for a season he was not left to be tempted of the devil, not left to the corruptions of his nature, not left to the afflictions which he had been feeling and suffering, for they were removed from him. Saved him. What brings this salvation? I would say this - Let us ascribe it to the power of God, but to the power of God as God in Christ. We shall never get a blessing out of Christ, never have a deliverance out of Him. All spiritual blessings are in Him and come from Him. So when we are saved out of our troubles, we are saved by Him. God bruises the devil under the feet of His people.

He does it by means of the teaching of the Spirit and by the mighty power of the Spirit; so all trouble comes under that head. We are saved by the precious merit and gracious power of the Lord God, Jesus Christ. O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness. 'Tis wonderful goodness given to us who have had this experience. These three things I would leave before you. First, the poor man, the crying, praying man; the hearing of God; then the deliverance. And as you may be able to follow that description, you will find in your own cases that there is a sweet answer. You say, O I know that.

"This poor man". You will never lose your spiritual poverty while you live. You will never be long without trouble while you live. Bunyan is right when he says

The Christian man is seldom long at ease
When one trouble ends, another doth him seize

and so you will find it. New troubles tread upon reliefs, and griefs run an endless round, yet there is salvation. "Saved him out of all his troubles".

My brethren you must have troubles of some sort, you must have them. God intends it. He says "In the world ye shall have tribulation". That is a promise and it is fulfilled. It comes to every person blessed with grace. It comes to every church where God gathers people together. It comes wherever there are Christians. Trouble comes. Do not expect a smooth path to heaven. If you do, you won't be free long before you are disillusioned. You will find your eyes opened to the folly of thinking you are going to heaven in a smooth, easy path. But O the blessedness of having the Holy Ghost, of having a spirit of grace and of supplication, the blessedness of being enabled to lay your case before God, to cast your care on Him and believe, at times, that He careth for you.

Now watch these things, watch God's dealings with you. Watch how He deals with you when you have some particular trouble and exercise. You will find that as you are enabled to watch that thus you will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord, and be led to give Him the thanks of your heart and the worship of your soul for His

great kindness to you. Therefore, O magnify the Lord with me, says the Psalmist; let us exalt His Name, because He has been so good, so gracious to us. We should thank Him, yet it may be sometimes with you that you say to Him - Look upon mine affliction for it increaseth and I am full of confusion. And a very painful experience that is. May the Lord think on us for good and make us understand this blessed experience.

AMEN.