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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTIST*

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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 10 February 1929

Psalm 36 v 10

"O continue Thy lovingkindness unto them that know
Thee and Thy righteousness to the
upright in heart".

Probably some of you are well advanced in years, maybe sometimes saying to yourselves we never expected to live to see the changes that we do see, the changes in religion, the changes in the nation, changes in the churches with which we are connected. I have such reflections. I never expected to see some of the changes which I have seen. There is One only unchangeable, only God. "I am the Lord I change not". Earthly friends die, some change. God is the same yesterday, today and for ever. Congregations rise and fall, churches flourish and decay. Seven churches of Asia; each one had a letter addressed to it through its angel by the Lord and five of the seven were greatly corrupt. We ought not to expect that any church will remain wholly uncorrupted yet God can keep a church, He can keep a people and if it has pleased Him to keep us in any comfortable measure in His truth, in His fear, in manifestations of His power and working, we have much reason to be very thankful. Sometimes of late I have felt very great fear lest my ministry should dry up and I should be like an old withered stick, of no use to any of you and this has caused many cries to God that He would prevent so great a calamity, but I have had the fear. A good minister is to bring forth things new and old from the rich treasure of his receiving from God. What he receives, that is treasure, and out of his heart he is to bring forth things new and old. I have been here now many years speaking about God and I would thank Him for His kindness in not allowing me to speak without some gracious effect among you but there is one thing will always be with us and that is need. We are dependent. We shall be dependent in heaven if we get there. There is no independent creature in any state or place. Dependence is indelibly stamped upon us all, rather so woven in the very texture of our nature that it will never be taken out. I have been glad to think that I shall be a creature in heaven,

dependent on the Lord. I remember when that was first of all impressed on my heart and I have many times thanked God for creatureship in the hope that, as a creature redeemed, I shall be with Him in heaven. Now this dependence, if it is not to wither us and leave us to die, must have a supply. There must be a supply. If we had no food for a certain time our body must necessarily wither, die, and if nothing is communicated to us by the Lord to our souls, we could not continue. "He will not always chide neither will He keep His anger for ever" lest the soul should faint before Him and fail. This supply is endless in its source, sufficient in its source. If we are languishing, if the bones which were once well covered are seen sticking out, it is not for lack in God, but because there are no communications made to us, and if He does not make communications there is a reason for it. If any of you knowing and fearing God lack communications ask Him why. If He be absent seek for causes of that absence. Well taught, you will never lay at the door of divine sovereignty your leanness. This supply is in the text and the prayer is for a continuation of it. "O" as the marginal reading is "O draw out at length Thy lovingkindness", which is, continue to show it, to communicate it, give it out, O Lord. Give out of Thy fulness and grace for grace. Nothing will preserve our souls in purity of doctrine but the communication of doctrine. Nothing will preserve us in purity of desire but the communications of holiness from the Lord Jesus. O dependence! Go, God help you, go daily, constantly to this fountain, the lovingkindness of God. Where is it? In Christ. "It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". What is it? The eternal love of God in predestinating His people to the adoption of children to Himself by Jesus Christ. What is the end of it? That we should be holy before Him in love. Sinner, think of this. It is manifested in Christ according to that beautiful Scripture which Arminians have stolen times without number but yet which remains the property of the church - "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the supply. How does it become the property, the experience of the saints? By the gracious indwelling and teaching of the Holy Ghost. Every new born person here is the temple of the Holy Ghost. You may, some of you, be in bondage, you may be hard of heart, you may be rebellious sometimes. You may wonder why you do not get a blessing while others do get a blessing, but, if born

again, you have in you, as a temple, the Holy Ghost. Well were it for us to believe this. "Know ye not" said the Apostle to the Corinthians, as if they had forgotten it - "Know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost and that God dwelleth in you". And he says, if any man defile the temple of God, God will destroy him in some way. It will be a terrible thing for a child of God to defile that temple. One will know by the rebukes and chastisements of God what an awful thing it is to defile God's temple. What will defile it? Worldliness. Remember that the holy city, Jerusalem, had a wall high and great separating it; that Ezekiel's city had a wall round about it; the holy mount had that wall round about it. O I wish we might, as a people, fear God in these things. I am glad to have a case of my own and I am glad that you have cases of your own and cannot do without God, but do not forget that the Scriptures do speak to the church, the church in the wilderness. They do speak to the church as a church and God loves Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. The promise of the presence of Christ is a great promise and belongs to the church. Wherever two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them. Now brethren look at this and let us for a few moments look at the continuance of this lovingkindness of God.

Continuance is first by fresh communications of life. No man can keep alive his own soul. If you complain of being withered, why is it that you are so? If you complain that for the most part the preaching is dry to you, do you ever ask why? If you complain that you get no answer do you ask why? If you complain that when you read the Scriptures they do not speak to you, do you enquire why? If you say sin in this form or in that form has dominion, why is it? That God has given you up to it for the time. He does give us up to some things for solemn correction. Enquire why it is not pleasing to Him. The Lord, He says, doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. This communication of life, new supplies, whereby desires of a right nature are kept lively, whereby visits to the throne of grace are made frequent, whereby confession is made sincere, and kept sincere, and whereby faith is strengthened to go out to the Son of God, to that fulness of God which it pleases Him should dwell in His dearly beloved Son; a continuance of life. How dull we get and how flat unless there be communications made. What a sickly condition you may be in though blessed with grace if there be not communications of life made to you.

A respectable profession, an easy comfortable condition of mind, yet corrupt before God, and we bring the lame to Him and offer it to Him, lame desires, whereas, as one says,

He requires pure desires
All the heart or nothing

and if some of us were honest we should say to Him, Lord this business of mine has the bigger part of my heart; this comfortable position of mine I am satisfied with more than I am satisfied with Thyself. O the confessions some of us would have to make. We may confess we are lean and not be at all sorry, but a communication of life to us will make us sorry. Continue to keep conviction of our condition lively and strong in our consciences. Nothing is so hardening as sin. Nothing makes men so tender as grace communicated. The life of God, as a root, is hardy - no frost will kill it - but the growth is so tender that the least sin indulged will injure it. The rooted stock remains, but indulged sin injures the fruit. We need grace communicated to us. We see the church in the wilderness under Moses constantly turning aside. Her character was that she was turning aside constantly. God sent His prophets rising up early and saying to them O do not this, but they did it. The daring nature of sin is painfully illustrated in that church in the wilderness and some of us may have to say we understand it painfully. O continue gracious God to keep the conscience tender. Continue to convey grace to us for the strengthening of faith. "Fight the good fight of faith". How many of us could go before God and say that sin that easily besets us we are constantly fighting? Should not some of us rather have to say, Lord it is true of us we have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. Faith, a great grace, needs to be strengthened daily. The Apostle Paul said to his son Timothy "Thou therefore my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called". O, believer, probably you say very little is needed in my case to turn me aside and to bring before, and into, my mind insuperable difficulties so that I am ready to say, the goodly land I shall never enter. Continue to give demonstration that my faith may not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Demonstration, what is that? Such opening, revealing, communicating truth to the soul as

that it shall be set clearly before the heart and faith says "Now I know". Some of you may say we are acquainted with the doctrines of God's Word. Yes, you may be, without loving them, without drawing virtue from them, without perceiving their infinite importance. It is this that I mean, an inward work, an internal work of truth, the truth as it is in Jesus received in the life of it and the power of it and the beauty of it and the efficacy of it, making us as the church is called, a city of truth. O continue Thy lovingkindness in visiting us. Jesus visits sinners still. Do you believe it? Do you know it? Does He visit you? What is it for Jesus Christ to visit a sinner? It is for Him to come in His gospel, in some branch of it, to show His well pleased face, to make known His arm, to speak His gospel, so to speak it as that that is understood, "My sheep know My voice". It is for faith to have given to it the high privilege of gazing on Him, now on the cross, now in the garden, now coming into His own garden to eat His pleasant fruit, now speaking peace to the conscience, then shedding abroad His love in the heart by the Holy Ghost, then assuring the heart of an interest in Him, showing the covenant of grace, and that the sinner to whom He is visiting in this way, showing His mercy, is found within the blessed folds of that covenant. Visits? O I wish we had them. I wish His visits were more frequent or that they lasted longer. O continue Thy lovingkindness in not withholding reproofs and chastisements. Nobody naturally would say that a parent had no love because he reprov'd his child. The contrary is the truth. If the rod is spared it is from hatred. God loves His people and therefore He chastens them. "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not". Chastisement is training, chastisement is tying up the tree, keeping it from being here and there, dragging its weight on the ground. Chastisement is an expression to a sinner of his foolishness and of God's kindness. If you have a vine and care for it you will do two things. You will tie up all the healthy, promising branches, and you will cut away what you know will not bear fruit. "I am the true Vine, My Father is the husbandman" Think of it and remember what Jesus said - "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away". Every branch that has attached itself to me in a sort of mechanical way of profession He taketh away. "But every branch that beareth fruit" being in Me rightly, "He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit". "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have

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spoken unto you", and purge and clean are the same.

O continue Thy lovingkindness in restoring comforts to mourners. When the wayward, the rebuked and the chastened soul went on in the frowardness of his heart, what does God say? Just the opposite of what you, what I, would say. We would say, let him alone. Says God "I will restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." O the sweetness of being converted. How often has God converted some of us. O the mercy of being converted in this way.

Continue Thy lovingkindness in keeping us to the end. "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". Think of it. What is more natural to us than to backslide? A very solemn word of God is that - My people are bent to backsliding as a backsliding heifer. Very humbling. If a man said it to a man there would be an offence probably. God says it and when He speaks He speaks the truth. May we be kept. May the Lord keep me in this pulpit. May He keep you in the pew. Our bent is that way - a "deceitful bow in the day of battle"- yet heaven is before us. It is, it is before some of us. We are going there. Blessed be God for a hope of it and for confirmations of that hope from time to time. "Surely there is an end and thine expectation shall not be cut off".

And dear friends, one word on this point and I leave it. This continuance of the lovingkindness of the Lord will go on through eternity. The supply will be there as it is now, ever full, ever flowing. The communications of it here are intermittent. One day something comes and another and there is a withholding. There, there will be no intermission. The Lamb will lead His wondrous company to living fountains of waters. Well, just think of it. I do think of it at times nowadays. There will be an absence of that horrible thing, sin. O that in itself is a great attraction - no sin.

Now the people to whom this lovingkindness is to be shown, according to this prayer, are "to them that know Thee", to them that know God. Some here would have to say if they were examined and would speak the truth as to the Almighty, this would be what they would say "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways". No condition can be imagined more dreadful than that, not to want God.

Others here would say, and do say,

O when will that blest time arrive
When Thou wilt kindly deign
With me to sit, to lodge, to live
And never part again

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"Them that know Thee". When people know God, they know themselves. The knowledge of self is derived from the knowledge of God. Therefore they know their sins. Then they know the forgiveness of their sins, Then they know their weakness without God. And then they know that they can do all things by God. "I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me" And they know God in His gospel in the forgiveness of their sins, in the communication of His righteousness, in the speaking home on their hearts of His word, His word of promise. Well what a wonder it is to know God. What is this? "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent". It is a great thing to know God but you cannot pick this up. It must be given. "I give unto My sheep eternal life". Saving religion is not a matter of acquisition but of impartation. God gives it.

"And Thy righteousness to the upright in heart". There is no man who has an upright heart by nature. Some may say I ought not to say that. Well, God says it. He says this - "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it". Therefore there is no man who has, by nature, an upright heart, but God gives an upright heart. What is it to have an upright heart? A new heart and right spirit will I give you. An upright heart is honest in its dealings with God, honest among men, but honest above all, on your knees in secret, when you can say, may I never, never dare, what I'm not to say I am. O it is a great thing to be upright. An upright man in the Psalms says "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting". And God graciously gives His righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, and He continues to show it. He continues His righteous dealings with such. He continues to make them know that He is good, that He changes not. And all these people are to be satisfied with the fatness of His house and to drink

of the river of His pleasures for evermore.

Just one word and I close, this, that this communication made to a sinner and to the church here, often intermitted, shall through eternity in the fulness of it, the freeness of it, the greatness of it, the sufficiency of it, and the efficacy of it, continue without interruption. Now how many of you could go home to your rooms and kneel before God and pray out of a sense of dependence in every respect, and say to God, Lord, I think I could from all things parted be, but never, never, Lord from Thee. Now may the Lord help us to answer honestly before Him.

AMEN.