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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Wednesday evening, 14th. September, 1927

Text: Psalm 36 v. 10

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

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Preceding this verse, we have wonderful praise offered to God in the blessed statements that are here made. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasure. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light." These verses very beautifully set forth the sufficiency of God; they are a most illustrious offering of admiration and praise to the only sufficient God. He is sufficient for us. The mercy which we need, is in the heavens, never to be exhausted; the faithfulness that our unfaithfulness calls for, is like the great mountains; and the satisfaction that our dependent nature and dependent spiritual life, - yes, spiritual life is as dependent as natural life is, - for the supply, we have here an abundance set forth, and a statement positive that it shall be poured out upon needy people - "they shall be abundantly satisfied;" - "saturated", the word may be rendered. Saturated, according to the word in Isaiah - "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed," - that is the flood, that is the water, the power of the Spirit on sinners and there is a river for them of which they are to drink. A river, not simply to quench their thirst, that would be much, but a river of pleasures, and pleasures that are God's pleasures. He loves His holy fear; He takes pleasure in all who fear Him. He loves His own Son, His own gospel, and these pleasures are at His right hand and He will make the thirsty people in the wilderness, drink of that river of His own pleasures, and all these wondrous commendations of God we have just concluded in the verse which was the text on Lord's day last - "For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light."

Now, may I not say, coming to the text of this evening, that it is a supplication, an intercession made for the church in the wilderness; people brought out of Egypt, delivered from the Red Sea and the Egyptians, gathered and guided and receiving a promise of the land given to them in the covenant; receiving a promise of that, they are brought into the wilderness. The wilderness state is emphatically a state of dependence. The industrious farmers among them could not say, 'Now we will set to and plough and sow this land.' No, they must depend on bread rained from heaven; and there were no engineers to say, 'We will dig artesian wells and get water.' They must depend on the God of all wisdom and power and infinite resources and fulness, to supply them with water. We are in a wilderness; we are in a state of moving; this is not our rest; no abiding city have we here; nothing firm. Our own foundation is in the dust and we shall soon lie down in the dust, but God has turned the heart and face of His children toward heaven, and instructed them to seek "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And this dependence of ours, - shall I say it? - I will, - is sometimes very pleasant, abhorrent to a fallen, proud heart, but pleasant to faith. Would you depend on any other if you could - would you dig wells for yourself if you could - would you provide your own bread if you could - would you protect yourself by night and by day and have your own movements in your own hand if you could? I believe men and women here, who are proud enough in their fallen nature to say, 'Yes, indeed we would,' the same can say, and do say at times, perhaps some say now, 'We are pleased to be dependent and are enabled sometimes to depend.' It is an honour to be dependent, and a mercy to have grace, to have faith to depend. ... On whom are we to depend? ... On the Lord. - "I am the Lord thy God." - 'I will lead thee in a right way; I will teach thee to profit; no harm shall come to thee; no danger shall overtake and destroy thee; no death shall swallow thee up.' - "I am the Lord thy God." Ah, He said to Abraham, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," - "walk before Me, and be thou perfect." This dependence then, makes this intercession for us, a very precious thing, "O continue Thy lovingkindness," - O draw out, (see margin), "Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee; and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart."

What is lovingkindness? I think it is the expression of the everlasting love of God. It is the bright shining of His face; it is the pillar by night, the fire by day; it is the communication

from time to time of some particular, some much needed, mercy. It is the opening of the Lord's mouth to a sinner, who says again and again, "Be not silent to me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." Now if that little attempt, that definition of lovingkindness, is correct, can you say to the Lord, 'Let that lovingkindness be drawn out to me.' How long is this to last? How long did the manna fall from heaven, and the water from the flinty rock follow that nation so favoured? Until they entered the land of promise. As long as the church is in the wilderness; as long as we here, are in the wilderness, so long shall we need the continuance and the continued drawing out to us, of this lovingkindness.

To whom is it to be drawn out? To "them that know Thee." How do we know the Lord? By our being brought out of Egypt; by our being delivered from time to time from some Egyptian enemy, from some death, or some watery grave. From being consumed by some fiery temptation, also by our having been thus far sustained and guided: moved by the moving of the cloud, made to rest by the resting of the cloud. Do you know Him? Yes, some of you do and I verily think I should lie against my right, if I said I know Him not. This lovingkindness, drawn out and given and manifested to a person, is like the earnest of his inheritance. When the bread fell down from heaven and the people gathered it, it would say, to some of them at least, 'Now the Lord who has sent this down from heaven for you, will take you to heaven to be with Himself one day.' Lovingkindness drawn out, means then, just a continuance of the Lord's mercy to His poor needy people. That is what it is. What is it in the working of it? It is the working of "all things after the counsel of His own will." The counsel of His will in eternity was to have some poor people here who should partake of his grace; live the life of Christ; live a life of faith in the Son of God; have wilderness temptation and wilderness fare; needing the patience of a pilgrim; the courage of a soldier who had daily enemies to meet, who would need to have exhibited to him by night, a protecting hand, and by day, a guiding hand.

This blessed lovingkindness, the Lord does show to His people, but there is always some trouble connected with it. If you have received a promise from the Lord, that promise has God in it, but also

it has trouble about it. You will never have a promise without some trouble connected with it; some waiting for its fulfilling; some temptation perhaps concerning the reality of it, or when darkness comes to you, some questioning of your interest in it, - there will be some trouble. You won't, at least I think you won't, find a saint whose case is in the Scripture given to us for our edification, who received a promise and who had not some trouble connected with, and as it were, growing out of that promise. Abraham would never have had twenty years of anxiety concerning a son if he had not had a promise that a son should be given to him. He might have had other troubles, but that one trouble was the thing of those twenty years. "Lord God, what wilt Thou give me," said he, on one occasion, "seeing I go childless?" Jacob got a promise of divine presence and protection, but Jacob had many a frost bite, and many a faint in the sun, during the years that he laboured for Laban, and how would he look at times on that promise given out to him from Bethel? How would he sometimes say, 'Did I get it - did the Lord speak it to me?' or, he would again and again go and seek His face and say, 'Do fulfil the promise.' There was trouble connected with it. David got an anointing. He was made a king, but there was then, when he was anointed to the kingdom, there was then a king on the throne, a God-rejected king, therefore an envious, a jealous king, who sought David's life. Have you some anointing? Then you have got the god of this world against you. Many a javelin will he hurl at you, seeking to smite you and kill you. Many and many a time poor David had trouble out of his promise of the kingdom. Now and again he was ready to faint and give up. On one occasion he said, 'Now it is no good; there is only a step between me and death. I will wait no more; I will get out of the land, and get away from all this trouble.' He never took that last step in the way he feared he would take it, but there was his exercise, - there was his trouble. If God tells Paul that He has given all the souls to him, that are with him in the ship, He also makes him know this - the ship must be broken to pieces. They must suffer shipwreck so as to make the preservation of each person given to Paul simply a wonder, a miracle of the power and faithfulness of God. So, dear friends, if you have some lovingkindness from the Lord, you will need Him to continue to express it to you, because while in the wilderness you will have something to trouble you, something to contradict you; contradiction of your unbelieving heart, and contradiction of the devil and contradiction of the world. In some way, some form, you will have to endure, and need, again and

again, Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Ah, if your eye is on God, you won't always see Him as you would wish to do. You won't always hear Him speak, if you have heard Him speak, as you wish to hear Him. There will come things, interposing devils, sins, time delays on God's part; they will all come, and they will have one voice, and that is, 'You are wrong!' But the cloud of witnesses will be seen sometimes and they have a testimony, even this, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto fellowship of His Son." God is faithful, and He continues His lovingkindness.

I would like, as enabled, just for a few minutes to speak of how the Lord draws this out. O draw out Thy lovingkindness. "Draw (it) out at length." It means this, dear friends: that God graciously conveys mercy to His people. Now how is this?... Well, when you say of and in some affliction, that you know the Apostle Paul's "present" is indeed painful; - No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous. (Heb. 12 v 11). When you say 'for the present', God keep you from saying, 'always'. There is a disposition through unbelief, to say 'always', when it is only intended for the present. You get a secret sustaining, without a sensible comfort. That secret sustaining, is the drawing out of the Lord's lovingkindness. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Were they forsaken to whom the Lord said, "When thou passest through the waters, --- they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned." Were they then forsaken? No! He was with them, and He was drawing out to them then, His lovingkindness. O,

"He lends an unseen hand,
And gives a secret prop,
Which keeps them waiting stand,
Till He complete their hope!"

There is that mercy. Might we have wisdom to observe it and grace to believe it. Think not that He is gone, because you do not enjoy His presence. Erskin wisely exhorts us in his own way: "Say not, 'He is gone for ever,' though His visits He adjourn." He has not gone, blessed be His name, He has not gone. Jacob fell asleep, alone as he would have said, he fell asleep. Look at the case - O, it is very encouraging. Look at the case. A guilty man, having recently deceived his blind father, encountered an angry brother, threatening him with death. To shield him from that, he is sent away from home. The first night, he lies down alone, and it may not

be difficult for some of us to imagine his reflections. You may lie down in a night of sorrow, and your reflections are painful - 'I have brought this to myself, I have procured this trouble by my sins; this darkness, this uncertainty, this perplexity, this pain, this anguish, this sorrow I have brought on myself by my sins.' You know what I mean; I know well for myself, you may have many a waking hour, and reflections in those hours that fill you with confusion and suffuse your face with shame. He lies down alone, but soon God talks to him. He gives him a dream. "God speaketh --- in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men." Jacob dreamed a dream, and heaven, - that might have, when he laid himself down that night, seemed very far from him, from his guilty conscience, - heaven appeared to him opened; a ladder at the top, whose bottom reached himself. I think that must have been the case, I have often thought about it; the bottom came to where he was, and then communications were made. Angels ascending and descending, and the Lord stood at the top and He spoke to him. What a change - no longer alone! God with him, promising him to continue with him in all places, all troubles, on frosty nights, on burning days, always with him; through Laban's deceit and the changing of his wages ten times, always with him, keeping him so as that on his return, when he came to where the Lord had spoken to him he said, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." And he said to Laban, "Except the God of my father, --- had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty." The Lord was with him. O say not, He is gone if you do not enjoy His presence. Is thy faith sustained; is it directed to the Lord Jesus? Do you feel in the midst of all, and notwithstanding all that is against you, you can lean, you must lean, on Him? You have no other dependence. "Thy whole dependence on Me fix," - and that is where you are. Looking to Him alone, and seeing no other dependence. I have none, I wish for none. This is how, a little, He will now and again draw out, or continue, His lovingkindness. He sustains in the wilderness. And sometimes, He continues, and draws it out like this: He lets some manna fall; He gives some of the bread of life; the holy gospel, the Lord Jesus, the love of God, the atonement of Christ, the intercession of Christ, the arm of the Lord. These, these, brought home by the eternal Spirit, are like the favours of God. They are the favours, sweet favours, comforting favours, sustaining, strengthening, encouraging favours; heartening you in the

wilderness, enabling you to say, 'O, I shall get through, I shall get through.' -

"David's Lord and Gideon's Friend,
Will help His servant to the end."

This is how the Lord does it, and that does invest this blessed Book with a singular beauty and preciousness, for you say, 'I have received it; I have found some words of this Book in my heart, and they have talked with me and revealed God to me and brought the Saviour near, and brought Him near to me.'

What bread the word of God is made sometimes, to sinners. O what bread it has been to me here and there. Now do not say you have had none because you have not had full satisfaction. An old puritan says, "A man may be rich and yet not possess millions." You may have had something, and not all that you want. Indeed who has had all he wants; whoever will get all he wants in this world? But, to have something. O, a crumb, yes, a crumb. What is in a crumb?... Every constituent of bread, - every part of bread, in a crumb, else it would not be a crumb of bread. Think of it.... He continues His lovingkindness. He continues it and what a mercy to be able to say: 'The Lord does not leave me entirely; He does touch me now and again; He does look on me here and there; He lets me know that He is about me;' and here I would say this, 'He lets me know a little of his lovingkindness in afflictions.' O what a good God He has been in afflicting some of us. Sometimes I have said I would not have been without the sorrows that have broken my heart at times, for the world. How they have sent me to God, and how kindly He has opened the throne of His heavenly grace, and I am not the only one here who can say that. Though for the present, the thing has been grievous, not joyous, it has brought us to Him in whom is joy. Oh, we have had reason to go to Him and so many things we have said - Lord we deserve it and hell at the end of it. We have said it is sin procured. We have many a time had to say it to Him in humble confession, and what has He done? He has sustained; He has granted a token for good; He has broken the heart with His mercy, more than it has been broken by the trouble, - and though the affliction has had a most ugly appearance it has sometimes had a kindness in it and a smile in it that has made us say, 'O the Lord is good not to forget us.' "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."

What then?... Ye are not consumed, - "therefore ye --- are not consumed." He draws out His lovingkindness in affliction. May we often, when afflicted, hear Him say, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." Hear Him in the rod; it will always be merciful, but you must not be surprised if the enemy, who is always maligning God's character, comes and says in your heart: 'Now this trouble is a sword of justice to cut you off.' I have heard that many and many a time in my own things, and greatly feared it would prove to be that. Why, dear friends, we have lived to prove, many of us I trust, that the thing we feared, the thing that came on us to hurt, to wound, to weaken us, has been the kindness of the Lord. "Faithful are the wounds of a Friend."

Now the lovingkindness of the Lord in connection with affliction, has still more to be spoken about. This namely, - that He has delivered us. Out of all his afflictions, the Lord delivers the righteous, and many an affliction has been brought to a good issue by Him. "Afterward"... That beautiful word, afterward, in its connection there. "Afterward," the grievous affliction has yielded the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" unto all exercised people. If you go through a trouble with your head high; if you despise chastening you will get no good, but only evil; but if you are enabled to listen to it; if in the grievousness of it, you can visit the throne of God's heavenly grace; if the Spirit guides your heart by faith to the atonement, and shows you how that all afflictions, though sin procured, shall be sanctified and the sins that have brought the afflictions shall be purged away by the blood of Christ, then you will find this: "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." The effect of righteousness will be peace in your conscience. O the lovingkindness of the Lord. Look back, my friends. One would well believe that when David was fixed on the throne, he would not always be in forgetfulness of the years of trouble he had, when he was travelling to it. He would not forget the time when he, with his men in the cave, saw Saul coming into the cave; he would not forget the advice given to him by one of his friends and adherents: 'Now the Lord has delivered him into your hand, I won't smite him twice, the first stroke shall be the last.' He would not forget the gracious restraint on his spirit that enabled him to say, 'No, I won't touch him in this way, the Lord will do it all.' - (1 Samuel 26 v 8 to 11) O the sweetness he would get out of this meditation, - the kindness, the faithfulness, the wisdom and the goodness of his God; and when you have been

brought through some trouble, you have reflected on the kindness and the wisdom, and the mercy and the faithfulness of your God. He led you about, He instructed you, He kept you as the apple of His eye; He brought you through. "---- Thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." And we need this still; O continue it, we need it still. Are you less dependent now you are old and grey-headed? Because you have had forty years of experience of the Lord's goodness, are you now independent? Do you less need His goodness than formerly? I do not think so. If I were to speak of myself I should say that I am more dependent than ever and more need Him. O we need keeping to the last step. If He left us alone, left us to ourselves to take the last step, should we take it well? Do you think you would? I believe, No, emphatically No. "Every moment" ... An expressive word, - a great promise, - "every moment." All the time watering it. "Lest any hurt it." Keeping, when His keeping has not been perceived; keeping to the very end. O continue this! It is a suitable petition for us, is it not? Continue the operations of grace, by the Spirit. These operations that overcome our death and enmity so; that again and again remove the sleeping and slumbering of our spirits. These operations that keep us alive and lively, and keep our faces Godward. We need them, - we need them constantly. Continuous motion of life, we need in our souls, and that can only be by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. I wish, O sometimes I wish earnestly, that this may be not only my own experience, but yours: that as a people, we may be kept from sleeping and slumbering; kept from the world; kept from the religion of the world, and preserved and protected from the enmity of the world. Kept in the wilderness, content with wilderness fare, because it is heavenly fare; and happy in the wilderness prospect, for it is the prospect of the land of promise. May the Lord continue to move in our souls. Pray that He will continue to move in my soul. I have felt something today, just a little: you know, there is an awfulness in my office; there is an awfulness in standing in the pulpit in God's name. I realise it sometimes, even to a trembling. There is an awfulness in being a minister, and an added awfulness in being a pastor, and you know, if I am faithful, if the Lord is about and with me, you know what I have to do and am for doing; - "they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with

grief: for that is unprofitable for you;" - and several petitions I have for you as for myself.

We noticed when we read the Scripture, I mean you as well as myself, we noticed that Christ observes what His churches believe; He notices the doctrine they hold and if they hold doctrines of devils, and the doctrines of the error of Balaam and the terrible doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, He tells them of it. One of my prayers for you, as for myself, is that we may never be allowed by God to receive and hold any error of doctrine. "Hold fast the form of sound words." May the Lord continue this to us. And the second petition is this: that He would not let us walk, that He will never let us walk, in the light of any sparks of our own kindling. Beware of a fleshly religion. And a third petition is: that we may not be permitted to walk in any ungodliness. These petitions I presented before Him this day, over and over again for you, as well as for myself. If we are wrong in doctrine, we shall be weak; if we are wrong in experience we shall be unsafe; if we are wrong in practice, we shall bring reproof and affliction on ourselves. Think of these things and pray we may be led and enabled to pray constantly: 'O continue Thy lovingkindness to us. Lord, look on us as a congregation, look on us as a church, and may we be kept in the holy, clean fear of God.' I need not tell you that we are living in terrible times; that there are many, many portentous clouds hanging over the world and over this nation. Who can read of the fearful earthquakes and the devastating, desolating storms that are abroad in the world and not think there is something unusual; and who can look on this nation in this strange summer, when so much of the fruit of the earth is being, has been and is being, destroyed; and who can look upon the terrible effort being made by the Archbishops and Bishops of the land to bring popery in, to make the Anglican Church a popish church, - part of the apostate system that lies immediately under the curses of God; who, I say, can look on these things and not have some apprehension of divine anger? O, my brethren, I am afraid, often, of what we may see soon. I do not pretend to prophesy, but we may soon see terrible things, and how do we stand? Is loving-kindness under us as a foundation? Is it over us as a protection? Is it around us as a shelter? Is it in us as a life, a light, a glory, a power, - is it in us? O continue it, - if you have it, may this prayer be answered, - continue it. Let it still be 'drawn out' in further and new sweet communications. If it be with us, may the Lord continue it. One danger we have is sleeping, although there is quite enough, if we have eyes to see it, quite enough

about us, to keep us awake, but the old man will administer some narcotic, if he is allowed, to send us to sleep. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Do not slumber on doctrine, sound doctrine; do not slumber on some good experience and do not slumber on the consistency of your life. If you are consistent, the Lord keep you awake, and keep me awake, exercised in this way, praying thus: "O continue Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee; and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart."

An upright man is one who fears God. Said God to Satan, concerning Job, "Hast thou considered My servant Job, ~~that there is none~~ like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" An upright man is a man who has a good and honest heart given him; the fear of the Lord written in his heart. "I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord." Now, says this word of intercession, continue Thy righteousness: continue the doctrine of justification in communicating it to their souls from time to time; continue to show them the covenant of grace that supports, and will always support and supply them with all that they need; continue the promise Thou hast made to them, and quicken them in Thy righteousness. Have you ever had it revealed? If you say, 'Yes, and I rest there,' and you really rest without exercise, you are in a poor condition. If you have had it and have seen a little of its glory, you will want still more and more to see it; still more and more to be wrapped up in it; to be justified in it; to be beautified by it. - Continue it! And has His righteous character been made known to you, and have you ever felt,

"His honour and His name's at stake,
To save me from the burning lake."

That holy confidence must be replenished with fresh grace, to keep it pure and sweet in your soul, and thus we need the Lord. We are dependent on Him. May we have grace to be depending continually.

"I on Thy promises depend;
At least I to depend desire,
That Thou wilt love me to the end,
Be with me in temptation's fire;
Wilt for me work, and in me too,
And guide me right and bring me through."

May the Lord be with us. Pray for me, - and may I be enabled constantly to labour in prayer for you.

Amen.