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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 21 December, 1924

Text: Psalm 36 v 10

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

The Psalmist speaks solemnly to the wicked in the beginning of this Psalm and shows that he himself possesses an intimate knowledge of what the wicked say. The knowledge is within his heart. They say that there is no God. Their language, practical language, is that there is no fear of God before their eyes. How did he know that? He heard it doubtless on every hand; that would be a sound in his ears. How did he know it in his heart? He had it there as part of his sad inheritance. It was his nature and he manifested it in his own conduct. Some of you may hear atheism and feel a kind of repudiation of what you hear, never suspecting that that atheism is in your own heart. But if you were convinced by the Holy Spirit of your sinfulness you would say now I know what I heard in such and such a place, on such a day, is in my own nature, and very solemn that conviction is. But after expressing himself with respect to the wicked, and the mischief the wicked designs would do, if it were possible, to him, he falls back on the mercy of God. Nothing less will do for you, for me. With all the wickedness that is in our nature, nothing can meet it but the mercy of God; nothing can stop it from prevailing, but the mercy of God; nothing can remove the guilt of it, but the mercy of God. How beautiful is mercy; how wonderful is mercy in God, the God you offend. How wonderful it is that He should be merciful to the unrighteousnesses of His children. Well, you will never come out well at the end of your mortality unless this mercy is with you, manifested to you, never. May you be delivered from self righteousness. May the blood of Jesus Christ save you from your guilt and pollution. The Psalmist notices the excellence of the lovingkindness of God - "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness O God!" - and the effect of it, this he knew. "Therefore the children of men" - who feel

their need of that, when they see it and feel it "put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." Have you this mark of being a gracious person? Do you put your trust under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty? But what are the Almighty's wings? The Sun of Righteousness spreading His heavenly light, His divine justification over all these children of men and when they see this beautiful light, when it spreads itself over and beyond all their transgressions and unrighteousnesses, then they put their trust under the shadow of it. The hen gathereth her chicken under her wings and the Lord Jesus gathereth His people under His righteousness that they may be justified and protected. Nothing will protect you like divine righteousness imputed to you, nothing fit you for God's presence but that righteousness and the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. O sinner, if you feel sorry for your sins, if you look on your transgressions as so many filthy rags, to use the scripture word, then may you have faith to betake yourself to this divine righteousness and put your trust under the shadow of it as under the wings of the Almighty. And those who do this shall be satisfied. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house." There is a house where sinners come, into which they are received, in which they find protection and provision. What is this house? The house near to which no plague can come, into which no arrow can come, no pestilence that walketh in darkness. That is not your well built house; it is no other than the Lord Jesus. "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation." This is the house and this house in the rich provision of it will abundantly satisfy the hungry soul and fill the hungry with good things. Here it is that the Lord Jesus satiates the soul of the weary and replenishes every sorrowful soul. Look to this house. If you are driven out of your own house of self righteousness, then run to this house. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe". "And thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." This river was shown to a suffering Saviour. This river was revealed to Him. He saw it when He said "It is finished" on the cross, and when He was dismissing His own spirit He saw this blessed river, the favour of God, the smile, the love, the goodness of God, and if God shows the same to you,

then you will drink of it. And Thou shall make them drink of the love of God, the grace of Christ, the mercy of the Spirit. Thou shall make them drink of holy scripture promises, instructions, divine mercies opened and brought in. All these pleasures God makes all His poor children to drink. Now a sip of this will do you good and then you will want more, for it is one of the blessed effects of a sip of God's goodness and pleasures, that it will create an appetite and increase it from day to day. "With Thee is the fountain of life." God gave His Son to have life in Himself that He may give it to whomsoever He would. This therefore is the Lord Jesus, the fountain of goodness, of justification, sanctification, wisdom, mercy. The fountain of life flowing and sending its sweet springs into the church of Christ is, in every one to whom it comes, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. "In Thy light". Who is this light but the Lord Himself. "I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on Me should not perish but have everlasting life and should not walk in darkness but have the light of life." This light shows the way from a deserved hell to a freely given heaven, from filthy rags to justification, from pollution to holiness. This light shows how God can be the friend of a sinner, the Father of an alien, the protection of one who is defenceless, the guide of the blind. This light shows a sinner the good and right way through trouble, from affliction to ease even while the affliction continues. "In Thy light shall we see light." If you walk in the light of corrupted reason you will stumble, and know not at what you stumble, but if you walk in this light you will see the way. It is a plain way though very difficult, full of troubles. Still it is a plain way. It is said to be a way above. "The way of life is above to the wise that he may depart from hell beneath." (Proverbs 15 v 24) Well if you walk in this way you are happy though you may be very troubled.

And then the text comes "O continue Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee; and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart" The marginal reading is - draw out at length. Let it come forth. Beloved friends, God's kindness is not to be shut up in Himself. It is part of His glory that He will communicate

what is communicable of Himself. What a mercy this is. I am glad that God is above men, that His lovingkindness is greater than all the sins and unrighteousnesses of His people. It does encourage me to go to Him. This lovingkindness is God's love kindly manifested, tenderly drawn out, for lovingkindness is tender regard, loving regard to its object. This points to experience. Draw out in a way to these people and continue to draw out at length through all their life, their difficulties, their tribulations, their sorrows, weaknesses, necessitates. Continue to draw out Thy mercy to them, Thy love and Thy goodness. You need it, we do need it and the longer we live the more we feel the need of this as we may be under, are under, the teaching of the Holy Ghost. You young people, I mean young in grace as well as years, more or less you will find this, one thing God never tolerates for long in any child of His, namely, a spirit of independence. He reproveth it; He reproveth it in the scripture. "Wherefore say My people, we are lords; we will come no more unto Thee?" (Jeremiah 2 v 31) The Lord is jealous. I am glad and thankful that He is. His jealousy comes out and He wont let you live without Him. He will never tolerate for long a spirit of independence in any of you who fear Him. He will have you to come to Himself. Let Me hear thy voice, let Me see thy countenance, let Me see a poor suppliant at My throne, let Me hear a beggar asking bread, I wont give him a stone. Depend on Me, look to Me. O needy sinner, you will never be disappointed. He will always be coming to you and helping your infirmities. He will always be helping your infirmities by giving you the Holy Spirit.

Now by the help of the Lord I will look a little at this lovingkindness. That is the first, but I will run along with it, the continuance of it, the drawing out. "O continue" or draw out at length, as long as they need it, "Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee." My brethren we are poor sinners. I need it for myself more and more but knowing this is not a bad thing. He who has a disease and does not know it because for a time he has no pain about it and from it, is not in a good way. You have all the disease of sin. I wish you all had the pain of it. I wish you all had the pain of sin that I have and the shame of it.

Then you would want the Lord to come to you and He would come. He does come to sinners. He receives sinners. He eats with them. Now one of the mercies that the Lord continues is this. He continues His good Spirit. "Thou gavest them Thy good Spirit." What should we do, we who are pilgrims, who are seeking a city which is to come which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, what should we do without the Holy Spirit? And in that day "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications." There had been a suspension of that mercy. Now He says when the day comes for Me to return and do good, I will give them this necessary gift, this beautiful, blessed gift, the gift of the Spirit, and He shall be in them the Spirit of grace. Gracious supplications shall arise out of their hearts, affected, and moved and taught by this Holy Spirit so giving the religion that will wear, that will stand the shock of trouble, that will stand all the resistance of sin and the temptations of the devil. The religion that wont die when nature dies is the religion that the Holy Spirit gives to a sinner. All other religions, and there are many - there are gods many and there are religions many - but they will all die. This will live. Beautiful sentiments, excitements, religious excitements, and all sorts of things that may please the mind, these will die. A trouble proves much, and death will prove more. But if we have this Holy Spirit continued to us what will He do? Well He will teach us to pray; He will reveal in us the way of prayer. "I am the way". He will show to us how prayer can come up acceptably to God, how answers to prayer can come down to unworthy sinners. He will show how a sinner may pray humbly and boldly. He will enable the sinner to confess his constant sins and give him power to plead and prevail. The blood of Christ is that which affords the strongest possible plea to him who feels himself to be the chief of sinners. When there is a wrestling spirit it is from the Lord and the Lord is overcome by a wrestling spirit. Jacob had power with the angel and prevailed. O that this may be continued to us. I have said once or twice lately to you, there is no substitute for prayer, no substitute for secret prayer, and if you have the Spirit continued to you, you will find yourselves praying, praying in the name of Christ, precious name. Pleading

the blood of Christ, an all prevailing plea. This will buoy up your spirit, this will encourage your soul, this will tell you to wait on God. It will tell you that there is no denial to be had by any poor sinner who comes in this way to God. It will tell you of a poor woman to whom Jesus Christ said "Great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Now how can we continue in prayer without the Holy Ghost. He is the Spirit of grace and of supplications. And then notice in that same place in the scripture, there is, when this Holy Spirit is thus given to people, also a sight of Christ given, a sight of Christ by faith, not Christ in history, but Christ in heaven, visible to faith. Christ's merit visible to faith; His constant goodness, His care never intermitted, visible to faith, real to faith. You say, if you once see Him shall you not always see Him? The Galatians saw Him once, then their eyes were bewitched, drawn away to some other object, and they did not see Him. This shows the need of a constant manifestation. The light must be continued if you are to see. The object must be revealed to you if you are to look on it. And all this comes from the Spirit. O continue the Spirit to us. David felt the need of this when he said "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." You will be confessing that you deserve that He should be taken from you and that feeling will give zest to your petition. Take Him not from me. When you feel that you deserve He should be, when you know you have vexed and grieved Him, when He has seemed to be an enemy by sending into your heart some reproof, even then as you feel you must be lost without Him, must turn aside without Him, there can be no good in you without Him, I say this feeling will give zest to your petition, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." O continue this to me. Do you feel your need of the Holy Spirit? What a wonderful mercy to feel your need of Him, this Holy Spirit. And the Apostle prays that the Ephesians who had Him might have Him still more. He prays that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened and that the Holy Spirit might be in them as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Christ. Christ is God and Christ is the Son of God incarnate. He has all the blessings of the Covenant, of forgiveness, of righteousness, of mercy, in Himself. He has all the power of God. He is the power of God and the love of God and all the union that ever is to be in the

church and between the church and Himself and of God you will find there. Now the Apostle says may the Lord give you the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. As we grow in years, if we are under the Spirit's tuition, we shall grow in dependence, dependence on this Holy Spirit. It is very painful to feel how you slip away from things, how easy it is to do it, how natural it is. We fall away from God through our sinful nature. Always, the tendency is there in us. It is innate, you will never be rid of it. But the opposing grace and movement and help and teaching and leading of the Spirit you will find to be a blessing indeed. O what a wonder it is thus to have the Holy Spirit in you. You will never see all there is to be seen in Christ. You may be acquainted with the garden, you may know the name perhaps of each bough and tree there, but a walk today only, as it were, opens certain particulars to you and another day other particulars and beauties come before your gaze, and so with truth and particularly with the Lord Jesus, you get a view today of something in Him and tomorrow the Holy Spirit shows you something else. O continue the gift and the grace of the Holy Spirit. We must be dead in our feelings, as a poor dead, formal people, without the movements of the Spirit in us. Therefore may the Lord continue this to us.

Next, has the Lord Jesus ever visited you, spoken to you? Then you had peace and happiness. His voice is a teaching and it becomes a joy. It is a strength, it is a protection, a leading. You get fresh trouble, then you want this. And Jesus drew near to them. Two sorrowful men, having sad communications each with the other, and Jesus, the subject of their conversation, of their spilt hopes, of their trouble and grief, Jesus drew near to them. And that is what we need. Need this dear Saviour to draw near to us and speak to us and draw out our hearts to Him. What sorrows we have, what sad communications. We need Him to draw near to us and draw out these things. This is a continuance of His lovingkindness. Once He visits, He visits again, He comes again. Religion is not at one dead level. There is an ebb, there is a flow. The tide comes in, and sweet it is when the tide of mercy and of love comes in and the sinner gets some sense of the loving favour of his good God. Ah he says I would like this to

continue, but then the ebb comes and that is grievous. Then he needs the Lord to come again. "O" said the Psalmist in a later Psalm than this "when wilt Thou come unto me." Do you believe God does come to people? Even in this day He comes, He says I will be with thee and He comes and makes His presence known. Jacob had had many times, many visits from the Lord at different times, and the Lord told him what to do, where to go, and to leave Laban's house and as he was going trouble came. When you get some favour you will be sure to get some trouble, some interruption, some difficulty, something likely to turn you out of the way from following the course God has set before you. Something comes and then what? The Lord comes. In the night Jacob found the Lord coming and there came a man and wrestled with him and this was a communication, a communication of power. There was a presence of the Saviour with him and that, O that is sweet, that is life. Then Jacob had to learn something. He was too strong, in a sense he was too strong, and so the Lord touched him and he became a cripple, and was crippled the rest of his days on that particular spot, and you will get a touch that will cripple your nature while it will strengthen your faith, and Jacob said "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me". This was a continuance of Christ's goodness to him, another visit, another direction, and it is said at that time "and He blessed him there." And you will find some of your heaviest trials to be the places where God will bless you. You will say "He blessed me there." There He came to me, there I had distress, there I was in a strait place, there I knew not what to do, and He came and blessed me. He weakened my strength in the way and that made me feel strong. When you are getting desperate perhaps you will find your faith the strongest. Lord I am in trouble. He blessed me there.

"Continue Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee."
Draw it out Lord. We need this faithful dealing of the Lord with us. Inasmuch as it has pleased God to put all fulness that He will ever communicate to His people in Jesus Christ, this will follow, you must have that blessed One opening His fulness to you and communicating out of it to you, and this means constant mercies from Jesus Christ.

Let me name another thing that He will do that is in this prayer. Continue Thy gracious word, continue Thy gracious word. We have the Bible but we need the Bible. I wish some of you who have the Bible, as well as myself and others here, had the Bible as we hope and believe we have it. You may have the Bible and not possess it. The Book is yours, its contents you are strangers to. The Word of God. There are two ways of knowing it. There is a natural way, a way of believing it, a way of believing in its inspiration, and so far it is good. You give Christ credence. So far you are right, but Hart says "Let him know, further than this he yet must go." Now to have the Word of God in your heart, to be able to say with Jeremiah "Thy words were found and I did eat them and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart". The Word of God is a healing Word. Do not my words do good like a medicine? This is a continuance that God sends out a word. It does good to you, just as a medicine sent to you for some trouble touches the spot and does you good, so the word of God sent into your soul touches the spot and touches the trouble, touches your unbelief, and delivers you from its prevalence, touches your hard heart, and you are melted; shines into your dark mind, and you see; speaks a word of guidance, and you know which way to go. "We walk by faith and not by sight." There is a power, there is an influence, there is a bright shining in the holy word of God sometimes. It is written "He sent out His word and healed them." Think of it. I want, if it might be God's will, that you might know it thus. In a small way, I know it. Others do and some do not. May you who do not so know come so to know it by the Holy Spirit. "O continue Thy lovingkindness". If you have heard one word you want to hear another. If ever He has spoken to you you want Him to speak again. "My sheep know My voice" and you know the difference between the letter and the power, between a natural appreciation of the beauty of the scripture and a spiritual realisation of its life giving efficacy. Continue this mercy. It is a mercy to know the Holy Word in the power of it. It comes to encourage people. "Seek the Lord while He may be found." "Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face evermore." And the Word tells you what to do in such a way as that you are enabled to do it. You follow on in that course that is open to

your faith by the power of the Word of God. Sometimes it comes in the way of promise. "I will never leave thee. I will never forsake thee". Then you rely on that, and of all the props that you may ever have in your pilgrimage there will be none like this, the holy promise of God spoken to your soul. On that you can lean, on that you can place confidence. Of that you can say, this will not fail me. Other things have failed me, this cannot. He who has the word of God in his soul is in that particular firmer than heaven and earth. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." That made Jacob safe and sound, that brought him through his troubles, that brought him back to his father's house though he was so many years away from the spot. The word "I will never leave thee. I will be with thee in all places where thou goest. I will not forsake thee till I have performed all that I have spoken to thee of." that, I say, helped him, stood by him, guided him, protected him, was his supply, his fulness, his strength, his wisdom. He came back. He went out with the word and the word brought him back. So God continues His word to His people and especially they get sweetness when they get a promise. The promise of God standeth sure.

His word shall stand, His truth prevail
And not one jot or tittle fail

O continue this. You say, O Lord I am a sinner, I am a greater sinner now than I was when I started on pilgrimage. I am poorer than in those early days, weaker and more dependent than I used to be. Continue to me Thy mercies. His mercy started, yes, His mercy started. O but my sins. They will not undo God. God is greater than man. Grace is greater than sin. The atonement is greater than all guilt and pollution and so once He begins, He never leaves off. "Being" says the Apostle to the Philippians "Being confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Draw out Thy condescension in speaking to a sinner and teaching a sinner to speak to Thee. Well of all the blessings this is one of the greatest you can have, the Lord speaking to

you in communion, opening His heart and His will, His love and His condescension and causing you to speak to Him in prayer, the prayer of faith and giving Him your whole heart and confidence, for I am sure it is so that when the Lord speaks to a sinner in love, that sinner speaks to Him and gives Him his heart and his trust and his confidence. It will live longer than you will, that is longer than you live in this world. What is started by grace will go on through eternity. The poor body in which the soul dwelleth dies, but the soul in which grace resided will go to heaven and grace will be there in all its fulness and completeness and communion will be large there, larger than was possible here. This is the Lord's gracious work. He draws it out. How far does it go and where? It goes to the low dungeon. Jeremiah was in the low dungeon and there he prayed and he said - when I was there and I cried unto God, He drew near. In the day when I cried, Thou saidst fear not. Where are you sinner? God can come to you if He will. In the low dungeon, at the ends of the earth, driven and tossed about, and He speaks and says - Come unto Me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved for I am God and beside Me there is no Saviour. Under the heel of the devil and God bruises and bruises him shortly under your feet. He continues His lovingkindness in distress and He says "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." No matter where you are this lovingkindness will reach you. He will draw it out. Trouble brings it; trouble brings His compassion; weakness brings His strength; darkness brings His light; death brings His life. Faithfulness brings Him to the traitor and treacherous dealer, and His blood cleanses all his sin away from the sinner's conscience. Joshua had a good testimony to this point. "Not one word of all His good promise hath failed." All is true. I proved it as He said. I know it is true. I know it is true. He started with a promise, "I will be with thee as I was with Moses." Now he said to Israel I am going the way of all the earth and God's promise to me He has fulfilled. Not one word has failed, not one word. The Apostle Paul had the same testimony in the spirit and substance of it. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give unto me and not to me only but unto all them that love His appearing."

That will do my friends. The end of a good man's life in this world brings this testimony out. It is not the end of God's goodness, it is the beginning of it in the glory of it in heaven, but the end of a long life of a servant of the Most High God, of a child of His, long in the wilderness, brings this out. not one word of all His good promise hath failed, not one word.

Depend on Him, thou canst not fail
Make all thy wants and wishes known

The blood of Christ, the oath of Christ, the Covenant of Grace, these must prevail over the sin and the guilt and the wanderings of poor sinners interested in them for the promise is "Sin shall not have dominion". Why not? It is in you, working, yes, but this will undo it all - Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sin and in Him is no sin. That will do, no devil will overcome this. If Christ is sinless, if Christ has made an end of sin by the sacrifice of Himself, then all for whom He did that amazing work must come to be just as He is. "As He is in this world so are we". O continue this. Beloved friends, in whom grace seems weak and sin very strong, look to this good God and put Him in mind of His promise. He said "Put Me in remembrance." And you who are in trouble, to whom trouble is mighty and grace seems small, look to Him who has said "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee." He wont, He cannot fail. He said "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass away." Therefore may the Lord help us to believe. I am sure He is pleased with a believer. It is faith in the believer that pleases God. If you cannot leave Him, it is because He wont let you and He has given you faith to cleave to Him. Therefore may you be enabled, each one waiting on Him, to say "O continue Thy lovingkindness to them that know Thee and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart." Now may God encourage us. There is much to encourage us, very much, and we shall come to say, each one blessed now with grace, that He has been good, and bless Him for His goodness. "Bless the Lord O my soul." Each must say, sooner or later, bless Him, bless His Holy Name and all, all that is within me bless His Holy Name. May the Lord continue this, His goodness, to us.

Amen.