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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham  
on Sunday morning, 11th. September 1927

Text: Psalm 36 v. 9

"For with Thee is the fountain of life:  
in Thy light shall we see light."

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This short psalm is made up of two parts. The first part is in the first four verses. These verses treat of the atheist. He answers to a word in an earlier psalm, - "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," - a very solemn condition to be in, - "God is not in all his thoughts." He rises in the morning and goes through the day without a thought of God; he goes to bed at night and knows not, thinks not by whom he has lived and been supplied; he does not seek the face of God. This is a terrible case - practical atheism, and this may be in some of us, though we do not say openly that there is no God. A practical atheist is a man who lives without God and does not want God. Atheism is a word that expresses that terrible condition - without God, and a practical atheist is a man who though he would if challenged say that he believes there is a God, yet, lives without Him, can do without Him, does not want Him. He is sated with the world, has enough in the world, and he wants nothing from heaven. How many practical atheists are in this little congregation God knows. Blessed be His name, some can say that though they may not be enjoying what they desire, may be feeling distant from the Lord, they are unhappy without Him. They know of no substitute for Him; they desire no substitute for Him. He and He alone, is the great, chief, glorious Object of their soul's desire, but the practical atheist, let me say this, is not beyond God's mercy. No child of God here now but what was formerly just a practical atheist. I was, and every one was. Nobody by nature wants God. Nobody rightly thinks of God, and the blessed arm of divine mercy can reach the soul that is the furthest away. Nobody is beyond the reach of God's infinite goodness. May that goodness reach to some of you who at the present, know not, desire not, feel not after God.

The second part of the psalm relates first to God Himself and I like that and so do you who know Him. He is the first. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." Ah yes sinner, guilty, fearing, doubting, weak

and confused, here is God's mercy, - sweet, full, rich, overflowing. It is in the heavens and can come down, and all that is needed is the unction from the Holy One to teach all things, to teach the empty sinner that there is a full Saviour in heaven and the weak creature that there is a mighty Saviour in heaven and to teach the lost that that Saviour came to save the lost. O Thy faithfulness to the Lord Jesus in the Covenant, Thy faithfulness to faithless believers who, though blessed with faith often are under the influence of unbelief, this faithfulness "reacheth unto the clouds" and the righteousness of God "is like the great mountains", - the mountains of God, - firm, immoveable.

"Thy judgments", - Thy dealings in providence and in grace and Thy uniting of judgment and mercy, O what a deep, what a deep! Are any of you under reproofs? Are you under some dispensation that is painful to you? Are your sins brought to light? Do you see in some particular ways, not in a general way but particular ways, that here you have gone wrong and there you have sinned and now you get reproof and rebuke and are at a distance? "Thy judgments" - of which one day you will sing sweetly as they are mingled with mercy - "Thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent (or precious) is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men (who in themselves are vile) put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." The shadow in hot countries, the shadow is grateful and these wings answer to the rock that is higher than we are. The shadow of a great rock in a weary land and men put their trust in this Great One. "They shall be abundantly satisfied (watered, saturated) with the fatness of Thy house" - and that is what you have to be yet who are not so; that is what is coming to the seeker who says that he is cast out from the presence of the Lord; that is what is to dissolve the hardest heart, to melt the sinner, - "and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures", and the text gathers all up, as I think, - "For with Thee," this blessed God whose mercy is in heaven; whose faithfulness reacheth to the clouds; whose righteousness is like the great mountains; whose judgments are a great deep; whose lovingkindness is precious and whose wings cast a most wonderful and beautiful and preserving shadow in a weary land and whose fulness shall satisfy and satiate and saturate the living soul, and He will make them drink of the river of His pleasures.

This God, with Him is the fountain of life, and so dear friends, we must feel our death, so we must feel our dependence on this Blessed One. This includes all our own natural religion; all our wisdom and strength and goodness and fulness and self-resources. These have to wither and die, and much of God's dealings with His people have this great thing in view, they must die to know what Paul knew and expressed, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Not easy, but profitable. This fountain, God Himself is to be understood in His eternal purposes in the covenant of grace. The freeness of it, the sufficiency of it, the holiness of it, the power of it and the glory of it, we shall find all to belong to Him. "With Thee", the great God, "is the fountain of life", and in the covenant it is given to Christ according to the gift of God to Christ before the world began. It is called eternal life. It is pure. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. It is in Him, and when His people are faint, then that is understood experimentally, more or less.

"He to the needy and the faint  
His mighty aid makes known;  
And when their languid life is spent,  
Supplies it with His own."

O it is a mercy to have this life poured out upon your soul from time to time.

Now this is to be communicated. A communicable thing in God is communicated. There is in Him, that which is uncommunicable. Eternity, immensity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, infinite justice; these are incommunicable attributes; they belong to Him alone essentially, but what He will give of His mercy, His goodness, His favour, we have to say is communicable, and communicable blessings are wrapped up in this - "life". "With Thee is the fountain of life", and I will speak of it, as enabled, in several particulars. When it is communicated, there at once is set up another kingdom in the heart, destined to destroy the kingdom of the devil, - "the prince of the power of the air"; destined to break in pieces and grind to powder and scatter like the chaff is scattered with the wind, to scatter all power and wisdom of men and to bring the happy blessed subject of this new kingdom unto

God, for the glory of God, but inasmuch as the devil, the prince of this world, is not easily dislodged, nor ever will willingly give up one of his subjects, there is at once trouble; trouble in the soul. The world pulls, - grace draws; sin works, - grace works; and these, as Paul tells us in Galatians, are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would. This holy life is known, manifested by its own properties. It has its own properties, one of each party and that is the secret of the trouble that God's people have from indwelling sin. Nobody can hate sin until he has a pure eternal life conveyed to his soul. Nobody can understand the malignant nature of sin, how that it is contrary to God's holy nature, that it is rebellion against His divine and revealed will; nobody can understand this, until divine life is imparted, then with this imparted, this strange life, this life contrary to that life, this life that is destined to destroy the old life; then there comes this conflict. One blest with this life says, - 'I would be holy, - I would be holy. I would not have sin in me. I would not commit sin for a world if I could avoid it', and this poor man, the subject of this blessed life must go all his days with this enemy in his heart; this opposition in his will, in his mind, in his understanding. My friends, look at this; it is a pure life that you have got if you are born again and this pure life cannot always have its own way in you. There is another impure life; a God hating life, a life of pride, lust, covetousness, worldliness; a life in allegiance with the devil, making a covenant with hell and a league with death, and a life unwilling to forgo any claim that it puts forth. This will be and must be to the end, our conflict. "What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies." Now do take particular notice of this, because in some of your conflicts you may find with painful distinctness, a life in you that says to God, 'I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways,' and also a life that says, 'O Lord, save me from sin. Do not let me live in any known sin; make me an overcomer, that I may in Thy time receive the stone in which is a name written that none but himself will be able to read.' And the second property of this life that comes from the blessed glorious fountain, God Himself, is this: that there is wisdom in it. There is wisdom in it, and this wisdom is to destroy your own fleshly wisdom. Fleshly wisdom says - God ought to be so and so, and God ought not to do such and such things. Fleshly wisdom says - this, is the best

way, it is easy; easy to flesh and blood, and the wisdom which is from above says - This, is the way I would walk. I would walk by faith and not by sight. I would walk with God. I would walk up and down in the name of Christ, as the promise, "I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name saith the Lord." This holy life says in your soul, There is no good in the world. Sin has brought ruin, defaced God's image in man, emptied the world of all substantial good, therefore seek the good that is in God. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Seek communion with Him; seek the blood of the Everlasting Covenant to have on your conscience; seek the presence of Christ in your soul; seek His word, that it may dwell in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding and do not choose the path that to flesh and blood is easy. O brethren blessed with this pure life, this life of wisdom, you will find this: it will always tell you, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." It is above us, yet it is in us. It is above us because it is in Christ. It is in us because it is as a stream flowing from Him into our hearts. This comes from the fountain, the pure glorious fountain of life in God, even Jesus Christ.

And also, this life is imperishable. O what a mercy it is! Did that word ever shine in your eyes? Of Jesus it is said, after His resurrection, He liveth "after the power of an endless life." O it has been a beautiful word to me at times, - "an endless life." Now if you have got that as from Himself, then you have what He speaks of in John's gospel, - I give unto My sheep eternal life. There is only one thing that you might imagine in some dark minutes could destroy this life, namely the law of sin which is in your members, but in the light of God you can see it otherwise. This life shall destroy our life, which is death. Imperishable grace, moving, guiding, influencing, more or less constantly and powerfully it draws the soul up to its fountain. How is it that some of us, after a long profession, stand as we do today with our eyes up unto God; able to say to Him at times, 'My hope is in the Lord. I wait for the Lord, who hideth Himself from the House of Israel.' How is it that with the sea of corruption in us, the spark has not been put out - how is it that notwithstanding temptation and chastisement, and difficulties and unbelief, we still hope in the Lord? - I give unto My sheep eternal life! O, says the world, there is nothing in religion. Says the tempter, there is

nothing in all you hear or in all you read. O, says an unbelieving heart, why should I be in this miserable condition, there is nothing in it all. The life says in you, "Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek His face evermore." It says there is a river at God's right hand, a river of pleasures. A river of life, pure and clear as crystal. Seek that river. Seek these pleasures. Seek the honour that cometh from God. This is eternal life the Saviour gives to His sheep, and this when it is given to a person will often perhaps be an explanation of the blights, the withering, the removing of God in His providence and in His teachings. If He had not withered some of our things; if He had not called for a blight upon some of our things, what should we have done, and where should we have been today? But He says - I will be thy God: where is there any other that may save thee? - and if He has allowed any of us for any time, for any hour, to try the world, what has He made us prove? That it is mere emptiness; nothing satisfying in it. Compare it with this word, "Thou shalt make them drink." Waters! They saturate, satiate them. And a little of this blessed water has a wonderful effect. This fountain o'erflows; this fountain keeps alive the soul; attracts the soul, influences, supplies it in every hour of need; and one more word on this point, this fountain makes the person in whom it is, independent with respect to the whole world. There is nothing in the world on which we can depend and God teaches us this. Naturally, we are mutually dependent. The king is supplied of the field. There is a natural, mutual, beautiful dependence and interdependence of men and providence, but when you come to this life, then you will say, 'Now only one source is there of this, and only One can continue to supply this, maintain this, and bring me off more than a conquerer.' With Thee, - "With Thee, is the fountain of life." To none then can I go, - "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" 'Who can supply my soul and animate it with life from time to time but Thyself?' Now brethren, this is the Person, the Blessed God you have to go to. This is the Source of all goodness.

"With Thee is the fountain of life." Now come to an experience of it. Come to some of your own experiences of this. Is it not wonderful, has it not often been wonderful that when oppressed by sin and driven by temptation, and burdened with affliction, your life has almost been crushed out of you and you felt, - my soul what will become of you - and has not there come a fresh supply; some Scripture has dropped in on your heart, or some more immediate

operation of the Holy Spirit, without any word, something has come when you have been seeking God in your fainting and sinking and readiness to give up, something has come from Him that has revived your hope, moved you and enabled you to feel - this is the religion my soul loves, a reviving from God. A little reviving in my bondage; how sweet this has been. Suddenly it has come sometimes or ever we have been aware of it, our soul has been caught up to God by faith, in hope and love, and what has this sweet thing done? Why, it has confirmed us, - He shall confirm the testimony of Christ in you. It has enlarged our views of God, and I am disposed to say here and now, that the enlargement of the views, the spiritual believing views that God gives His people of Himself are to be very much noticed and valued. How cramped we are. How near to ourselves for the most part is our horizon. How little beyond ourselves do we for the most part see, but a reviving gathers up the faith and opens the eyes to see God in whom there is no boundary; all things are possible; all things shall be done by Him for the soul. All needs shall be supplied; all strength shall be given; all wisdom shall be imparted; O the enlargement that you get sometimes! It is very remarkable to notice the difference between our approval of what we hear, of what we generally believe, of what we may acquire by reading, and this impartation. The first may leave us very cold, or may make us very proud. The second warms, enlarges, humbles, crumbles, brings us into the dust. Down goes self; withered is self esteem; up rises the Lord and He has a great name, a great name. "My name shall be great among the Gentiles." My throne shall be in the midst of Jerusalem. Their governor, their Prince shall be of themselves and He shall rule in judgement and of His kingdom and peace and government there shall be no end. Wider than creation; deeper than the deepest depths and higher than all imaginable heights, the soul will sometimes get a view of God, and faith says He is sufficient for me, and He is sufficient for time and all that I shall need and sufficient for an endless eternity on which I am soon to enter; supplying all there, for, the living fountains of waters we have there. "This fountain so free", so effectual, it meets the hardest heart; it purifies wherever it flows; it gives new life. You have it in Ezekiel in the way of experience. First to the ankles; then to the knees, then to the loins, then a river to swim in. A river that cannot be passed over. Well dear friends, the more you have of this, the more dependent you will feel; the happier you will be; the more contented you will be in the path of tribulation and the brighter will be your prospects.

O the lovingkindness of God as it is brought home by this fountain to the soul in the streams of living communications. The prayer in the word that follows the text is very beautiful, - "O continue Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee." The marginal reading is very expressive. "O draw out at length Thy lovingkindness," which means communicate it more and more and continually. Draw it out at length; say this, do that, work in me all the good pleasure of Thy goodness and the work of faith with power that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in me and I in Him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the second part of the text is - "In Thy light shall we see light." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And this Word made all things. The Word made all things, and without Him was not anything made that was made; and the Word was the light of men. This is the light, and in this light men in whom it shines, see light; that is, they see things in this light that they could not see without it. And what do we see when this light is given to us, - what do we see? Talkative, in Pilgrims Progress, began to discant upon high things. Now I will come to this first: when this light shines upon us we see ourselves, we see our sins, and here I would make a distinction. We can see a lie naturally when it is uttered. We can see a piece of deceit when it is practiced, either by another or by ourselves. We can see things naturally in that way that will make us say, - that was a lie, and that was deceitful, - but what the lie was, what the deceit was in the sight of God, no man can see without this light. The awful nature of it; the malignancy of it; the guilt of it; the death it deserves, the death it is; the image of Satan, the very contrary of God's nature, - unholy. We see this in God's light and see what may stumble millions of men when they read it, "The thought of foolishness is sin." What may be a mere crime easily passed over by and among men, is seen in this light to be of the most fearful nature. The Psalmist must have had this view when he uttered and penned these penitent words, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." O, solemn beyond all utterance, solemn is the sight of sin when it is seen in this light. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." When you see one little sin, little, as men speak, in the light of God, you see a sin that is just suitable for the justice and the punishment of



God without end. I believe no man can understand properly how hell can be a just and an endless punishment for the sin of foolishness except he sees that sin in God's light, and I do not see how any man, any living human being can enter into the solemn denunciation against sin that the Scripture utters unless he sees sin in God's own light. Nor can he see weakness as being the inevitable ruin of his soul unless he sees that weakness in him is sin. Weakness, sin? . . . Yes, my friends, weakness in us is sin. How can that be? God did not make us weak. You were not created weak, I was not created weak, we were holy, pure creatures with no evil about us and no inability in us, and it were an awful reflection on God to say He created us with weakness and inability to obey Him and fulfil the law. No, the weakness that is in me, the inability of my mind and soul and understanding and will and heart, the inability to do good and to please God, is my sin and I have felt it; I have confessed it, it is as much my sin as any wickedness that I have ever done in my heart, but we cannot see this without God's light.

We must see what God is, to believe what we are. Reflect on it my friends, reflect on it, and then, as you see light in this light, O you will not be able to bear yourself at times, and truly you would say, "Had I not the blood of Christ to plead, the sight would sink me to despair." What I have done against God; what I have thought against Him; what I have imagined against Him! You do not go to wicked people in the world to see what sin is; you see it in yourself; and with life in you, you feel it in yourself. Have you been guilty of deceit? Men may pass that over and say that was not much, but you will see a hell in it. A hell in your deceitfulness. Have you been unbelieving - you will see the greatest dishonour and immorality that exists in your unbelief. I have long held, and sometimes said to you, the greatest immorality in the world, is unbelief. It is against God's law and against God's nature and against God's holiness, and to see this is to see a terrible thing, but we must see it in God's light. "In Thy light shall we see light." But this is not to press us into despair. The end of it is this: to bring us to the Saviour, that while seeing death in ourselves, we may in God's own light see life in the Saviour and see a remedy for our malady; a healing of all our diseases; a justification of our persons and a sanctification that we may stand just and holy in the sight of God, and in the light of God's grace and teaching and the Spirit's unction, we see

this and O what a sight, what a sight! How it magnifies God; how it unites the soul to God; how it humbles the soul in the presence of God; how deeply humbled the man is to whom this comes, and I do not speak a strange language to all of you do I? Does not every blessing give you the sweetest repentance. Does not it bring you near the Lord with self-abhorance and do you not see Him in His own light to be beautiful and glorious and His fruit comely and excellent for your escaped soul? O we see Him and if we see Him here, though it be - and it is only so - through a glass darkly, we shall see Him one day face to face. Though now we know only in part, we yet shall know even as we are known. May the Lord make us afraid of a false light. "If ---- the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

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