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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday morning 20 April 1924

PSALM 36 v 9

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

The first four verses of this Psalm are occupied with death; death expressed by the transgression of the wicked which the Psalmist perceived in his own heart. What he saw in men who feared not God, what wickedness was in them, he understood by the wickedness that was in his own nature. As many of us as know our own hearts, we may say, we do not need an outward finger to point at the wicked and say that their transgression arises because there is no fear of God before their eyes, for there is an inward sense in us which leads us to conclude, even though there be no outward transgression, nothing but the general trend of a person's life, and the spirit of his speeches, nothing more is needed to tell us what the transgression of the wicked is, the source of it, and the end of it. I know, you know, what it is to have the atheism of the atheist, the covetousness of the thief, the hatred of the murderer, the uncleanness of men, in our own nature, and all that saith within our hearts, there is no fear of God before men. But then he particularises a little in respect of this transgression, the transgression of the wicked. Then, turning from that subject, he looks to the Lord. The eyes, as the eyes of a believing man, directed by the Holy Spirit, turned to the Lord, and while he looks on death in himself, on death in all others, he says, the mercy of God is like a great mountain, or, as the marginal meaning is, like "the mountains of God". None planted them but God. He created them, and as they are steadfast and can never move but by His word, so His mercy is steadfast. "His mercy endureth for ever". And this glads the eyes, and the heart, of every child of God. Thy judgements, Thy dealings with the wicked, Thy dealings with the saints, Thy chastenings of the saints, and Thy destructions of the wicked, all these are a great deep. We cannot find them out. If we think to know God's ways we shall find them to be more than we can grasp. "When I thought to know this" - that is, the Psalmist was searching out the reasons of the

apparent improprieties, inequalities in the providences of God. He said "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me", too high, I could not reach it. God's judgements are above us. Happy he who, with grace in his heart, is enabled, with trouble in his house, trouble in his soul that is to say, trouble in providence, can say - "Thy judgements are a great deep" and I am content to leave them, content to be ignorant, only desiring that I may profit by what I pass through. It is a great thing to be silent before God when He deals with us. And he turns still to the Lord, and perceives the excellencies of God. "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God!" shining in the face of Christ, beaming from the cross of Christ, touching the heart that is distressed in many ways. How excellent is it. And the consequence of that is "the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings". Where else can you flee? To what other source can you run for safety? When you see the lovingkindness of God by faith in Christ thither you will be running. O, - your feeling will be - O, to get to those wings, to shelter beneath those wings; wings which are elsewhere celebrated thus - "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings". Christ rising in your soul, Christ coming nearer to you and spreading out His kindness and His mercy and His love. Like wings opened and spread out to cover the chicken under them, so the wings of Christ's love, and blood, and righteousness, and mercy, spread themselves out to cover the defenceless, and help the weak, and comfort the distressed, and the mourners. And these sons of men "shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house" and you will have again to turn to the Lord Jesus. There is no abundance elsewhere. Death in us, death everywhere about us. There is no abundance, no fatness, no nourishment, no goodness, out of Christ, the temple which the Lord pitched and not man, full of all the mercy of God. "It pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell". When you turn to self - alas, what saint does not often do that - when you turn to your circumstances - as you are naturally disposed to do - when you turn to friends - as we are all naturally disposed to do - what do you find? What do we all find who do those things? Emptiness, weakness, vanity; nothing else. Then the Holy Spirit comes and says to these sons of men, Go to that house where God is, where His fullness is, where His love is, where His mercy endureth for ever. Go to that house and out of that you shall be abundantly satisfied. "And Thou

shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures". What river is this? Says the Apostle John in the Revelation - "And he" - the angel commissioned to show him things - "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal". This is the river, the river of God full of pleasures, a full river, a pure river, a wonderful river rising from the throne of God, issuing, and running into the wilderness, and into the sea, to make the waters whole, for whersoever this river comes, there is healing. The waters are healed, the fishes are healed, and everything lives that this river touches, and it would seem as if the Psalmist sums up the whole of which he has been treating so beautifully, though briefly, in the text: "For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light". Every child of God has within himself, as it were, two fountains, he has two lives. The life of sin, endless in its motions. The life of sin powerful in its motions, ~~always tending downward, hellward, sinward;~~ always. The plague of our heart is dreadful. This life mars all true happiness, eats up our strength, withers all fruitfulness, and brings every child of God to say, death's within me. But he has another life, he has that pure river of water of life in him of which Christ speaks, saying - "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly". And this wonderful life always brings that to pass that is in the Epistle of John - "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not;".... he "keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" ( 1 John 5 v 18). That cannot mean that the child of God never can sin, for the Scriptures, which never contradict themselves, say in another place - "There is no man that doeth good and sinneth not" A holy Paul found a nature in him that opposed his pure life and made him say - "O, wretched man that I am". I am hindered in the good that I would, I am driven into the evil that I would not. "O, wretched man that I am". But the possessor of this life keeps himself. This life prevents deliberate sin, persistent sin, constant sin. Its holy, pure nature makes the person who has it sorry that he is a sinner, and sorry that at any time he falls into sin. He keeps himself, his face is God-ward. His cry is "Lord help me", keep me from sinning, keep me in the fear of Thy great Name. Keep me looking to the cross, keep me hankering after the Son of God. It is a mercy to have this life. With Thee is the fountain of it, and this is in the Lord Jesus, this is in the blessed Son of God, and it comes by His death, it comes by His death. Everyone who lives spiritually

lives by virtue of the death of Christ, for the death of Christ swallowed up the death of sin, the curse of the law, the anger of God. The death of Christ removed the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, that pronounced the curse upon us. It removed all that. He took all that out of the way, nailing it to His cross. And this makes what we have been reading and singing this morning everything to the church of Christ. Now if Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (1 Corinthians 15 v 20). The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith sees it, holds it, loves it, pleads it, hopes in it, and expects all the goodness that God has promised in the Covenant of Grace to flow through it. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And every touch of love, every motion of spiritual life, every aspiration of a new born person, every casting of a believing look to the Lord Jesus, every sensation of love to His great Name, and of hope in Him, all liberty, all peace, all reconciliation, justification, and sanctification, all are parts of the power of the resurrection of Christ. "That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection". And this is it, for the Apostle, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, says that He, having died to sin dies no more, but He lives unto God. And that precious living unto God, there mentioned, is the source, and root, and power of all the living unto God that a child of God is the blessed, happy subject of. "With Thee is the fountain of life". The church finds it so, and she says in the Song - "A fountain of gardens" is my beloved. Here are the trees, here is the beauty of the garden, but whence its fruitfulness? What makes the trees bud? What forms the bud? What brings the fruit? She says, Not my order, not my digging, not my cultivation, but a fountain of gardens is my beloved. This is the Lord Jesus. You will find that it is so, that whenever you can believe strongly, or even feebly, when you live a little, when you pray with freedom, when you get access, when you obtain success, you will find all of it comes from this fountain - "A fountain of gardens", the fountain of a poor sinner. Liberty, O blessed liberty, sweet liberty, the people of God find in their souls. This life in Christ every child of God is brought to look to and feel. "Your life is hid with Christ in God". Ye are dead in yourselves, dead in your nature. Now your life, your new life, is hid with Christ in God. This is the fountain.

Now let us look a little at the blessed moving and flowing in of this fountain into the soul. It is a pure life. That is the first thing to know. "A pure river of water of life clear as crystal". No mud of human nature, no imperfection. Pure, clear as crystal, simply, only, coming out of the throne of God. Just think of it. Now when this comes into a sinner there is the nature of it; hence every child of God has this pure nature, born of the Spirit. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is in him, it is a pure nature. I will give them a new heart and a right spirit. I will sprinkle you with clean water, and ye shall be clean. And you will find, you do find, you who possess this life, there is a current in your heart, an under-current of feeling, of desire, longing after God, and it is expressed sometimes by you in the hymn - "I would be holy". A desire to be holy is derived from the life that is holy; no other way. O child of God, it is this holy life that makes your natural impurity known, and mourned. It is this pure life that separates you from evil, that gives you to understand what the transgression of the wicked is, as it speaks in your heart - this pure life - and it is destined to live with Him who is its fountain, its only source. Yes, it is destined to reach heaven, and not as it came - a stream from God - will it go back, but it will take you with it. A new born soul shall go in the blessedness of this pure life to the land which is very far off to see the King in His beauty. And here I would just drop this observation, the reason that a person who was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, will find himself at home, and happy, when he reaches heaven is this, that he has a life, a nature it is called, like heaven itself, a nature that can rejoice in a holy God, a nature that while here below struggling against sin, always had its tendency toward holiness, it being holy. It is a nature that can never, never smile at sin. Though often it may be browbeaten by sin, it will never, never be at home in sin. Bless God that some of us have a testimony within that we have a life - low often very low, it seems dried up and all but gone - that we have a life that cannot rise in any act of faith, or breath of prayer of itself; still a life that makes us say, O, this wicked thing that we have, sin; O, this dreadful blackness, this pollution of sin. Bless God for a holy nature - "Partakers of the divine nature".

And this leads me to say in the next place, this life, coming

from the fountain, is a hungry life, really a hungry life. It answers to our nature in this respect. We naturally are hungry people; hunger is a part of health. A hungry person is hungry because he is living, and if his appetite be a healthy appetite it is a part of his health. Hunger expresses life; hunger expresses want, and surely every child of God can say he has a hungry life. And how will your hunger show itself? your spiritual hunger? "O", you will be saying, Lord "When wilt Thou come unto me?" "Hide Thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities". Speak to me, Lord. "Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me I become like them that go down to the pit." Lead me by Thy Spirit. "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me". Bless me with Thy presence, subdue my sins, guide me into truth. Give me rest in the Lord Jesus. Give me to partake of the bread and water of life. If your spiritual hunger is at all healthy, and not in any way vitiated by the corruption, and slothfulness, and carnality of your nature, you will find it will be expressing itself thus before the Lord. And has the Lord bread for these people? Will He give these hungry people that bread they seek? Yes. That is a beautiful passage, in the type of Christ, where God, speaking by Moses, says that Aaron and his sons shall eat of the things wherewith the atonement was made; shall eat, that is to say, shall eat of the atonement. The things, the ram slain and offered, the ram heaved before the Lord, says God, you shall eat of this, and that, in the gospel, is "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". And are you not hungry for His Word? Can you be content to be reading the Bible always, and never feel any of it, never receive a passage in power, never feel anything applied to you, never hear God's holy Word to your heart in His Scriptures, and by them? No. If you have a real, that is to say a spiritual, appetite, you will want His Word. "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life". This is the food that a hungry religion, a hungry life, will crave, and receive from time to time. You will be sure to receive it. God gives this bread. He gives it to those who seek it, who knock for it. Knock and it shall be opened, seek and ye shall find. You will be partakers of Christ. Yes, you will be partakers of Christ from time to time, and a partaker of Christ is one who finds Christ to be his life. The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper is made life and it is a sign and a symbol of that nourishment that the Lord gives to His people. "Take eat, this is My

body which is broken for you". Take this cup, all of you drink it. For this cup is the new testament in My blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins. This fountain coming into the soul makes the soul hunger and "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled". They hunger for grace, they hunger for righteousness, they hunger for sanctification, they hunger for the presence of Christ, they hunger for the light of His countenance, the smile of His face, the words of His lips, the touch of His love, and the support of His hands. They hunger. God keep us from a religion that has no hunger in it.

And next, this life is a strong life. Do not say now that at once cuts you off because you are weak. Part of its strength will be known by the sense of weakness. You will feel weak if this life is in you. That is, the weakness of your nature you will feel, the strength of your sin you will feel, the weakness of your faith, and your hope, and your love, and that will cause you to go after Him that you may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. As Paul says to Timothy - "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus". But how is this strength, the strength of this pure river of water of life to be known in a soul? It is known in the soul in many ways. It is known first by a real sense and feeling of sinfulness, and an inward opposition to it. If you consent to sin always it is because you have no life, no spiritual life. But if you have spiritual life you will keep yourself. "He that is born of God keepeth himself". And keeping yourself there means you will be finding in yourself a resistance. You will have the spirit of Joseph. "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God". You will find it so. O, the strength of this life is seen in that one particular; you will never live persistently, and constantly, and willingly in sin. You will be saying sometimes even, you would rather die than sin. Sometimes, when this life is in you in a good measure, you will be saying, O, if the day should be near when I shall leave this world and go to the land which I have sometimes seen by faith far off, go to see the King there in His beauty without the veil of mortality, without eyes that can bear but little of that glory; O, if that day is near, at this moment I cannot feel to regret it. That is what you will feel sometimes. The strength of this life will rise in that way. Sin is filthy, sin is dreadful, to a child of God. He has a nature in him that makes sin

bitter because it is bitter to God, hateful to God. And this hatred to sin is not something that a child of God works up in himself. It is as natural to him to hate sin after the inward man as it is natural to him to love sin after the flesh. It is a natural thing, natural to the life that the child of God lives. He lives the life of Christ, therefore he hates sin by the life of Christ in his soul. O what a mercy it is, not to love sin. And yet you will say sometimes perhaps with tears in your eyes, Lord, I am sorry I love sin, but you will only say that as you have this pure life in you, this holy life of the Lord Jesus.

And the next thing I would bring to your notice is this; this life will give you an affinity with its source, with Christ Himself. Blessed be God with some of us there is no bitterness against Christ, there is no quarrelling with Him after the spirit. He is beautiful, and lovely, and desirable; we want Him, cannot do without Him, are miserable when He is not with us. We are distant, we are dark, we are foolish, but there is a spirit that says, O if I could only be with Him. There is an affinity. Holiness is attracted to holiness, life is attracted to life; light goes, in the eye on which it falls, back to the sun; there is an affinity. They used to say, and they say still, many people - "We will not have this Man to reign over us". Now if you were put into a company of twenty people and each voice should say of Christ - "We will not have this Man to reign over us" - what would you say? I believe you would say two things. The first would be this - Lord, this is not my company. And the second would be this - Lord, do be my King. Do reign over me. Why what makes the difference? The possession of life, spiritual eternal life; that makes the difference. The same by nature, sinful. O, the world used not to be disagreeable to us. The society of our carnal friends was all the society we desired. What makes the difference? Why, because the Lord has come to us. The Lord has come to us in His grace and put this pure life out from Himself, its fountain, into our hearts in some measure and now holy David, believing Abraham, weeping Peter, zealous Paul, and the doctrines that emanated from God expressed by inspired men, these are our company, these are the things we want. They all come from Him and as we know them we love them. Look at the saints, go to the saints; find in the Lord's providence yourself in the company of saints. Though you may say, I am not fit to be with them, you will



say, I love them. I wish to be like them; I would like to be able to speak as they do, as I believe they speak, out of feeling hearts. Lord, let me be numbered with them.

Numbered with them may I be  
Now and through eternity

There is a secret to all this and it is in this word, the fountain of life. It has come in some measure from Him into our hearts. Blessed be God, there is a fountain that gives us an affinity, as we have it in some streams in our hearts, With Him. I am glad I do not hate Him. I did once. My nature is no better today, but I am glad the Lord Jesus does attract me, and that I find in Him that which my soul wants. I only wish I had more of His grace, and of His favour, and think some day I shall be with Him and see Him in His beauty and in the land that is very far off. There is a word in the prophet Isaiah that may do some of us good, may have done us good in the past. "All that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed" (Isiah 45 v 24), and perhaps you said, Lord, I am not incensed against Thee. O, it was once like a live coal in my heart. I am not incensed against Thee. Cannot you say it sometimes? Can you not sometimes appeal to Him and say, Lord there is that in Thee that I love. I am sorry I am a sinner, but I wish I were Thine, and that I could live near Thee, and follow Thee, and love Thee, and be like Thee. With Thee is this fountain, and from Thee this fountain has come in some living streams.

And in the next place, my last word this morning, if we have this fountain in us, if the sweet streams of it are active from time to time in us, they will lead us to some familiarity, for affinity will lead to familiarity. That is to say, in simple English, you will get communion with Him. He will speak to you, and you will speak to Him. He is not a stranger, and He said to His disciples - Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends, for the servant knoweth not what His Lord doeth, but all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. I have done, and will do, the part of a friend. He will open His heart to you, He will show you His secrets, He will let out the secrets of the Covenant of Grace, and the preciousness of the atonement, and the glory of justification, and of sanctification and He will come as a friend, come to help you, to comfort you. "I will

not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." "I will send you another Comforter even the Spirit of Truth". And all these mercies, dear friends, come from the fountain. The promises come from the Promiser, mercies come from God, the God of mercy, communications come from Him, who will not keep His love in His heart unexpressed, but He will express His love to the objects of it from time to time. And we get communion in strange ways sometimes. Trouble drives you, and love draws you, and He speaks to you in your trouble. Affliction weakens you, and tries you, and weans you, and then He comes drawing you to Himself, and lets you know that He has mercy in His heart for you, and that because He loves you He sends this trial, that difficulty. He comes in strange ways. He says "Let Me hear thy voice", and you say, I have nothing Lord to say but complain of sin, and deadness, and darkness, and distance, and carnality, and yet you begin to say other things. Do bless me, and save me. Do not let me be deceived by my own heart, nor by Satan. Guide me into truth. Bless me with Thy presence. Open Thy mercies to me, apply them. "Remember Thy holy promise". Remember the Covenant. Communion. O, it is very wonderful that the God of heaven should ever speak to a worm of earth, and speak friendly to him, and kindly. Very wonderful that sometimes He should use trouble and make a silver trumpet of it to speak into your heart some kindness; that He should use some affliction like a channel through which shall flow mercies into your soul; that He should use trouble as a means to wean you from this life, and make you say, O the day I trust is coming when I shall be absent from the body, present with the Lord. "With Thee is the fountain of life". We shall trace all up to this fountain. Yes, grace; grace shall be the topstone as well as the foundation. Jesus shall have put upon Him many crowns by His people and all shall say - "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His Own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." "With Thee". Where else will you go? Peter's word will be yours in the spirit of it to the very end of your pilgrimage. "To whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life". And I will venture to say this, you would not want another, you do not want another. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" No source of supply, no source of pardon, no source of reconciliation, no source of justification, no source of sanctification, but the Lord Himself. And there, a sinner reconciled

in the body of the flesh of Jesus through death, is content to be, and more than content, he is thankful for this blessed source of goodness, of life. With Thee it is. God has put it there. "...the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself;....." (John 5 v 26) and therefore the Son says - "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly". You think you have not much now, O but the abundance is to come. It will be abundant indeed when it swallows up our death, when it has destroyed all opposition. Well we have a hope some of us - I have - and he that "hath this hope in himself purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3 v 3). It will bring you to it and part of that will be manifested in the sorrow you have that you are a sinner, and the darkness, and confusion you often feel, and in this sense, that you have procured all the darkness, and confusion to yourself. May it please a good God, an ever full Christ, to send out sweet streams of His mercy out of that full river, the river of God's pleasures which is at His right hand for ever. There are streams, as in the Psalms it is said - "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High". Dear friends, may this blessed fountain send its holy, sweet streams into your hearts.

AMEN.