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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 6 November 1932

PSALM 37 v 4

"Delight thyself also in the Lord and He shall
give thee the desires of thine heart"

The word is set against the natural disposition to fret and chafe ourselves in the presence of wickedness; a needed word. We all fix our gaze on what is troublesome, on what appears to be militating against our best interests. Temporal things are very near to us. Spiritual things are distant. Temporal afflictions are very painful to bear, and unless God is present and gives grace, they are all but intolerable, especially when some wickedness is intimately connected therewith. But, much reason as there may appear to be for fretting ourselves, for chafing in our minds, or irritation, and even for endeavouring to remove the evil under which we are smarting, there is the exhortation. Do not try to remove burdens which God has laid on. Do not try to straighten what He has made crooked. Do not resolve to bear such and such evils. You will only make matters worse when you touch them. You will make the crooked more crooked, and the burdens heavier, and the afflictions more intolerable if you endeavour to put them right according to your wishes, according to what seems to be your interests. "Trust in the Lord". A wide word, embracing of all the things that may afflict. Trust Him to do the best for you. He loves His people too well to allow evil to come for their hurt. Trust His kindness, trust His wisdom, trust His knowledge, trust His power, trust His promise, trust His immutable love. "Trust in the Lord and do good". Pray the best you can do in afflictions. Pray the prayer of faith. Trust in Him. Not easy. Nature rises, unbelief works, and everything within us strives to do that which God will not permit, but grace is sufficient. It was sufficient for the Apostle Paul who, when hurt by the pricking, piercing thorn, prayed that it might be removed from him. He got what was better than its removal, even grace to bear it, such grace as made him glory in the infirmity which this thorn made manifest to him.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord". What a word this is. Poor child of God with your eyes on your troubles, and difficulties, and burdens, and pains, and your minds much exercised as to why this has come, and troubled because of the wickedness the affliction brings to light, "Delight thyself" - take pleasure in Him. When nature shall yield no pleasure, when the transient nature of all good shall be seen, when your comforts are fleeing away, when your strength is decaying, when wickedness prevails about you as well as within you, then - not when all is removed - but then, in that, in the midst of all, "Delight thyself in the Lord". There are many reasons why we should do this. If we are the Lord's people, there are many reasons why we should delight ourselves in Him.

First, in His eternity. Changes, generally speaking, are painful to us. Durability is pleasant. Nature abhors these changes, and fleeting days. They all say "We must needs die". Every change is in itself a kind of death. A change means that what you have been in is dead, and what you are entering into you know not. But here Jehovah reveals Himself as the eternal God. May the Lord direct the minds of His children to this great truth - "I am the Lord, I change not". As no change can be in His nature, so no change can take place in His purposes. The eternal God. We cannot understand eternity. Vague is the idea, the widest stretch of imagination is short, infinitely short of eternity, and yet faith lays hold by the power of the Spirit, of this truth. The Lord is eternal, without beginning, without end. Dear friends, the heavens are to be rolled up as a scroll, the elements are to melt with fervent heat. This, before the Psalmist, caused him to delight in the Lord, for he said "Thou remainest, Thy years fail not", as if his faith should say, Though I see nature failing, though I know that I must die, "Thou remainest", and my hope is in Thee the eternal God. Have you ever delighted in Jehovah? ever felt that you were thankful that there is the eternal God? He remains. Look at this great truth. When you cast your hope there in Him as He is revealed in holy Scripture, you cast hope in God who changes not. When you cast your circumstances, which are always changing, sometimes from bad to good; oftener perhaps than you could wish from good to bad; there is One who changes not. "The Eternal God is thy refuge". Thus God, as it were, places Himself before a believing child of His, and says, All the changes you go through do not

affect this. They bring you into a state of helplessness sometimes, of irritation sometimes, of unbelief prevalent, making you say, I shall see no more good. Yet He says, "I am the Lord". "The eternal God is thy refuge". O do not fret when some earthly shelter is taken away, when some earthly defence is removed, when some earthly prop is taken from you. If you have faith in the eternal God you have before you at times that unchangeable Being. Delight thyself in this.

Delight thyself in His omniscience. Jacob made a great mistake through unbelief when he said - "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgement is passed over from my God". And the Lord appeals to him - Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? hath it not been declared unto thee that the Lord changeth not, that there is no searching of His understanding? The wicked say, He shall not see. Says God, He that created the eye, shall He not see? The wicked plotteth in secret. God sees him. Can any hide in secret places from Me, that I shall not see? says Jehovah. Delight in that omniscience that sees the wickedness of the wicked, that sees the plotting of the plotters, that sees all their designs against His majesty, and against His interests in the world; that sees your weakness, your inability to stand. Rejoice in this that the Almighty sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and there is no secret thing to Him. He sees how the wicked prevail and stops them at the point when they seem now to be just about to triumph. He sees the poor child of God ready to faint, and give up, and says - "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding." Delight thyself in omniscience, yea, even when you know that that omniscience looks into your own wicked heart. You may have been glad that God sees what you would be sorry for your neighbour to see in you; that He searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. He looks upon the heart of His people, not to destroy them because of the evil He sees in them, but to save them from it. Delight in omniscience, my friends. Commit thy way to Him who sees it. Cast thy burden on Him who knows what that burden is exactly.

Delight in infinite justice. No honest person, that is to say, no child of God, would wish God to be other than infinitely just. It is a principle of our holy religion that God is just. Yes, and He deals justly with men. When the wicked spreadeth himself as a green

bay tree, and seems to be flourishing, the God of justice is watching and though oppression be in a city, the righteous are told not to fret, because there be higher than they. Commit thy way to a just God. Delight thyself in infinite justice because it is interested in saving a sinner. That is an amazing Scripture - "A just God and a Saviour". Justice is as much glorified in salvation as it is in condemnation. The wicked will have no injustice done to them when they are condemned and banished from the presence of God, and the righteous will not enter heaven by the justice of God being sullied in their salvation. It is glorified in their salvation. Therefore, delight thyself in the justice, pure justice of God.

Delight thyself in the immutability of God. An amazing truth, the immutability of God. Nothing immutable here, either in our persons, or our circumstances. Change and decay stamped on all things here below. Sin has brought change, decay and death; so the only immutability to be spoken of is God Himself. "I change not", cannot change. And this is in the Scripture put into the promises of salvation, and the oath of God is connected therewith. "By two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie". The oath and the promise of God unite, are tied together by the Lord, to give strong consolation to His people. Therefore delight in that. Ah we do not build on sand when we build on God for salvation. This is a faith that truth embraces and rejoices in. O what a shining word that is in the Epistle of Paul to Titus - "God that cannot lie". I have rejoiced in it, it is a wonderful word - "God that cannot lie". No, He will never lie to a child of His. He will never lie to an enemy. If He gives a promise He will fulfil it. If He utters a threat, He will fulfil it. He cannot lie.

Delight thyself in omnipotence. "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" any sin in you He cannot subdue? any lust He cannot break the power of? any rock He cannot break in pieces? any rubbish He is not able to burn with the fire of His truth in you? Is there any enemy against the Church of God, against an individual member of that Church, He is not able to manage, turning the wrath of men to praise Him, stopping the enemy when he is, as it seems, on the point of triumphing. O, what a God we have, what a God we trust in. I will receive you saith the Almighty, and ye shall be My sons and daughters,

"I am the Almighty God, walk before Me and be thou perfect". Trust in Me, commit thy way to Me, look to Me, cast thy burden on My power, cast thyself on My power. Delight in omnipotence. God is worthy of all the delight in Himself we may ever have in our hearts.

"Delight thyself in the Lord" who is love. His nature is love. "God is love". What an amazing truth, what an infinite mercy. He embraces His children in the embrace of His love. He chose them in love; in love He gave His Eternal Son to be their Saviour. In love He sent His Son to die. In love He chastens wayward children. In love He lays on them the rod, the rod of a Father, not the sword of justice. And so it is a great thing to be enabled to delight in this. Says one, and we sing

Loved of my God, for Him again,
With love intense I'd burn

Eternal love, that love that embraces the vilest sinner. It embraced one of the two thieves crucified with Christ, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left hand. It embraced the jailor, and turned his heart at once to Himself; the Thessalonians, called from idolatry to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor, and an evil man, embraced by love, and arrested by love. He rejoiced in it; there was nothing else for him to rejoice in; he delighted in love. Rutherford delighted in this. You will remember - I have named it to you before - his word: "I did not love Him, but He would love me and I could not refuse to be loved." O, when you feel the love of God in your soul, then there is that which you delight in. It is eternal. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee". Delight thyself in this.

Delight thyself in the patience of God. He has been patient to us, borne with our ill-manners in the wilderness. Out stiff-necked ways have not provoked Him to utterly leave us. Most patient has the Lord been. This patience is expressed by Isaiah, speaking by the Spirit - "The Lord waiteth to be gracious". Waits till the sinner comes to the bottom; waits till he has no more strength; the sinner just falls utterly at His feet. Waits to show Himself very gracious

in forgiving sin. He has waited for you. He waited from eternity till you were born, waited through all the years of your unregeneracy, and waited till the moment came which He had appointed to be the time of your calling by grace. And when you resisted under the law, and were determined not to have this religion, still He waited and sent word after word, truth after truth, sentence after sentence, condemning you until you came to the bottom - "God be merciful to me a sinner". And in affliction, when you pitied yourself, and blamed this, and that circumstance, He was waiting all the time, like a Refiner, sitting watching the process of refining. We have great reason to delight in this blessed patience of God. "The God of all patience". Nothing provokes Him to leave off the work of salvation. Nothing provokes Him to leave doing good to a sinner. He will do him good even to his latter end. "Delight thyself also in the Lord."

Delight thyself in the promises in which He has discovered Himself to you. Promises do discover God. Yes, they discover you in your weakness, and meet that weakness. They discover you in your ignorance, and show you the way of wisdom. But they also discover God; as if a promise to a weak sinner says, God is almighty, trust Him. God is all kind, believe in Him. God is intending good to you, believe it. There is but one thing, that is you are under the rod of chastening, but that rod is for your good. The rod of correction is sent to drive folly from the heart of a child. The promises of God are like Himself, immutable. We are told the promises of God are yea and amen to the glory of God by us. How are promises to the glory of God by His children? They are to His glory in their fulfilment. When He promises strength to the weak, the giving of strength is to the glory of God. When He says to a child of His, "I will guide thee Mine eye", His guidance of the person is His glory. All the promises of God are yea and amen. Not yea and nay, yea and amen to the glory of God by us. Delight thyself in the Lord in these particulars; they are worthy of our consideration.

And in the last place here, delight thyself in the Lord in respect of the issue of all things with respect to His Church, and every individual member of it. What is the issue? Heaven. "Where I am there shall My servant also be". Where is Christ? At the right hand

of God. That is the place, the habitation prepared before the foundation of the world for all for whom it was predestinated. Think of it, a world of change, and changing feelings, circumstances. Deacons lost, losses of friends; these things come, and they say, they may say to our hearts, these changes are just among the purposes of God to wean you from the world, to wean you from yourself, to set your hearts on better things, especially on the end. There is an end, an end to change, an end to affliction. Therefore be not thou envious at the wicked for there is an end and thine expectation shall not be cut off. So says God in His word, and so says faith in the heart at times. Look to Him, faith says, thou canst not fail. Depend on His Word, depend on His promise, depend on what He has said. There is no failure where I am in heaven. I was once a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, I was despised and rejected of men, I died, I rose again, I am now at My Father's right hand, and there My servant who served Me in My gospel shall be also. The uncertainty resides in us through unbelief. The certainty resides in God who cannot change. Circumstances have no influence in this. They influence us, but they do not touch God. Unbelief questions this, it does not touch it. It hurts our hearts but it does not change our state. Circumstances cannot change our state. They hurt us, wound us, weaken us, but our state is unchanged, untouched. We are all hastening to eternity. Some of us, as we hope, are moving toward heaven. Happy place, harps, songs, praises, satisfaction without end, effulgencies of glory coming from the Lamb in the midst of the mighty throng. One wonderful attraction to the people of God to heaven is this, they will then, and there, be without sin, without that filthy thing, sin; without that unjust thing, sin; without that terrible thing that judges God in their minds, sin. This filthy, this unjust, this proud thing, sin, will then be finished. We shall be like Him. O, what a prospect is before thee, tried child of God, what a prospect. Here you kneel and serve the Lord Jesus, here you say, "Lord, help me". Here you confess your sin - Lord, I am sorry that I have sinned. Here you mourn an absent God. Here you think all is ended that is good. Here you say, Mine eye shall see no more good. But there, no night, no smiting sun, no consuming hunger, or thirst. God in the midst. It is a wonderful prospect, that of heaven, given by the Holy Spirit. "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty, and the land which is very far off". The King of kings, and Lord of lords. The eye of faith now and again gets a

glimpse of Him. There He shall be seen without the weary veil of the flesh. And the whole of the people of God will be there, their bodies as well as their spirits; they shall be all together with the Lord for ever. Delight thyself in this prospect. Thou must say, O the weary days, the sleepless nights, the pains, the griefs, the sorrows, the changes, the uncertainties which are about me, and are troubling me continually, these all, all are with Him, soon to be put away. Peter speaks of putting off his tabernacle. In this tabernacle we groan, being burdened, but ere long this tabernacle will be put off. May the Lord help us to obey this holy Scripture when the wicked prosper, when iniquity abounds, when dark days are threatening, coming nearer, and nearer to us; when this once favoured land shall be under the heel of oppression, when atheism, ungodliness, shall be more and more seen than it is today; that is my own judgement. We may be much nearer a triumph of this ungodliness than some of us expect or think, but we are moving rapidly, as I believe, as a nation, and all the optimism of men will not avert the threatened judgement. It is a threatening - "Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" What then shall we do, when heart and flesh shall fail, when circumstances shall be worse than they are today, when all the refuges of lies shall be swept away, and when the proclaimed evils of communism shall, in any measure, be realised in this nation? What then? Just think of it. I think of it at times. A kind of dismay comes on the mind; when this is gone, when that is removed, and no refuges remain, what then? Well, the eternal God says this - "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isaiah 26 v 20). Delight thyself in Him who thus speaks, who has thus mercifully made a refuge for His people, even Himself. May He give us grace to heed this word, and to follow Him in it, and when heart and flesh fail find that God is the strength of our heart and our portion forever.

AMEN.