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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Wednesday evening, 29th. June 1932

Text: Psalm 37 v. 4

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

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This may have been to some of us a sad day. Sad, because of the great and grave distance between our souls and the text. We well understand what it is, to delight in the world, when, it in some things and ways, pleases us, and we may sometimes be too glad of comfortable feelings, and rest in them, so as to provoke the Lord to withdraw them, and we may be sometimes, - perhaps some today have been - depressed by circumstances; circumstances which have taken hold of the mind, as it were, seized it, gripped it and would not let it go after better things. And others may have been tempted. You may have felt the tempter's power and wondered if ever you would be free from that power, and such things as this, such exercises and darkness and trouble and depression and temptation may have had such weight and such a powerful effect and hold upon us, as that it would seem all but useless, all but hopeless to go and expect anything from God. It is not often, perhaps, that we can realise that our need, meets God's supply; that our corruptions make room for divine holiness in Christ to flow powerfully into our souls, and that our weakness is to be the place for His strength. There must be a fitness between the Saviour and the saved; between men and women who are going to heaven and the knowledge of how they are to go there; that is to say, we are to learn that it is not of flesh and blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but wholly of God. I have no good thing to say of self. I have no union with the cry among our churches here and there heard, that there is too much preaching about sin. There is not too much when it is rightly preached. There is a wrong preaching about sin and there is a right preaching about sin, but with all that, I am disposed to say to you, that the text is a very fitting one for people who feel that they cannot do as they would, with respect to it. We may feel we cannot obey it. We may have felt through the day that it would seem like a contradiction to talk about delighting oneself in the Lord, when the many

things against that were working, if not prevailing, but, it is a word of God. May that not be forgotten. It is a word of God. A word from God. Therefore, with all our indisposition, our intense untowardness toward God; with all our helplessness, unbelief, hardness of heart, insensibility to divine things and to our own interest in them; let us, as enabled, look at this word, it may be the will of God to cause it to take hold of us.

Take pleasure in the Lord. What a word! "Delight thyself." A sinner called by grace, emptied out from time to time, looking at self with pained gaze, and feeling self to be the greatest monster existing. O sinner, remember this word. "Delight thyself." Take pleasure in the Lord. He has spoiled you for yourself; He has spoiled you for the world: He has spoiled you for self-dependence, self-goodness, self-wisdom, and self-guidance. Now, all that you need, He has provided in Jesus Christ, therefore, delight in Him! And what shall I say? I will tell you what I wish for myself. That I could delight in God for His own sake. A great attainment - still, it is attainable. I am sure some of you believe it - it is attainable that you may delight yourselves in the Lord for His own sake. What is Jehovah? Incomprehensible to us, and ever will be, even in glory. No creature shall ever be able to comprehend Jehovah. He who can comprehend Jehovah, is Jehovah, but though He is incomprehensible, He is apprehensible. He has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture, in infallible Scripture, and He is glorious. Glorious in His eternal Being - without beginning - without end. In that Being, that eternal Being, we have infinite perfection. What is imperfect, is just of time. Infinite perfection knows no time. God is One, not many. Three Persons in one God. One God in three Persons. He has no parts, no passions, and yet He has revealed Himself as possessing affections; what we call attributes, and for our own poor minds, it has pleased God to reveal Himself as possessing attributes, affections, infinite wisdom. - "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all." - Everything is made beautiful in His season. In the six days work of creation, we find that at the close of each day, "God saw that it was good." There was a kind of beauty upon each days work, which He expressed in that - He "saw that it was good," and that wisdom in creation continues to be manifested today, - reproduction of each species; "the sufficiency that is in creation unto the end of time, for the always continuing

wants of the creature. If we have at all right views of this wisdom in creation, we shall delight in it.

"Delight thyself" in omnipotence. He said, and it was. He says still, and it is. He upholds all things by the word of His power. All the order of creation, all the disaster that sin has made, are under the control of that omnipotence that belongs alone to our God and Saviour. "Delight thyself" in the immutability of Jehovah. There is mutability in every creature. Immutability is His alone. And should it please the Holy Ghost to gather our minds up to this divine Being, and the perfections which he reveals in the Scripture, we shall find that in Him, that will enlarge, and, shall I say, ennoble the mind, and detract from the beauties that we admire in the world, and set our attention and affection on Himself. The only thing that God created never to die, is man. We die to our bodies because sin has made them mortal. There can be no death where there is no sin, and there must be death where there is sin. Our bodies are sinful, that is to say, we are creatures with sin in us, and therefore we are mortal as to our bodies. One word might be written, as I have more than once said in this pulpit, across every certificate of death that doctors write, when, having given the immediate causes of death, one word could be written right across - SIN. Sin causes death; sin digs our graves; sin makes these bodies corrupt: - what then? This great, this glorious, this wonderful Being, Jehovah, has provided in His wisdom and love and power, a remedy, and the remedy is in Himself. And if we are led into that chapter which I read, - one of the most remarkable chapters, in my judgement, in the whole of the blessed Book of God - we shall certainly see enough to attract us, and pray that we may feel attracted by what the Holy Ghost there speaks by Paul. I have felt it good sometimes, to be led up to the Fountain - God. Wonderful Fountain! Eternal decrees, a decree of saving some men; fixing immutable love on them; choosing them, not because they were more or better than others, as Moses said to Israel; but because He would. He loves because He will love; He saves because He will save: and He adopts children, even sinners, unto Himself, by Jesus Christ, because He will have children. They do not want Him, but He wants them, and He gives them grace to want Himself.

"Delight thyself" in this, - that salvation is not a haphazard thing, but an eternal purpose in God. "This people have I formed

for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise." And this salvation that was eternally decreed, that poor sinners should obtain it, is found in Him whose name is Emmanuel, God with us. And when a sight of sin, pains and wounds, distresses and depresses, then, the Holy Ghost comes and gives a sight of Christ, and that sight raises the soul up; gives a good hope; and makes Christ the Alpha and Omega, to that sinner's heart. And all the changes he feels, and the difficulties that confront him, and the devils that inhibit him, and the temptations of Satan; these do depress, but Christ is more than all of them. He is more than all of you, as you know, you even, who cannot call Him your own as yet. You know, and if you speak honestly about yourself, and do not lie against your right, you will say it is true, that sometimes, some rays, sometimes in the night watches, when sin is present with you, and would drown you in destruction, there come views, and whispers, and touches, and influences, from the Lord, who draws your soul to His Son: and you creep to Him; fly to Him; pray to Him; hang about Him; hanker after Him; and say that you believe none but Jesus can do you good. Now if you enter into the word, 'delight', or, 'please', - take pleasure in the Lord, - you will say, 'I did that, that day, - I did it that day. His love was beautiful, His Person was glorious, His work was complete, and I saw it by faith, and though it did not come in, and I have not yet got the satisfaction I want, still I did feel my heart warmed towards Himself.' Perhaps you sing the last verse of the first hymn -

"But something yet can do the deed,
And that dear something much I need;
Thy Spirit can from dross refine,
And move and melt this heart of mine."

One of my first hopes arose out of the first and last verses of that hymn. The earnestness, the persistence, if I may use that word, that one felt, in seeking the Lord..... "Something yet!".... Hardness of heart, wickedness of nature, persistence of sin, cannot stand before the glories of the Lord Jesus. "Delight thyself", in His Person.

"Delight thyself," in His willingness to come. "I come," said He, in the Spirit of prophesy in the Psalm, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." A sight of the will of the Lord Jesus - a sight of that will that made Him set

His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem, when He knew what He would receive at the hand of His enemies - will move the soul. Behold His coming and doing. Remember this, there was His will to come, and to do. Behind all His going about doing good, was His eternal purpose to do it. The immutability of Christ in that, as the Son of God, is very wonderful. Come sinner, and look on this! - A willing Saviour.

"How willing was Jesus to die,
That we fellow-sinners might live!
The life they could not take away,
How ready was Jesus to give!"

How willing He was, How determined He was, to give His life, as an act of obedience to His Father. If ever you get a sight of His activity on the cross, in offering Himself a sacrifice, you will love Him for it. He not only received in a passive way, the wrath of God, but He actively offered Himself on the cross; and it is this that makes what Paul speaks of in the Hebrews - "We have an Altar." Oh the willingness of Jesus Christ to come; the willingness of Jesus Christ to offer Himself; and the active offering of Himself must, when seen by faith, have an attraction. The attraction of Christ is infinite, invisible. Ten thousand troubles, cares, pleasures, devils pulling one way toward hell, could not move you in that direction when the glories of Christ shall shine to you by the revealing Spirit of Christ. "Delight thyself" in a willing Sufferer. The thought that He was unwilling is abominably wicked in the extreme.

"Delight thyself" in God's just punishment of His Son. It was no injustice in the Father to punish His Son. May that blasphemous thought never lodge in our hearts. Just and right is God. Just and right was the Father, when He said to His sword, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." - "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." The infinite depth of that Scripture we shall never be able to fathom. The eternal Father came to His only begotten Son incarnate, and saw that Son under the law which we had broken, and saw all our transgressions we had committed and all the vileness of our nature, and He took our iniquities and laid them on His Son, so it was just; it was love; it was glory that smote the Lord Jesus. Oh that we

could see this more in the light of the Spirit's teaching. It pleased the Lord - it gave pleasure to the Father, to smite and put to grief His only begotten Son. I believe if a little of this glory fell on our hearts tonight, we should want to be alone, and if it grew much, we should find it affected our bodies. I have found that a sight of sin in God's light was more than I could bear for a few minutes. The sight of Christ following, was almost the same - too much for the body. "Delight thyself" in the punishment of Jesus Christ - in the pleasure of the Father. And that pleasure and that punishment, we have in the epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle says, "for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Think of it Condemned it, means He punished it. He bruised His Son. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Now if I had grace and ability to speak on this to you, I could occupy the whole evening, and a long time speak about it. It is very wonderful in my view, this 'just pleasure' of His Father - this 'love' of His Father in punishing His Son.

"Delight thyself" in the voluntary death of Christ. There is a word which I am very, very fond of, and as you know I have often used, - the 'vicarious' death of Christ. If you are interested in that, you will go to heaven, for the vicarious death of Christ for you, means that He stood in your place. He was the 'Vicar'. He stood in your place. He took what was owing by you, on Himself to pay, and as death was owing to you, He paid that awful debt.-

"How willing was Jesus to die."

And He did die, and His death was an active death. I would press this on you for a minute Our death will be passive. We shall die an involuntary death. Naturally, we would live, if we could. The death of Jesus was the opposite of that. It is called - obedience unto death, - and why? Because His Father laid it on Him as a Divine command. "I lay down My life. ----- This commandment have I received of My Father." Ah, may the Holy Ghost, lead you, lead me, to the cross, to see the Saviour there; with His life in His hands, so to speak, and offering that to God His Father, and knowing when it was done, that all things were accomplished. He said, "It is finished," bowed His head and dismissed His Spirit.

He dismissed it by His own act, died by His own act, that guilty sinners - some here - might live eternally with Himself.

Delight in His resurrection. Christ not raised, means, we are yet in our sins, and every minister since the apostles to this day, has been lying when he has ~~spoken of~~ ^{denied} the resurrection of Christ. "Ye are yet in your sins," says Paul, - 'and we who are witnesses of that resurrection, we are ~~false~~ witnesses, for we have declared He did rise from the dead.' As there is a glory in the death of Christ, that the badger skin of His ill treated body, His human nature, covers and hides from men, so there is a singular glory in His resurrection. The Father was just in punishing Him. The Father is just in raising Him from the dead. The Father was just in accepting the offering, and He is just in saying, 'I am pleased with it, and therefore, come Thou, My Son, out of the grave.' Pleased with it so that the Spirit came and quickened that body that had been lying there, actually dead in the grave, for three days and three nights. He raised Himself. "I have power to take it again." The Father raised Him, and the Spirit of Christ raised Him. That Spirit, who, dwelling in you that have Him, will raise up your mortal bodies also. "Delight thyself" in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the hope of the people of God, the keystone to the arch. Ah, Christianity, - when I say Christianity, I mean real grace, - in the saints of the Most High. And "delight thyself" in the infallible proofs, which He gave of His resurrection, to His disciples and to above five hundred brethren at once. He said to His disciples, 'Go into Galilee, and there you shall see Me,' (Mark 16 v 7) and it might have been, that when they went, they saw the Lord. Five hundred brethren worshipping a risen Saviour! Well, He has had many thousands since, myriads in England, since the five hundred were seeing Him, and He has still in the earth some who see Him, and worship Him, as being raised from the dead, by the glory of His Father. Oh, at your leisure, read the proofs of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and remember this, that the evidence of the apostles, is such as cannot be reasonably or properly doubted, and all the cannons and proofs you will find, this will meet all of them - He was raised from the dead and showed Himself alive.

"Delight thyself" in His ascension into heaven, and His presence there, at the right hand of the Father. In His ever living, and ever prevalent intercession, "able to save them to the uttermost

that come unto God by Him." Does not this meet the case of some? You have got bad cases, and bad hearts; painful cases in providence; difficulties perhaps in your business, and in your families. Things you cannot manage; things you do well to leave alone: but nature will meddle. A wise man "handles a matter wisely." What is that? Taking it to the throne of grace. If you have an enemy, take him there. When you have wants, and the supply does not seem likely to be given with the wants; when devils attack you; go with them to the good Lord Jesus. Oh, the precious Remedy! The good, the full supply, of this great and wondrous Saviour, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now my friends, my gracious friends, have I been able by God's mercy, to give you sufficient reason to attract you to this word - "Delight thyself"? Look to Him; go to Him; name Him in every prayer; in every confession of every sin; laying before Him every need. The need you have of conquering grace. The need you have of Omnipotence, to subdue these persistent, inveterate enemies, - indwelling sins. He wont say no to you - let me say it to you again - He wont say no to you. To some, He could not possibly say "I never knew you," because He has known you already. "Thou hast," said the Psalmist, "known my soul in adversities." When you are in the dark, and look for your evidences, you cannot see them. When you are brought to the throne of grace, He enables you by faith to set up a high heap, and a stone of help; the stone of help here, and the stone of help there, and put all together, they make, as Philpot says, "a respectable heap." And that which seals all of them, is one more favour, another touch, another blessing, another attraction in the person of the Lord Jesus.

"Delight thyself," in the next place, in the Holy Scriptures. They are His word; they belong to Him. They came from Him, and they are not to return unto Him void, but to accomplish that which He pleases, and to prosper in that whereunto He sends them. Oh what good words God has written in the Bible! How thankful we ought to be for an infallible Bible; an inspired Word: the Word that can never be broken. "The Scripture cannot be broken." The feeblest believer who has faith given to him to cleave to the Lord Jesus, is firmer in his standing than the earth and the heaven. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away." "Delight thyself" in the reproofs the Lord has spoken. Oh, I would be thankful that He

has been good enough to reprove me! And some Scriptures stand out in my view, occasionally, which have wounded me, grievously convincing me of some sins. The jealousy of Christ is very merciful to us, and expressed in reproofs and rebukes. "Delight thyself" in gracious promises. Oh, gracious promises to be fulfilled! The Word of God cannot be broken, for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? --- shall He not make it good?" And what comes then? There is a delight in us, in the Holy Scriptures. Descriptive of sin; descriptive of the Saviour. Threatening punishment to sinners; promising grace to believers. Holding out a full Christ, for an empty soul; a powerful Christ, for a weak sinner; the strength of God to be made perfect in the weakest of believers. Beautiful Scriptures! Blessed be God for the Bible. Perhaps some of you complain that you do not get much out of it. Still go to it. God help you to go to it! If haply your eye, one day, may "light on some sweet promise there." Good is God's Word to the saints; good is the Word of the Lord. And each believer, in his own case and measure, comes to see, that all God's precepts in all things, are right. Nothing wrong in the sweet Word of God.

Once more, and briefly, "delight thyself" in God's providence. What, to the child of God, is God's providence, but divine dealings? Emptying him, and filling him; weakening him in some things and ways, that the goodness and the strength of the Lord may be made manifest. Sending affliction to fetch back a wandering child; sending trouble to bring out again, new cries, giving many new errands to the throne of God's heavenly grace. Watch providence, watch it closely. Not as only being the act of God. Watch it as to its influence on your souls - what does it say to you? Is there a rod? Hear it, and who has appointed it. Are there disappointments? Wait on Him who says, "I will help thee," and who has promised that nothing shall fail. And the day will come, when you will say, "there hath not failed one word of all His good promise."

There is attached to this exhortation, a promise. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Now this may be a great attraction to some. 'O,' say some of us, 'if God gives me what I desire, He will give me Himself.' And what else, and what more can He give? Toplady sings, and we have sung with him, many-a-time, - "Less than Thyself will

not suffice." Great is the grace that enables a sinner to say that. "Less than Thyself." But these desires may be spread out in many ways, about which I have no time, if I had strength and ability and grace, to speak particularly, but they do spread out. "The desires of thine heart," - the desires that sin shall not have dominion. It struggles for it. The more grace you have, the more sensible you will be, of the presence and the wriggling and the struggling, and the ceaseless striving of indwelling sin, for the mastery. Oh, what cries this will give you! What errands this will give you to the throne of God's heavenly grace. How often you will say, 'Lord, let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' Desires, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend ----- the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

"The desires of thine heart," that the Holy Ghost may make you His temple, and that if He answers that desire, you may be kept from defiling the temple of God, lest ye provoke Him to destroy it. The desire that God the Father, may dwell in you, and walk in you, as He promises - 'I will receive you, and I will dwell in you, and I will be in you, and will receive you as My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' (2 Cor. 6. 16 - 18). And as the desires are, that the Trinity may take up His abode in your heart, and that He may speak to you, and you may have communion with Him, "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart," which are, that you may profit by what you experience in providence, and that God will kindly and wisely and powerfully bring you honourably to your grave. Oh, the times I have said to Him, 'bring me honourably to my grave, do not let me fall.' May you not say the same? Have you not said the same, "take not Thy Holy Spirit from me, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. - Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me." We do need the Lord to keep us. Oh what disgrace I should soon bring on this pulpit, and on His name and on the cause, if God left me. In the beginning of my ministry, I met with a sermon in manuscript, by Abraham Booth, called, Pastoral Cautions, and some of the cautions he gave in that sermon, a sermon preached at the ordination of a young minister, have never left my mind really. Take heed to your steps; pray to be

brought honourably through; pray that trouble may be useful to you; and that God may cause you to walk in this Scripture - "Delight thyself in the Lord." Whatever trouble comes; whatever death may supervene, and seem to come on the back of a favour of life; whatever the devil may insinuate, or roar: let this be the aim - 'There is a God in heaven, whom I believe; a God in whom I hope; a God to whom I would be going daily with my case and my prayers': and then this will come to pass - "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Let me close with one desire. Namely that we may reach heaven. Earth is, at times, a kind of hell to the people of God. Oh to reach the presence of God, as He will show Himself. To be satisfied eternally, and that though a creature, there will be no want, no weariness, no weakness, because, no sin. "The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Ah, it will be something to get to heaven! I have felt the hell of sin for many years, and hope that I shall never feel it when I am dead. That it will be done with, as far as I am concerned. That is my hope. Holiness, then happiness. Do not put happiness first. God will never make you happy, if He does not first make you holy.

"Heaven is that Holy, happy place,
Where sin no more defiles;
Where God unveils His blissful face,
And looks, and loves, and smiles."

Rutherford said preaching was not heaven, and every minister will come to that, and hearers will say, 'the best hearings are in heaven.' They bring a view of it, but heaven, - we must be there, to know what it is.

Now may the Lord look upon us. Oh, how scattered we are sometimes. May He give us grace to come again and again to this, - "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Amen.

