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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed
Chapel, Brighton, on Wednesday evening
24 October, 1934

PSALM 46 verse 1

"God is our refuge and strength a very present
help in trouble".

Moses, by inspiration, said to Israel "The Eternal God is thy
refuge" and what more can be needed? What greater thing can be
desired and prayed for, than that one, who is in danger, should
find this wonderful thing - A refuge in God, in the Holy Trinity?
We are not to separate the Trinity as to essence, as to will, as to
love, as to purpose. God is One. "Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God
is one Lord." Paul said to the Ephesians, "There is one Lord, one
faith, one baptism" As God is one, so His church is one, and the
revelation in Holy Scripture of God is always in some form or manner
of manifestation related to the church, that is to say,
to His poor, needy people. If it has pleased God to convince
us of our sin, we know a little, according to the measure of the
conviction, of the terror of the Lord. Very solemn, but every one of
you, born again, must have known, must perhaps even now be knowing
(for it is not confined to the beginning) a little of the terror
of the Lord. When perhaps affliction comes and with it some conviction
of sin, and some fear of the judgements of God, then faith, blessed
faith, has power given to it, by the Spirit, to cast a look on Christ,
to cast an anchor into Him, who is within the veil. "He, our
forerunner, is for us entered, even Jesus, who delivered us
from the wrath to come."

A refuge speaks danger of some kind. Faith in the Psalmist thus
exultingly speaks, - God whom we know. God, who has appeared for us
in the past. God, who has not rejected our prayers. God, who has
drawn us to Himself, again and again and made over something of His
covenant, which is Christ. This God is our refuge. That is a wonderful
gospel. I should be in the hell of despair without the gospel, in a
very few minutes. It, and it alone, bears the spirit up. You cannot
see in the light of God your sinfulness, without trouble. You cannot
feel your corruptions, without trouble. You cannot enter
into the solemn experience of the Psalmist, who said, "The pains of
death and of hell gat hold upon me" without needing in your feelings, a
refuge. We shall never bless God enough for the Refuge. Though I
have said we are not to divide the Trinity in respect of love and of

goodness, and of wisdom and of grace and of purpose and of power, still it has pleased God to reveal Himself as in three Persons, each one holding a particular office and doing a particular work in the work of salvation. The Father is distinguished from the Son in this manner - that He is the God of election, choosing sinners to eternal life, distinguishing between two women grinding at the mill, taking one, and leaving the other. Distinguishing between two men in the field, taking one and leaving the other. It may strike some of you as being exceedingly solemn, and so it is, and with your conviction of your sins you may wonder if God did look on you in election and choose you and give you to His Son to save. If that question is in you, the Lord keep you from casting it aside. The Lord keep you from rebelling against election. The Lord help you to bring the fear and the question to Himself to settle it for you. He can do it, none else. He may use a minister to this great end, but the work is His own. That is the Father's part, but what does that involve? It involves this, the gift of His eternal Son. God gave some men to His Son "The men Thou gavest Me"(John 17 v 6) is Christ's word in John, and God gave His Son for and to those men. A double gift of everlasting love. And the Son's part, what is that? He said in the Psalms (Psalm 40 v 6-8) in the spirit of prophecy "A body hast Thou prepared Me" As Paul explains in the Hebrews (10 v 5) that He should be the Incarnate Word, the Incarnate Son, and should take on Himself, as by imputation, all the sins of the men His Father gave to Him to redeem, and in this He answers to the type you have in the Old Testament - six cities set apart by God to be cities of refuge. A man who unawares had slain a man, unto one of those cities the man-slayer might flee.(Numbers 35 v 6,13 and 15) Christ answers to that, that is He, the refuge. "A refuge for sinners, the gospel makes known" What a refuge. Now this refuge has in it many things, one or two of which I will name, as enabled. The first is this - He made an end of sin. "By one offering He perfected for ever them that were sanctified" Sanctified there means that they were given to Him, set apart for Him, for that is what sanctification means, something, or some person, set apart. Christ made an end of sin. O to get a sight of that by faith. To know, to believe and to enjoy, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, is one of the greatest and the sweetest and the deepest and the strongest experiences you can have in this life. Nothing better, sweeter, or more comfortable, to a sinner, than to know that, though he is a sinner, and though he must remain, as to his nature, a sinner, all his life, yet the whole of his sin of birth, of life, of heart, of lip, that all his sins, past, present, and to come, Christ made an end of, put away, and when they

are sought for by a tender conscience, or by an accusing devil, or by the law, they shall not be found. Now, when this is opened to faith, what does a sinner do? He does this of a sweet necessity, he flees from the wrath to come to Him who bore that wrath. He flees by faith into this sweet and safe refuge, the Eternal God, Jesus Christ. Sinner, when you flee to this refuge there is one thing that is certain, certain perhaps not to you at the moment, but really you will never be rejected. The door is open all the day, and there is no night there. "Come to Me" said Christ. Law-condemned, self-condemned sinner, come with your terrors, with your fears, with your doubts, with your questions, with your guilt, come to Me. I will give you rest. This is a blessed present thing. God is our refuge from the wrath to come, from a condemning law, from a condemning conscience, from a condemning heart, from a pursuing, angry, bitter, devil, and from the corruptions that are felt. He is the refuge from all these things. There is no ground of despair where a sinner, convinced of his sins, is crying for mercy. Go, as well as you can, with guilt, with the publican's cry "God be merciful to me a sinner", with the cry of the poor woman "Lord help me".

God is our refuge from the devil. "Be sober" said the Holy Ghost by Peter "knowing that your adversary the devil walketh about seeking whom he may devour". You may think you know when he is coming, but you do not. You may think he will come this way, and while you are looking at that way, he will be coming another way. There are two attributes the devil has in constant exercise among the people of God. The first is deceit, the second is violence. Deceit was the first thing he practiced in Eden and by deceit he overcame Eve. He will deceive you if he can. He would deceive the very elect if God allowed him. He will paint you a saint, a believer, a holy brother. He will make out to you quite clear that the scripture is on your side because you turn to the Lord and you profess to love Him and all that. He will paint you to be something you are not, and that is deceit. God has promised by His Son to deliver His people from sin and violence. Violence is what he practices often. He violently assaults you. He brings your sins to remembrance, not by the Holy Spirit's influence, which is quite different, but to work a terror in you, to harden your heart. O what violence he exercises against the faith of a child of God. He will drive you off your knees sometimes. He has driven me from my knees more than once. He will tell you there is no help for you in God. He will tell you that though you are

convinced of sin, your convictions are not right. He may tell you of some godly friend who has deeper convictions than you have, and says your convictions are not right. If you feel a little hope, he will tell you that that is the hope of a hypocrite, because you are a sinner, and even the very hour you have felt a hope you also committed some sin. He reasons. Do not you reason with him. I have tried that. He can outreason you. He is older and more subtle and cleverer than you. Nay, even Michael, the Archangel, durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan". Pray, if you have this violent enemy about you. Pray that God would rebuke him, that He would cast out these, his violent suggestions, and assertions, for he will both suggest, and assert, many things. I am older than you are, my friends, and have had years of this struggle and contest with the devil, both in his deceitful workings and by his violence. Now what can you do - a worm and the god of this world - what can you do? When the Holy Ghost helps you, you will say with the Psalmist - "I flee unto Thee to hide me" You will pray as in the hymn

Hide me O my Saviour hide
Till the storm of life is past

God is your refuge. Jesus had more experience of the deceit and violence of the devil than any saint ever had or ever will have. In the wilderness, tempted of the devil. Tempted to presumption, tempted to unbelief, tempted to deny His Sonship. Tempted to tempt the providence of God, and He was with wild beasts and the wildest of all these wild beasts was the devil, but He overcame. It was not possible for the Lord Jesus to fall. It was not possible for Christ to fall to sin. No. Now our favourite hymn writer Hart, says

Christ, who conquered for us once
Shall in us conquer too

O flee to the Saviour. Run to this refuge. This rain of the devil's temptations wont wait for you to get out of the field, but a refuge is here. In the wilderness a little sanctuary. The same thing. God is this refuge. A refuge from yourself, You need that as much as you need a refuge from the devil. Good Erskine said "I am both a devil and a saint". O it is difficult to make these two things agree in one person, but it is so. As you need to be saved from yourself in a time of trouble from rebellion, you need the Lord to give you submission to His will, to enable you honestly and humbly to say "the will of the Lord be done". To believe that He exacteth of you

less than your iniquities deserve. Grace will come and enable you to say "I deserve this and hell afterwards". You understand me, those of you who have struggled with conviction and pain in your heart, and burden on your conscience, with an affliction, and you have said "O, if with my sins compared, how light", But you need a refuge from yourself, from rebellion, from hard thoughts of God. You see perhaps others going more smoothly than you are, and you fret. Asaph did that. He saw prosperity even with the wicked and adversity given to the saints, and he tried to make these two things right with God's goodness. He could not manage it. You will never put God straight by reasoning about men, about yourself. I have got trouble, you say, and my neighbour, who blasphemes God, gets along without trouble. Well, the Lord give you grace to leave off reasoning. But you must have grace in the refuge and from the refuge, just as Asaph did. He puzzled himself, he reasoned, he looked at matters about him, he looked at men around him, he looked at God's character, and could not make that character straight with these differences in the providence of God. O, but the Lord took him by the hand. May He take you by the hand, if you are in this trouble. He took him by the hand and led him into the Sanctuary, which is a refuge, and then light shone into his soul and faith rose up into exercise. Then he saw what you may have seen - that the wicked, who are prospered, are, by their very prosperity, set in slippery places. Self-confidence is a slippery place. Self-confidence is a slippery place for anybody. Self-strength is a slippery place. Self-goodness is a slippery place, and the accumulation of natural comforts, which Asaph thought were the prosperity of the wicked. O, but what a slippery place. The Lord keep us from envying any prosperous person in this world. If there be no grace with the prosperity, the person is in a slippery place. Then he saw himself and what a sight. Ah, one says, he saw himself a saint. He saw himself a beast - "I was as a beast before Thee". God wont flatter you, my friends, if He deals kindly with you. If He takes you into the Sanctuary you will be sure, in that certain, holy, light to see that you are, but as a beast, before Him. But also, he saw another thing. He said I have been held up by Thee. Lord, when I was in danger, Thou didst hold me up. When I was making a mistake, Thou didst hold me up. When I was fretting myself all but to death, Thou didst hold me up. And so he came to two conclusions, first that he was always with the Lord. O, is not it sweet to believe God is with you and to feel it, to believe He will never leave you nor forsake you. Then he said

another thing in his heart was made quite clear to him. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee".

O sinner, did you ever get a sight of the loveliness of Christ, the sufficiency of Christ, the goodness of Christ, the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ? You will be sure, when you get that view, to say "Whom have I in heaven but Thee" None upon earth to help. My salvation. None upon earth upon whom to lean, but thyself. So Asaph got a refuge from himself. We need a refuge from being overwhelmed and drunken with surfeiting and care. We are very apt to get into that state. I was in that state once, particularly, and I walked as a man drunk, and the Lord said "Be sober", and I said Lord, I am drunk, I was drunk with trouble. One needs a refuge from that kind of thing. Despair? Sinner, despair? With a refuge near you, revealed to you. Despair? When Christ has dropped some kindness into your heart which you have forgotten. No. When faith comes again into her own sphere, as it were, she says "Begone unbelief, my Saviour is near". God is our refuge from ourselves. "Self in myself I hate" to quote Erskine again, "'tis matter of my moan" Faith holds Christ to be the same yesterday and today and for ever.

God is our refuge from the world. If it were given a saint at any time when his mind was under the influence of the Holy Ghost to choose between the cross of Christ and the world in its best dress, you know the choice he would make. Give me Christ, he would say. Give me Christ or else I die. If we had more grace we should be much more afraid of being in the world, because the friendship of the world is enmity against God. If any man will be a friend of the world he is an enemy of God. Look at your friends. It has been well said - Show me a man's companions, and I will show you what he is. Show me a man's books, and you can find it out what he is. If his companions be the poor people of God, if he says I would rather spend a day as a door-keeper in the house of my God than have seasons with the wicked, you have got a man who has a good God to go to. God is our refuge from the world.

One more word here. God is our refuge from the fear and the power of death. Christ has broken the power of the devil, taken away the sting of death and has obtained victory over the grave. Yes, it is one thing for a man to say - "I know I must die", that is quite true, but it is another for a poor sinner to say "I have had

many a shake at the thought of death. I have had much fear as to how it would be with me in the hour of death, and I have sent hundreds of cries to God that He would be with me when I come to the last. Now that poor sinner may say "My refuge in regard of death and the grave is in God. My refuge is there" You will have plenty of enemies consulting to cast you down from your excellency. They delight in lies, want to make you lie against your right.

And strength. Another good piece of christian experience - strength. We read that Christ is the strength of Israel. "From thence" that is, from Him "is the shepherd, the stone of Israel" (Genesis 49 v 24) We need it. First, strength to believe. It is given to the saints to believe. The Philippian church rejoiced in that it was given to them to believe on the name of Christ. Whosoever believeth shall be saved. No question in the scripture about that. Much questioning there may be in our hearts; will be, but O look at the strength of Abraham for a moment. In hope he believed against hope. There was everything in nature to contradict his faith and to blight his hope. O, but he believed God. One of the greatest words that is said of Abraham was - he believed in God. If you believe Him with that faith you have got the strength of Israel in your soul and you know it at times. Faith to believe in the wisdom of God. Christ is the wisdom of God. Perhaps you are saying - Lord what shall I do. I do not know which way to turn. I am in difficulties. I am in affliction. What shall I do? He comes and helps you. A very present help in trouble. What is that? He gives you help to cast it on Himself. To cast all your cares on Him.

Strength, in the next place, to wait on God. Ah, run here, says the devil. Go there, says the adversary. Do this, says nature. Says faith - "My soul wait thou only upon God, from Him cometh my salvation". There my friends you have the secret. "From Him cometh my salvation". My salvation in trouble, from trouble, from sin and from mortality in God's time.

Well, it is a great thing, is not it, to have this God for your refuge? Yea, and I might say this, sometimes He comes so near, He becomes quite familiar with you, and, as it were, He says "Trust Me. Believe in Me. I will never leave thee. I will never forsake thee" "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

I must leave it now, may the Lord help us.

I know your kindness and I want your prayers in a particular thing. Last Friday morning my wife was taken ill with what the doctor called an acute attack of bronchitis. From then, until yesterday morning, things were going well apparently. Yesterday morning after seeing my wife the doctor came down and gave me a great shake. He said he was not satisfied with her condition. Now if the Lord will help you to pray for us, that is what I ask

Amen.