

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 26 October 1932

Text: Psalm 56 verse 3

(Reading: 1 Kings 13)

"What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee"

It is a general experience in all the saints of God that they have times when they fear. The professor who does not fear is, it is to be feared, but a professor. The life of God is likened to a tree. It has its seasons, changes, winter. David is a very striking example of this truth. He had much more grace than anybody today, as I should judge, knew more of Christ than most of us, had more intimacy with God than most of us, distincter approaches, and distincter answers to prayer, than perhaps anyone in this congregation can speak of. At least he was equal to the best. People talk about the darkness of the Jewish dispensation. As a dispensation, it was certainly darker than the gospel dispensation, but there were individual cases in which God dwelt so distinctly, blessedly, that most of us professing God's name, must hide our faces, and say we know little of that. But he had times of trouble, many of them, and the times of trouble which he had, were such as to make him afraid of the consequences. You may lightly say, matters will right themselves, and have no fear, but if that is the case, you will get no good out of your trouble. You will never be able honestly to say "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" But if the changes, and the difficulties, and the troubles, and the fears, which you experience, bring you to the footstool of mercy and to have dealings with God, then you will get good.

Times of fear. "What time I am afraid" which says this: there are circumstances, enemies, temptations, difficulties, powers, principalities and powers of darkness, which, as felt as being burdensome and fearsome and likely to do great damage to us, as we apprehend, will cause times of fear. We shall be afraid.

That I may not wander about the universe, and be general, I will name a few of the times, the things that make us, if we experience them, afraid. The first I will name is this. We may be afraid of God forsaking us, and casting us away from His presence. David had such a fear. Said he, in fervent prayer, "Cast me not away from Thy presence." It is a solemn thing to fear it, to consider what would be the effect of that on your soul, if God left us: no exercise, no prayer, no confession, no earnest calling on Him for help, but just a sinking into a deathly condition. Does indwelling sin, working, urging, deceiving you, make you afraid lest God should forsake you? Does carnality, as manifesting itself, make you afraid? Does the low state of the church of God, as you see it, and feel it, make you afraid? Do barren hearings make you afraid? Do readings of the scriptures without life, light, power or unction, make you afraid? If such and such things befall you, and you begin to search and wonder, you will say, why is it I call on His name, and get no answers? I read His word and feel no power. I get no instruction. I listen to the preaching, it does me no good. I cannot blame either the scriptures, or God, or the ministry. I must blame, and lay all guilt on myself, and am afraid. Is this the case with you? O, if God should leave us, what would it matter if we had the whole world? O professor, if God should leave you, who could befriend you? If the influence of His presence be removed, who can help you? Who can keep you from carnality and from the world? Do, if you are exercised, I beseech you, do pray that prayer "Cast me not away from Thy presence. Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" In earlier days I never prayed that as I do nowadays. I cannot say I am walking in the fear of hell, but I do very much walk in that "Cast me not away from Thy presence". Profession must wither; goodness, if we have any natural goodness, must wither; a tree must wither, if it have no water. I have often thought of that scripture and prayed it might not be my case, "a garden without water" Think of it, dry, and therefore what is planted in it is sapless, and must die.

What time I am afraid of God leaving me, leaving me to my pride, and my carnality and my worldliness and my covetousness

and my dreadful unbelief, issuing as it must do if God leave me, in infidelity, that is one thing. May we lay it to heart. May we not go away from this service and say, "He is always talking like this" but lay it to heart if you can. The terribleness of God leaving a person. He leaves a person judicially, as He left Judas. He leaves a person in blindness. He leaves a church to the influence and prevalence of sin. If you see these things in the scripture, if you feel that they may have application to yourselves, may there be a fervent cry "Leave me not, neither forsake me".

And the second thing that would make us afraid, if we were tender in the fear of the Lord, is the prevalence of some particular sin or sins. "Let no iniquity prevail against me" No one, who has any sense of sin, would say he had no strong iniquity. There are strong propensities in us to sin, strong inclinations to this or to that evil in our nature. We have what Paul calls the law of sin. A law reigns, has authority over people. The law of our nation has authority. Now a law in the members means that there is some authority over the affections, over the will, over the inclinations, and evil thoughts, and evil things of every sort and kind, will be found in this law in our members. No effort against it that you may make, no resistance that you can offer, no resolutions not to give way that you may form, will be a barrier against this law. O, it is a fearful thing to find the prevalence of any iniquity in you. Either pride, or vanity, or covetousness, or any lust of the eye, or the pride of life, any yielding to sin because it is pleasant to you, because it is easier to yield than to resist. If conscious of such things then your cry will be "Lord I am afraid". The carcasses in the wilderness may say to us "Look at us. See what befel us, because sin prevailed in us, because unbelief prevailed." "O" you may say "Lord let not my carcass be added to those carcasses".

The thing that will make us afraid or should do, is temptation. No child of God escapes temptation. Temptation is some argument, some reason, some attraction to your mind or affections or will, to do what conscience may tell you is wrong.

Temptation to anger, to take your own part, to fight your own battles. Temptation to disobey what you know God has set before you. Well might Jesus Christ, who knows our weakness, say in His word "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" Pray "Lead us not into temptation" You may not, if a child of God, you will not, lose heaven by falling under the power of temptation, but you will lose a great deal in this world. That poor, disobedient prophet, whose solemn case impressed me so much today as to induce me to read the chapter (1 Kings 13), that poor prophet, he forgot God's immutability. He forgot that when God has said to a person "do this" that He does not change His mind and say to him, "do the contrary". It was as if the devil came to that poor prophet, as he went to Eve, and said to him "Hath God said" and he fell a prey, and the lying old prophet told him a lie. He had the word of God in his heart and he obeyed it partly. He had done what he was told to do, up to a point. He saw the authority of God and the power of God in respect of His word. He saw the altar rent (see 1 Kings 13). He saw the ashes poured out. He obeyed the Lord in refusing the reward of the King. He started back on the way that God told him and then his faith failed. He little knew what was awaiting him when he left the house of the old prophet. A lion stood in the way. It did not wholly devour him. You may be disobedient and you wont lose your soul, but you will lose much good and much comfort. If you believe this, if you feel this, will it not move you to say "I am afraid, Lord I am afraid". Ease, comfort, may argue with the old lying prophet "Go back, do this. You obeyed the Lord in all but this little thing, go back, take refreshment, and then start again on your journey home". God says "No, you will never reach your home, you will never reach that after which temptation leads you to stretch yourself forth" Are you afraid of this? "What time I am afraid"

What time I am afraid of formality prevailing, so that I am not seeking reality, not seeking communion with God, not seeking to mortify the deeds of the body that I may live. It is an easy thing for you and for me to be drunken and surfeited with care, an easy thing for the world to come in, in various forms and claims, to lay hold of you and carry you away. Formality is a dangerous thing. Generality is an equally dangerous thing. You

make a profession, you become formal, you become general, you are not particular about God or His character, or fellowship with Him, or visits of His love, or tokens for good, and so you become much like the dead bones in the valley, very dry.

Or the effect of trouble on your mind may make you afraid. You fret, you murmur, fall a prey to reasoning. Why has this come? Why has God permitted this strange affliction to befall me? And you begin, I say, to reason about it. Your way is hedged up. You see no way out of the trouble, and so you say, "This is an evil and I must bear it. I will get along as well as I can" and so you are driven away from God. Trouble, which in itself can never do good, but which, sanctified, draws the soul to God: if it has not that effect upon us, then surely we have reason to be afraid; more reason to fear the effect of that, than we should have reason to be afraid when under a right exercise.

What time I am afraid of the pride of my nature. Dear friends, the dust is the best place for a sinner and with regard to spiritual health, the valley of humiliation is the most healthy place you can live in. You may make difficulties to yourselves in going down and as Bunyan says, get some slips in going down. O, the influence of pride. It may take the form of enmity, and a desire to revenge yourself in some particulars, forgetting that the Lord says "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." It may take the form of despising your affliction, against which despising you are exhorted. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him". Or it may lift you up against a fellow member or a neighbour, some creature. "Who am I that I should be down?" You lift yourself up, and the spirit of that is this, you say to the Lord "Why hast Thou made me thus?" An evil spirit. The Lord keep us from pride. If friends speak kindly to us, we can scarcely bear it. It seems almost that if we were scolded and blamed it would be better for us, so susceptible are we to pride. It is much easier to say "I am nothing" than it is to be nothing. Paul had grace enough to say "Though I be nothing", to say he was the least of saints. Much grace is needed to be humble. God must humble us, before we are humble. "Pride, that haughty

monster pride, it works by fraud or force..... and keeps us from the Lord" The Lord keep us from it. But if we feel it, may we have grace enough to fear it. May we have grace enough to say "Lord do save us from it, this devil, this liar, this filthy thing" What is more unbecoming a creature, and a sinful creature, than lifting himself up in pride. We do not like dependence, but God will have us depending. We are dependent. O, that we were enabled to depend. There is a difference between the two. Dependence is written in our nature, in the very warp and woof of it, dependence is there, but a depending spirit in a fallen sinner is by grace. Faith says, "you must hang on Christ, keep close to the cross, abide by His atonement."

What time I am afraid of Satan who, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour. He is the devil if he is an angel of light. He is the devil if he subtly comes to us. He is a devil if he roars against us. He will never be anything but a devil, a lion, a murderer. O, may the Lord make us afraid of this enemy of our souls. Be sober, dear friends, be sober, be vigilant in prayer. Seek to have on the whole armour of God, against this enemy. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world". Who can stand? I am afraid. I am getting near the end of my journey. I never had more fear than I have nowadays concerning certain things. What time I am afraid of this enemy, this devil.

What time I am afraid of getting no benefit by afflictions. They will do us good or harm, either soften or harden, either direct us to the Lord or divert our attention from Him. Afflictions are made, to the saints, tribulation to separate the chaff from the wheat. What effect have your troubles on you?

What time I am afraid concerning the last. There is no discharge from one war. You who are young may think that I perhaps needlessly bring this subject to your notice, but it is not needless. We are naturally apt to put away the thought of that day, but it is coming. "We must needs die". "Am I made a real christian, washed in the Redeemer's blood, have I union with

the church's living Head?" "Pause my soul and ask the question, art thou ready to meet God?" A dying bed will be a very solemn bed. What, is this fear slavish? No, a good fear. Not a tormenting, slavish fear, wrought in us by the work of the law, but a fear that comes from the fear of God, that comes from a sense of weakness in ourselves, that comes from the feeling "Lord, hold me up or I shall fall. Guide me, or I shall go astray, teach me, or I shall perish for lack of knowledge". Clean tender fear. Many a man may die under the power of legal fear, but a child of God, though he has that in him, in common with all men, has also that blessed clean fear of God, of which we read in the Proverbs "Happy is the man that feareth always". "The fear of the Lord is clean enduring for ever", and if we have it, it will turn our hearts Godward. Its natural movement in the soul is just to turn the heart Godward. It will say to you, "If God is your friend these troubles will end well, these enemies will be overcome, and slain, these afflictions will yield you good." So sweet, so clear, so clean is the voice of the fear of the Lord in the heart. Watch it, see if you have it, when trouble comes. If the fear of the Lord is in you, if not strong enough at the moment to overcome, it will resist evil. It is "an unctuous light to all that's right, a bar to all that's wrong".

Now what is the effect of this fear? I am afraid, I will run away from this religion? No. I will have nothing more to do with the name of God? No. He says "I will trust Him. Man deceives me, God is immutable and He is true. My heart deceives me, God is immutable and is true. His promise is yea and amen." And how does this trust in Him move? It moves this way, it takes you to the Lord. It moves you to say, "Lord, hold me up and I shall stand". "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not" "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". And you see at times so much in God, so much in the promise of the gospel, so much in the suitability of Jesus Christ, so much in the immutability of God in a promise, and an oath, as that you will be moved to say "Lord, I cast the anchor of hope here. My hope is built here. Here would I live, here would I breathe the spiritual air of the gospel, here would I look to the Saviour of sinners, here would I lean on the arm of Jehovah in my own

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nature, here would I come with my troubles and my difficulties, and my fears and my sins and my temptations. Here would I come with all of them. Nobody knows, but a sinner who trusts in the Lord, the sweetness of that trust. The sweetness of it. There is a little of the Lord Jesus pressed as it were into the soul, some sense of His power, of His goodness, of His ability to help you in every trouble, to guide you through all difficulties, and to provide in all necessities. "O what a Christ is Christ to me" one says, and some here have said it. "O what a Christ is Christ to me". I am afraid yet I trust in Him. I have that in me which is against Him, but I find I have that in me, that draws me to Him, that makes me need Him and feel my need of Him, that enables me to go to Him in every need and every distress. I will trust in Thee, the only trust. The jealousy of God comes against all other confidences. He rejects them, but this, never. When He sees a poor, depending, humbled, weak, failing, falling sinner at His footstool, He sees a lovely sight. The sinner does not feel to be lovely, but the Lord sees a lovely sight. We shall never know the delight we are to the Lord, when we go to Him, and trust in Him. You may see it in the scripture, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm" He is to be like the heath in the desert. But, on the contrary, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord. His leaf shall not wither" He shall not be afraid of wind, or rain, or sun. God is his confidence. There is, dear friends, sufficient in God to warrant our trust. His immutability, His promise, His oath, His suitability, His wisdom, His goodness, His love, His covenant. O, faith viewing Him, in these particulars, or in any one of them at a time, says in the soul, "There is enough there". "Here is all a God can give". Sinner, "All a God can give". More than we can hold. He is infinite. "I will trust in Thee". I will trust in the atonement, that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. That blood of which Hart sings

The blood of Christ, a precious blood  
Cleanseth from all sin, doubt it not  
And reconciles the soul to God  
From every folly, every fault.



O do you say it sometimes? Does the beauty of it, like a flash, just dart into your mind and quicken thought? Almost you say, "there is infinity in that" Does the power of it to kill sin in you from time to time appear to your faith? Then you will say "I trust that" I cannot trust in resolutions. I cannot trust in conviction that it is wrong to do this or do that, but I can trust that blood to kill my lusts. Jesus, on the cross made an end of sin. His blood, seen by faith, teaches a sinner that the blood of Christ can cleanse him, can kill his lust, can enable him to do what is said in the Romans, "Mortify therefore the deeds of the body, that ye may live."

What time I am afraid I will trust in the righteousness of Christ. That answers all, meets all difficulties. We are full of difficulties, full of faults, full of errors of spirit, full of failings, marring everything, but this righteousness meets all. It says to a sinner, you are complete in this. You are righteous in this. You are pleasing to God in this and faith says, I trust it. I look to it. I believe in it.

What time I am afraid I will trust in the omnipotence of the Saviour. He ruleth the raging of the sea. He sitteth King on the waves. Yea, He rules the universe. Dear friends, there is reason in God the Son, reason in God the Father, to whom we have access through the Son, and reason to trust the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, may we, though weak in faith, trust a mighty Saviour. He does not need our strength. The weaker we are, the better for us. The weaker a church is in itself, the better for it, for the members. It is well then to be going to the Lord for strength and nowhere else.

Trust Him, He will not deceive us  
Though we hardly of Him deem

No, but He loves His people so well that He says to them "O My dove that art in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely". When that is so, this trust is in exercise. "I will trust in Thee". What for? Briefly, to bring

me good out of evil, to keep my feet from falling, to sanctify all troubles to me, to sanctify me through the truth, and to give me a good finish to my wearisome pilgrimage. Trust Him for everything, body, soul, spirit, circumstances. Trust Him for the business. Trust Him for family. Trust Him for friends. Trust Him for the Church. Trust Him for everything. "I will trust in Thee" There is enough in God my friends, enough in the Trinity, enough in each Person set forth in the gospel. Therefore, be it given to us to say solemnly to the Lord "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee". Men cannot drive us from this, devils cannot drive us from this, indwelling sin cannot drive us from this, if we have the faith of God's operation. The Lord give it to us. Do not banish fear by any effort of your own. If you do, you wont trust in the Lord. Do not be strong in yourselves. If you are, you wont want the strength of God. Do not manage by your own wisdom. If you do you wont need the Lord Jesus. But if, distrustful of self, distrustful of everything, fearing evil everywhere, and sensible of being liable to fall every minute, blessed with faith, you will say "There is one to whom I may go, to whom I will go, though He slay me, though His providence be against me and though all things are upside down in my matters, I will trust in Him even though he slay me." I will give you a bad report of self, but I will try to give you a good report of the Lord. He is worthy to be trusted. May the Lord help us to trust in Him. Amen.