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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 9 November 1921

Psalm 68 v 20

"He that is our God is the God of salvation;  
and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death"

The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets and they prophesied of things which should come to the Lord's people and that have come to them, and a believer, whose eyes are directed to Christ and whose affections are set on Him can well imagine what diligence, prayer and supplication, the Psalmist, penning these words, would feel; searching, as Peter tells us what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in him at that time did signify, for doubtless Christ is in this Psalm; of Him the Psalmist wrote. The Apostle Paul, you will remember, quotes from this Psalm in writing to the Ephesians. He quotes this passage. "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." And the Psalmist's heart would ascend after this ascended One, would look, or seek to look, somewhat into the fullness that here is ascribed to Him, - for you may observe that the marginal reading of this part is "Thou hast received gifts for men" (gifts in the man). In the Man Christ Jesus is a fullness of gifts, that fullness perhaps being specially with respect to the gift to Him without measure, of the Holy Ghost, and that now, ascended on high, all the government, not of the church only, but the whole world, is committed to Christ. Well, the Psalmist's heart would long to look into the fullness that was in Christ, and to see that Man who was crucified through weakness, who was buried, and who, in the fullness of time burst asunder the chains of death, for it was not possible that He should be holden of death, He owing it nothing now. He would look, or desire to look, upon that ascended One in all His conquering power, in His ascended glory, and to believe that the once suffering Saviour, now exalted, should suffer no more. And if the Psalmist longed for this, looking forward, what may we desire to do in looking backward but to have a view of the same Person in the same position, in the same

exaltation, blessed with all that fullness of grace, of eternal life, of infinite wisdom and of power. And if we are led by the Holy Spirit to look on this Person so exalted, so full of mercy and compassion, so able to save because He is ever interceding, and so ready to save and bless poor people who, convinced of their worthlessness, think that He cannot be willing to save them; I say, thus led, we shall, with admiring eyes, melting hearts, and warmed affections, join with the Psalmist and say, each to the other, bless the Lord, speak well of Him, sing a song unto Him for He and He alone is worthy. Join with the saints in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect, and sing "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. Unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Well then we must believe that the glorious One in the text is the Lord Jesus. "He that is our God". Why, that is what every one born of the Spirit wants to be able to say. Probably, indeed I believe that some of you, would feel that you were among the happiest of all people tonight if you could go home, lay your heads on your pillows, and say, we have a God in heaven, a Father, a Brother, a Priest, an Intercessor, a King. O happy people who are enabled to say "This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our Guide even unto death." O what is honour, wealth, or mirth, to this blessing. Gold is sordid dust, jewels are gaudy toys. An earthly name is but wind, a vapour, and life, it is but as a swift shuttle flying through the warp. What matters it what we are here, how short our stay here is, if we have this God for our God. "He that is our God". And because He is not the God of all people - since the fall we have all gone astray from Him, have become ignorant of Him, and intensely untoward with respect to Him, and altogether unlike Him; huge and void, misshapen and utterly godless - it becomes to every one born again a vital question, not I will be a Christian, but will God make me one. Not, I will join myself to Christ, but will Christ take me up? Will He make me one of His? Not, I will do my duty, a thing that a convinced person well knows he cannot do, for, by the way, every man's duty is to love God with all his heart and with all his mind and all his soul and all his strength, and his neighbour as himself. Not, I say with the man of God is it, I will do my duty, but this rather, did Christ die for me? Did He love God perfectly in my stead? Did He do all that I, as a creature, ought to do, but cannot? And my "cannot" is my fault. I am liable for my "cannot". It is as

much my sin as anything else. But did Christ do all that I cannot do? And, because my life was forfeited, did Christ give His life for me? When these questions are answered satisfactorily in the conscience by Him who alone can answer them, namely the Holy Spirit, then the sinner, in all the happiness that the satisfaction imparts, says He is my God. "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". And I do believe that most people who get this blessing feel, while under its power, that they are not only ready to die, but they would be very pleased to go home and sin no more. I was a young man when this blessing came to me, and I did wish that the end would soon come. "He that is our God". Well then, if He is our God, we have a Friend who will never change. "I am the LORD I change not". And what is the consequence of that to some people? "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". If Jesus is ours we have a true friend who, "having loved His own which are in the world loved them to the end, and He will do all things that are necessary for us. Why, He will gird Himself with a towel, He will take water in a basin, and wash our feet. And, says one, He shall never wash my feet. And Christ will overcome that and there shall be such a compulsion on that person's heart as shall be the sweetest feeling he can have. Christ wont seize his feet with His hand and pour water on them, but He will tell him the truth. He will say to him "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me." And that was more than Peter could stand. What, have no part with Christ. And is this, His washing my feet, an evidence and proof? Will it be a proof to me that I have part with Him? Then, says Peter, with all his impetuosity, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head". Christ serves His people. "I am among you as one that serveth" I will help you, you need it. I will do it for you. I will help you to pray, I will help you to believe, I will help you to submit to My will in providence. I will help you to fall into My arms for your security. I will help you to depend on Me for guidance. I will help you to look to Me for supplies, for you shall see that all you need, both for time and eternity, I have. I have received gifts, God has given Me a fullness; He gave Me grace for you before the world began - as Paul teaches Timothy - and you shall see all this fullness. Fullness of pardon, fullness of sanctification, fullness of salvation, fullness of providential mercies. He has power to protect. "All power" - for the exercise of it, for the beneficial exercise of it, for His people - "All power is given unto Me in

heaven" - to command angels, and make them ministering spirits to poor people and He can understand how a weak sinner needs an angel to strengthen him for He Himself was weak in Gethsemane's Garden and an angel was despatched from heaven to strengthen Him. He will do all these things for His people. "He that is our God". And if He is our God well then He will kindly teach. We shall often, perhaps, enter into the petition of the Psalmist. "That which I see not teach Thou me", and He will do it. He does not always speak in parables. Sometimes He speaks plainly as He did to His disciples. I came from the Father. I came from the Father to save you, to call you, to bless you. I am that blessed and ever blessing Jesus Christ whom the Father sent from heaven and I am going back to Him. I have done the work He gave Me to do; I have given My life for the dead, and they shall live by My death. I have poured out My blood to fill the fountain for sin and for uncleanness, for all causes of separation from God. I have done all this and I am going back to Him. I am going back in your interests to take possession of heaven for you, to prepare mansions for you, and doing this, then I will come again and receive you unto Myself. He will do it. He will not forsake His people. "He that is our God". And if He is our God He will come to us when we need Him. Not as we think we need Him perhaps immediately, but when we really cannot do any longer without Him in certain cases. He may let us toil all the night in rowing and weary ourselves, when we should think, now if we had a friend in trouble we would take the first possible moment in hand and be at the side of that friend. If you judge of Christ's heart by some of His dealings with you, you will probably make a misjudgement of Him and trouble yourself. He comes in His own time.

He tarries oft till men are faint  
And comes at evening late

The fourth watch is good time when Christ chooses that; as good as the first, and more instructive to those to whom He comes then. O, but we are poor judges of Christ in this particular, but when He comes we know, what we want, we now possess. What we have sought we have got, and what we would fain be at and the place we would be in, we are immediately there, as when He entered the ship on one occasion, immediately they were at the other side. "He that is our God" will

look after us and really there is no need for the perturbation we often feel. For the haste we have in our spirits there is no reason. What an inconsistent thing it is for one to commit His way to God, and then take it up himself, yet what child of God has not been so inconsistent. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait I say on the Lord." Lift your eyes up, dear saints, to heaven and see a Man there, the Man Christ Jesus, Almighty God. See Him in the midst of the throne of God, because He is God. He is in the midst of the throne; saints are round about it; He is in the midst of it. Lift your eyes up, see Him there. Almighty power is His, wisdom is His. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge He possesses. See Him full of love; with whom is plenteous redemption. See Him having all authority in heaven; sending an angel swiftly to minister to you; sending His word into your heart; giving you His good Spirit; opening your eyes to see what is unseeable to our poor, fallen nature, as Paul teaches in the Corinthians. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." They are there; we only need eyes to see the fullness and the Holy Spirit to bring out of that fullness to our souls. "Thou hast ascended on high". "Now", says Paul, in using this Scripture in the Ephesians, "Now that He ascended what is it but that He first descended into the lower parts of the earth." This points out the humiliation of the Lord Jesus; tells us that "in His humiliation His judgement was taken away"; that "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." It tells us that the Father laid the iniquity of all His people on Him; that we are saved by the wounds and the bruises and the stripes and the chastisement that the Father laid on His Son. It invests with a sort of terribleness that great Scripture: "Awake O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts. Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." He came into a low condition, so low that our hearts can never fully conceive it. So low that an angel was despatched from heaven to minister strength to Him on one important occasion. O what a low place Christ came into. Did you ever feel sorry that your sins burdened His guiltless heart? Did you ever feel sympathy with Him? But now He is ascended, ascended on high. The Man Christ Jesus taken up into union with the eternal

Son of God. He is ascended. The Son descended and took up the body prepared for Him, the Seed of the children and now "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." And among the things He will fill you will find your own souls. Exercised, emptied; empty souls He will fill. Fill with mercy, mercy that becomes most welcome news. With love that melts into repentance and joy. With pardon that cleanses the conscience; with justification that acquits the person charged with sins he owns and confesses. And one day He will fill these very people with glory. "He that is our God" who laboured, groaned, wept, sweat blood at every pore, He "is the God of our salvation." Salvation. It is a relative word of course, as you know. It cannot stand alone. It involves people, embraces people, blesses people. Salvation. Why it points in the conscience of a sinner to the hell of sin from which Christ saved him, and everyone saved knows something of that. What a hell of suffering Christ endured. I like Rutherford's word. He calls it an innocent hell that Christ suffered. He entered, not into the place of the lost, but He entered into the suffering, and the shame, and the curse that His people had incurred. This was the hell, and what a hell it was to the dear Saviour who did no sin, who had no sin, in whose mouth was no guile, whose heart was perfect, perfect toward the Father and perfect toward His children. Perfect in love, perfect in obedience. This is involved in the word "salvation". It is a word that has in it two turns, of something from which, and something to which. Something from which a person is saved, and something to which that saved person is brought. Saved from sin, from its dominion, from the love of it, from the guilt of it here below. Saved from its very being eventually. O happy thought, blessed, sweet hope, that one day we shall be free, absolutely free from the monster sin. Here we are always missing the mark; there we never shall. Here we are always defiling ourselves; often displeasing God, often bringing frowns upon our consciences, and distance between God and our souls in prayer; often doing that which, when we feel it to be against God, covers us with shame and binds us a great deal in spirit. There, none of this. O to be saved is a great thing. We need a great deal of saving. Omnipotence saved us on the cross. Omnipotent grace, omnipotent mercy, omnipotent pity, we continually need here. We often need this; may the Lord as often give it us. Indeed He

will.

"The God of our salvation". To speak definitely for a minute or two, we need saving from self. Rutherford's sore complaint is that of some of us. O, said he, that I had not a myself. Did you ever say it, for substance at any rate, if the words have not been with you. O that I had not such a wicked heart, such a wandering mind. O that I were not so intensely untoward respecting that good God who has never done anything but blessed me, even when He has chastened me. And we are saved from this. He saves us from refusing to take the cross up. Any poor, lost sinner, taught of the Spirit yet left to himself for a few minutes, would say, I cannot take that cross up. What is the cross? It is a cross that is common to every child of God. It is this, self-denial. That is not much to some people perhaps, as they judge. But when you regard - as indeed you will, taught of the God of all grace - when you regard self-denial as the utter renunciation of yourself, of every little bit of goodness; when you come to Paul's renunciation as given in the Philippians, privilege of birth, some acquirement, some religion, some blamelessness, and come with all of that and say now I see that beauty and loveliness, and goodness and glory in Christ, that I am now willing to entirely renounce all that I have and lose myself and hate my life; well if you are brought to that kind of self-denial you know it is no easy thing. A camel could go more easily through the eye of a needle, a little tiny gate in the wall, than you, being rich in yourself, could enter heaven, or enter into the kingdom of heaven here below. O it is a hard way, yet a beautiful way. O it is a repulsive way to a proud man, but an attractive way to a humble man; very attractive. Faith sees everything in it that is beautiful while nature says there is everything in it that I hate.

We are saved also from the fear of the devil. He has power to tempt and plague but he has no power to destroy. There is one prohibition - if only one, there is one - which relates to every child of God. Though the Lord may permit Satan to touch you in various ways, He will be sure to say this - only his life, do not touch that. He cannot reach it. Where is it? "Your life is hid with Christ in God". But temptation is temptation, and no tempted sinner can snap his finger at Satan. Michael, the Archangel, durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee O

Satan." And the people of God get such an experience of the power of the enemy that they cannot bring a railing accusation. No, they have to say, Lord do bruise him under our feet, and the promise is that it shall be so. "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly".

They are saved out of their afflictions. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken." Their confidences often may be broken, their hopes may often be blighted, their affections may wax cold; they may think the Lord unkind; they may think they will see Him no more, but not a bone of them shall be broken, and God will restore what the caterpillar, and the cankerworm, and the locust eat up. You may have your tree barked, and made white, but the God of all grace will make all over again. He will save you from the power of the tempter. O but it is a hard struggle sometimes, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness, against the rulers of darkness of this world. Rulers of darkness; dark temptations may come and becloud your spirit. And God shall bruise this devil and all the evil spirits that may come, shortly. You will find it so.

"And unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." Why do people who are born again, and so possess eternal life, ever get into death? I wish they did not, but they do, and indeed it is God's order that they shall do. To whom belonged the issue from that death that came on God's promise to Abraham, to make him a father of many nations? To whom did belong an issue from that death that came on the blessing that Abraham got in Isaac, when the Lord told him to offer up his only son, even Isaac, whom he loved? Why, to the Lord. To whom did the issue belong when David came into deaths oft, when Saul hunted him and there was apparently no prospect of David ever ascending that throne to which he was anointed? Why, to God. And so one might go through the Scriptures and bring many very beautiful illustrations of this truth, that whatever death you come into, whatever death comes on a promise that God has given you, whatever delays you may experience in the fulfilment of a promise, whatever temptations may seem to kill you, the issue belongs to God. That is to say, He commands deliverances. "Thou hast commanded deliverances for

Jacob". And it is much like that beautiful Scripture in the Revelation. "Behold", says the Saviour, "I make all things new." There are new experiences for people who come into deaths, like a new life; a new conversion. Some people have many conversions; indeed I believe all the people of God get many. And unto God, therefore, must belong the praise. Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Bless the Lord, speak well of Him. Here is praise in the text. Here is a song, so to speak, for us. "He that is our God is the God of salvation." The God of heaven and earth; the God of love, and of goodness, and of mercy. The God who freely loves, and never ceases to love, an object of His love. "He that is our God", is this blessed God. Well my dear friends, perhaps you are asking a question that I cannot answer, and yet I might attempt an answer. You are asking the question - Now what is the proof of being a child of God? of having God for our God? Now I will tell you what I think is the best course for a child of God in your perplexity to take. Ask the Lord to bear His witness in your spirit that you are a child of God. The Apostle writing to the Romans tells them that because they were children the Spirit bore witness with their spirit that they were the children of God, "and if children" - O he carries on the sweet line of truth for their comfort - "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." I could give evidences, marks and tokens, such as repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Such as a renunciation of self and all the claims of self; proud, haughty, full, wise, foolish, dead self; hating of this self. Turning from the world, coming out from it; cleaving to the truth; cleaving to Christ, following Him. O there are many, many evidences. But I believe some of you, if I were to put them to you and ask you to dare to deny possession of them, you would not be able to deny them; but then, after all you might say, perhaps, I did not get these things in a right way. Perhaps they are only assimilated, and although I am not conscious of active hypocrisy, I have enough hypocrisy in my nature to turn me aside from the right way. But there is one testimony which, if you get - and may the Lord give it you - you will not be able to deny or doubt for the time. An indubitable evidence it will be to you if He should say this: "I have redeemed thee, thou art Mine." I have bought thee with My blood, for God did buy the church with His Own blood. "Feed the church of God . . . . . which He hath purchased

with His Own blood." I say, you would not doubt that. I used to feel, when I was young, and before the Lord blessed me with forgiveness, that if all the saints I then knew told me, as with one voice, that I was a child of God, I could not have believed them, such was my knowledge of myself as a sinner, and my conviction that I was hastening to perdition. But when the Lord told me I did not doubt it. Well, you will get this in God's time as you are led to seek it. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness". And all the death that you now feel, the issue from that is God's, and you will stand with your feet in the gates of Jerusalem. You will see the Lord Jesus, King there, King over you, King in you, and King for you, and He will glad your eyes with sweet views of Himself in the fullness of His grace, in the sufficiency of all His precious gifts for you. He will glad your eyes with views of His eternal Deity, His sacred Manhood, constituting one Person, and that blessed One your own Redeemer, so that you will say, He that is my God is my Saviour. He that is my God has in His hand the issue of all my deaths, and all the afflictions and sorrows that I have to bear.

AMEN.