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Lab 812

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday 3 June 1936

PSALM 69 v 33

"For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth  
not His prisoners"

This wonderful Psalm relates to the Lord Jesus Christ, His Own words uttered long before His incarnation, looking forward to the solemn days of affliction, persecution, hatred, malevolence, misrepresentation, blasphemies, all heaped upon Him by the nation, His Own nation, to which He came, and which rejected Him. He looked forward to the day when He would be crucified, when they would give Him gall for His meat, and in His thirst give Him vinegar to drink. If the Holy Ghost should be pleased to give to living souls present, a faith's view of Christ in this Psalm, it would beget worship, admiration of His love, adoration of His Person, mourning for our sins, reproaching ourselves for furnishing knots, and whips, and bands to the hands of the wicked men who took Him and crucified Him. We can read all this without being duly affected, but should the Holy Ghost come and give us to see the suffering Saviour as a sufferer, and to see He suffered all that for us, the effect would be we should not be able to get low enough in the dust of self-abasement, and self-reproach; not be able sufficiently to worship, honour, adore, and praise, and glorify Him whose words we have been reading. May the Holy Ghost enable us to say "that Jesus is the Lord". Paul tells us that no man can say that without the Holy Ghost. We may use the word, but we cannot say it in faith without the Holy Ghost. Christ turns His eye on His betrayer, and on those who crucified Him, and He uses what the religious world today will not allow, what they call the implicatory prayer of Christ. They cut it out of the Bible. The Dean of Durham, in a religious service some time ago in the Cathedral of Durham, cut out the words, saying that they were not according to the christianity of the present day. Of course they are not, but they are the words of God incarnate. And then He begins to praise God - "I will praise the Name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or

bullock that hath horns and hoofs". And in the light, and by the grace of, the Holy Ghost, the humble, the meek, the instructed sinners, shall see this and be glad, and all seekers of God are to live. "Your heart shall live that seek God". Look at this word, O seeker. I am a seeker I believe. Everyone blessed with grace here is a seeker. We have found, but we are still seeking if we are under the teaching of the Spirit. We do not know all, do we? We have not searched out all the riches of Christ have we? Are they not called "unsearchable riches"? yet we are encouraged to go on seeking, and here we are told that our heart shall live, live in answers to prayer, live in the continued goodness of God, live in communications made to us by God. Lift up your heads, O seekers, your salvation is nearer than when you first believed.

Then in the words of the text we have this beautiful truth. "The LORD heareth the poor". The Covenant of Works was very strict and one offence closed every door, and avenue of good, to the sinner who committed that one offence. That kills us, that consigns us to judgement, the just judgement of God. Dr Owen has a beautiful word, speaking of the Covenant of Grace, he speaks of its latitude. What does he mean? He means this that the Apostle Paul was inspired to write - ".....for the judgement was by one to condemnation, but the free gift (in the Covenant of Grace) is of many offences unto justification" That is salvation. That, O sinner, is your salvation. "Many offences". "Yea, many a time forgave He their iniquity and did not stir up all His wrath." We shall never be able to bless God enough for that "many offences". The gospel is this - Where sin abounded under the law, there grace much more abounds under the gospel, the Covenant of Grace, and it is on the ground of Christ's death that the Lord heareth the poor. This is the new and living way. God - whose ear was, to express it, closed in the law against the sighs, and groans, and troubles, that sin brought on man, and who said only one word: "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" - says in the Gospel - "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". Bring large petitions. Yes, importunity; press your cases on my notice. Come at midnight with your petitions. Come at all seasons with your prayers A new way, opening the ear of God, and, as He said in response to Solomon's petition - "Let I beseech Thee, Thine eyes be open and let

Thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place" - "Now Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place." When you come in the power of the Holy Ghost into the sanctuary, you come to a God whose ear is open. May you think of this - may it be with me - that there is a good God who says - "Open your mouth wide". Come with your trouble, come with your sins, come with your difficulties, come with your impossibilities, with your mountains, your valleys, your enemies, the devils in you, the unbelief, come with them all. "For the LORD heareth the poor".

And there are several things which this patient God listening to sinners hears from them. The first to mention is confession. A religion without confession does not come from heaven. Charging His people with their sins, by Jeremiah, He says "Only acknowledge thine iniquity". That is the bar often gracious people have at times, but when their hearts are opened, when they see themselves in the light of divine teaching, when they get a view of what they have done, how far they have run from God, how many times they have turned away from Him, then this becomes their occupation, to confess, and not general, but particular. Not only in the bulk do they say - "Behold I am vile", but they bring again their humble, honest confessions in particular ways. You may go through the Scriptures, and study certain passages, look closely, intently, prayerfully, into them, as, for instance, when the Lord says, You have gone after other lovers; you have had commerce with other gods. You look into that, then into your spiritual conduct. You confess then, you humbly confess. You may say, I have looked again and again into that passage in Jeremiah - "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", and you come before God and say, That is my heart, Lord; deceitful, full of hypocrisy. And you may join then with John Bradford the martyr who, when he was in prison, wrote to say that even since he had been there, the Lord's prisoner, his self-seeking, pride, vanity, lust, and all kinds of sin, he had, and was having. Feeling confession is in this way a wonderful thing. Again, God charges His people with forgetting Him. You look at it, you say, I have done that, that is my sin. Not general confession, but that which belongs to you, really your own sin. In that trouble, I forgot Him; in that difficulty I ran to myself; in that perplexity I went to a friend; in that need I went to other things, rather than to God. I have forgotten Him. A very

solemn confession it is, and if the merit of Christ were not before Him, how could He listen to such shameful, shaming confessions that some of us have to make to Him. "The LORD heareth the poor" who have nothing to boast of, but everything to be ashamed of, everything to wound them, weaken them, and make them wonder that the Lord has been so patient with them as not to cut them off. I am ashamed. I understand a little of Ezra's feeling - "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face unto Thee". A confessing sinner is listened to. The eye of God is on him. The ear of God is open and attent unto the confessions which he makes, as John says in his first epistle - "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". That is the first thing. You can enlarge for yourselves who have an experience of this kind.

The second thing, is petition, prayer. O what wants you have, what needs you feel, what fear you entertain, what sorrows fill you at times, that you are such sinners, have turned away from such a God, and now you want Him and would fain be near Him. You want the blood of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the holiness of Christ, the preserving power of the Holy Spirit, the guiding light of the Spirit, the sustaining power of God the Son, and these needs, felt in your soul, bring you to prayer. You pray, and the Lord heareth you. "The LORD heareth the poor". He does not say, Go to your gods. He does not say, Go and lean on those stones, and stocks with whom you have had commerce. He says "Come unto Me". Make your requests known unto Me. "Open thy mouth wide". "Call upon Me in the day of trouble", and faith obeys Him. There is an obedience of faith when prayer is in the soul. You believe God, you follow what the Apostle Paul says in the Hebrews - "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." You believe He is a God of grace, a God with whom forgiveness is that He may be feared. You believe that Christ is the Mediator, and even pray that His mediation may cover you as the incense covered the high priest who went into the Holy of Holies. You believe that He is almighty, and able to do more for you than you can either ask or think, and this enables you to pour out your heart before Him, to make known all the requests that are in your heart to bring to Him. "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord, for it is great" "Make

Thy face to shine upon Thy servant". "Be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name." And sometimes past things, past days, past mercies, will come to your sustenance. You may be able to do what Jacob did. He had the word in his heart, the promise, and commandment of God, and he said - "Thou didst say". And you may take - a believer is enabled at times to take - invitations of the gospel, and say to the Lord, Thou didst say these things. They are written in the Scripture, and they come to my mind. And you get a warrant in that way; every believing, praying person has a warrant to go to God. The devil will try to close his eyes and mind to that truth, but it is so. There is no believer in the world today who has not a warrant in holy Scripture to go to God. And when faith makes use of it in the power of the Spirit, there is a going to God with requests and the Lord heareth the poor. Try Him; a needy soul, put the Lord to the test. You will find Him better than your expectations. The merit of Christ is the ground of this. The good pleasure of the Father is in this, the mighty teaching and operation of the Holy Ghost is in this. "For the LORD heareth the poor" in their prayer.

And third, the Lord hears their praises. They have got much to praise Him for and they do offer praise to Him now and again. They have so much mercy, so much preservation, so much guidance, that they can only say - "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me. I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord". "Praise ye the Lord". The Lord hears these poor people trying to sing the song the angels did when they came to announce the birth of Jesus - "Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace and goodwill toward men". You have offered praise, have not some of you? I have. What a blessed thing it is for God to see at His footstool a thankful sinner, and hear his praises for the Person of Christ, the grace of Christ, the poverty of Christ, the riches of Christ. I am too poor, one says. No. If you have divine life in your soul you have got that in you that calls for praises. If you have had the spirit of faith created you have that in you that calls for praises. If you have had any intimation from God of His kindness and a good intention toward you, there is there, a cause, great cause for praises. "The LORD heareth the poor" with great acceptance when they go to Him to praise His great and glorious Name. The Lord help us to do it. The

Lord help us to do what Joseph Hart speaks of in one hymn

Brethren, let us praise the Lord,  
Exalt His blessed Name;  
Let us hear, and keep His Word;  
His glory be our aim,  
Let us resolutely strive  
To work God's work with full intent;  
And what is it? To believe  
On Him whom He hath sent.

Let us look a little into this. The Lord hears the poor who praise Him for the incarnation of His Son. Heaven for sinners depends on that. No Mediator, no heaven. No Mediator to cover sinners, sinners must be consumed. The fiery indignation, the hot displeasure of God must fall on the whole of the human race. But the Mediator, Jesus, is born of the virgin Mary. If we were led into that mystery we should see an infinite reason for praising God. Our poverty makes room for this, and "Whoso offereth praise" for this "glorifieth God". Think for a moment what is included in this, the incarnation of the Son of God. First, the love of God. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." That faith honours Christ, honours the love of God in giving His Son. And then another step further, as it would seem, in that gift is this that "He that spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all". That was included in the first, but it is an enlargement, an opening up, of the love of the Father to His church in that He would not spare His Son the indignity, the shame, the persecution, the enmity, the malignity, the misrepresentation, and then crucifixion. And deeper still, He spared Him not from the curse of the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree". Did you ever praise Christ for that? and God the Father for sending Him for that purpose? Look at His incarnation then, for all this was involved in it. Yea, this was why He was incarnate. This is the reason that the Son of God became Man and took on Him the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2 v 16). The Lord receives acceptably, with pleasure, the praises of the poor who praise the Incarnate Word, who praise the Son of God for dying. We believe

generally that the death of Christ was necessary, that God could not forgive sin without blood. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission". Whose blood? The blood of God. "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His Own blood". We are to praise God for this, and for the sweet hope that Christ shed His blood for us; that it is by that precious blood we escape the wrath to come, the vengeance of divine justice; that we escape eternal banishment from God. The death of Christ alone secured us, and preserved us from so dreadful an eternity. Let us therefore praise and offer thanksgiving to God for the death of His Son.

Another thing to bless and praise Him for is the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ was necessary to prove two things. To prove that He was the Son of God. The Apostle Paul teaches this in the Romans ( 1 v 4). He was manifested - that is decided, determined openly - to be the Son of God, whom He had said He was. And next to prove the sufficiency of His sacrifice, prove that the debt was paid, the curse was exhausted; that now there was no bar to the worst of sinners, between him and God. The Lord heareth poor people praising Him for the resurrection of Christ, for His ascension into heaven, and for His intercession there.

Now if we are poor, needy, helpless, wicked, guilty people, taught of the Spirit, then we shall be confessing, then we shall be praying, then we shall be praising, praising Him from whom the blessings of redemption freely flow into our hearts from time to time.

"And despiseth not His prisoners". Sinners bound, God's prisoners. First prisoners to the law that holds men till Christ delivers them. But when they are under the law by the powerful teaching of the Spirit, the Lord does not despise them. No. He despises the image of the idolator, but He does not despise a poor, groaning, troubled, burdened sinner under the law when self-condemnation fills his conscience, when grief and trouble fill his heart. When he does not know what to do, where to go, to whom to turn, then the Spirit graciously comes and helps him. He does not despise him. If any here should be under the law, you will be tempted that God hates you. You will be tempted to believe that He can

do nothing but despise you, and banish you from His holy presence, but the Scripture says, No, you are the Lord's prisoner, He has arrested you. He has laid His hand on you, not to destroy, but to save you. He despiseth not the person under the law.

One may be bound in affliction and iron because he has rebelled against the words of the Most High, but the Lord who has arrested him, who has put him into bondage because of his foolishness has mercy in it for him. It is love in God that brings us into bondage sometimes, which means chastisement, rebukes, called the rebukes of life, and when this poor sinner is in this trouble, he is brought to this position, this state of mind - "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him". Chastised Ephraim said he had been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. He had rebelled and he found the word true - "The rebellious dwell in a dry land". Did God despise him? No. "Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him." So the Lord does not despise His prisoners. No, He sent His Son, and He anointed His Son Jesus "to preach good tidings unto the meek; .... to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." But if there is a bound sinner here, may the Holy Ghost open the ear of such a person to listen to the gospel. Jesus preached it, and He was sent for that express purpose, to open the prison to them that are bound, to say to the captives, come forth and show yourselves. Come out of your prison, come out of your affliction, come out of your bondage, and behold My greatness, and My goodness, and My grace, and My glory. So this word is a very beautiful word, meeting bad cases. Do not think - I would not preach it for a world if I knew it - do not think that the gospel is for good people. It is for sinners.

Sinners are high in His esteem  
And sinners highly value Him

The gospel is for the poor. That was sent as a word to John to relieve him of his doubts. Tell John, said Christ, to John's messengers, what you have seen. The sick healed, the hungry fed, the dead raised to life again, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. Paul was



so enamoured of the gospel so that however capable he was of rising in eloquence he said - "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified". That was strength for the weak, eyes for the blind, and mercy for the miserable. Whatever bondage you may be in - self-procured it will be - this, as God makes you His prisoner will be true in your case - "He despiseth not His prisoners". The world is a prisoner to self. The world is a prisoner to the god of this world, the devil. Men are prisoners to their lusts, their vanities, their pride, their covetousness, their idolatries. God has prisoners, prisoners of hope, and it is said to them "Turn to the stronghold". Turn to the Lord Jesus, turn to Him who is full of mercy, and with whom there is forgiveness that He may be feared. It does not come, you say. The Psalmist said "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say more than they that watch for the morning." And then he says - Let Israel hope in the Lord, for the Lord shall redeem him out of all his afflictions. All of them. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all". May the Lord open this to you and to me. His compassion in not despising a man who has brought himself into this case, His love in looking with great pity on such a prisoner who cannot escape and would not escape if he could, the hand, and the dealing of God with him. And may this be kept before us - I would bring it, and keep it before you - the whole of this hangs on Christ, as He speaks in this Psalm. Never forget, dear believing friends, never forget that whatever mercy, goodness, grace, wisdom, life, and power, God may bless you with, must come, can only come, by and through Him who was crucified, who died, who was buried, who rose again from the dead, who now sits at the right-hand of the Father ever living to make intercession for all who come unto God by Him.

AMEN.