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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 5 June, 1927

PSALM 69 v 4

"They that hate Me without a cause are more
than the hairs of My head; they that
would destroy Me, being Mine enemies
wrongfully are mighty; then I restored
that which I took not away"

This Psalm is emphatically a Psalm of Jesus Christ, His sufferings, shame, prayers; His weakness, His dependence on His Father, whose servant He had willingly become; His sinking into deep mire, the overflowing of the waters of divine anger. These expressions came from His troubled heart, which reproach broke. We do not know much of trouble; we have but little sorrow; drops to the ocean. This gracious One is concerned here for the character of His Father. The character of Deity men had taken away, robbed God, as He puts it in Malachi. "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation". The law of God was not worth an apple to Adam. It is nothing worth to us naturally; we care nothing about it. The character of God is nothing to us naturally; we know it not. Pharaoh lives in men today "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" But the Lord Jesus came to restore that which He had not taken away. God He was, and is. Man, He became, pure, holy, upright; everything that could be desired in man, was in Him. Zeal for His Father's house and glory. Love for His people; they were in His heart, being given to Him. He knew well what He had undertaken, what was required of Him, what was necessary for Him to do in order to save the people given to Him to save. And, out of His deep sorrow, sorrow of which we, as to the measure of it, can have no conception, He cries to His God. Ah, there was a God to go to for Him. There is a God for us to go to in Him, and we can reach Him through Christ. And, moreover, there is in heaven a sympathetic heart; One who is able to have compassion on the ignorant and to succour all who are tempted in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted. O, afflicted sinner, go to Him. Troubled heart, call to Him. Bring your troubles, your pains, your griefs,

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your sorrows, to Him. May we be thankful that there is such a Man in heaven, united indissolubly and for ever to eternal Deity; even Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost, and able to have compassion and able to succour all who are tempted, in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted. The text then, relates to the Lord Jesus, and if God will give me wisdom and grace and unction to speak a little of Him - I use the word "little" advisedly, because who can say much about Him - it will be a favour.

He looks upon His enemies and addresses His Father in respect of them. They that hate Me are more than the hairs of Mine head. Why do they hate Him? Why do you hate Him? Why do I hate Him? He did thee no wrong; He has done you no wrong; He has done me no wrong. Why do we hate Him, the lowly, loving, tender, broken-hearted Lord Jesus, whose beneficence is such as to bring Him down from heaven to save His people? and yet we hate Him naturally. It is written - "The carnal mind is enmity against God". There were some, in the days of His sojourn here, who, because He had wrought a miracle, making a man sane and clothing him - and, in doing that had prompted the devils whom He turned out of the man to enter into the swine and they ran down a steep place into the sea and were drowned - said to Him, depart out of the coasts; get away from us; do not trouble us; do not inflict any greater loss or any other loss on us. Get away from us. Perhaps you think you would not have said it, but listen. Man says to God - "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways". And perhaps some of you, if you spoke the honest truth that is in your heart, would be obliged to confess that you do not want to know God. Satisfied as you are, and with what you are, and if you can get the pleasure your heart craves in this world you do not want anything better. And that is tantamount to saying to Him, Go away from us; do not deal with us in providence; do not touch us in any way. Leave us alone. And there are some, to whom the very thought of saying that to the Lord of Life is a grief, and the fact that we did say it - if not actually, yet in all our aspirations and designs we said it - it is a grief to recollect. But now it is different with us; it is different with me. I want Him and I love Him and I am sorry that I behave as badly as I do to Him and that I am not more profitable. Is it not a grief to some of you, and do not you say to Him - "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" My friends, vital religion unites the man who has it to

God. Grace ties Christ and sinners together. Grace makes a union never to be dissolved. Grace brings a love that cleaves to Him and says, Ruth-like, "Entreat me not to leave Thee nor to return from following after Thee." If you could believe He would never bless you, you would die of grief would you not? But He will bless, He does bless, seeking sinners. They hated Him without a cause. He gave them no just cause to hate Him. Then why did they hate Him? Because His holiness conflicted with their pollution. Because His justice conflicted with their ideas of what is justice. Because His Kingly authority came against their ideas of being their own, to rule themselves. No man likes to be thwarted; no man likes to have his schemes broken. No man likes to have all his desires smashed. But when grace comes and Jesus Christ looks on a sinner, that sinner says to Him

Reign o'er us as King, accomplish Thy will

And we have said, with the Jews, we have no king but Caesar; we do not want another. But now grace in the heart says to King Jesus, O come and reign; reign, make me Thy friend. Dr Owen says, you may make an enemy a friend, but what are you to do with enmity? Kill it; and that is what Christ has done in some of us. He has killed it and made us His friends. O happy sinner who is a friend of Christ. When David was to be made king over all Israel some of the captains of Israel went to him and one was the spokesman for them, and he said to David - "Thine are we David and on thy side thou son of Jesse". And the Spirit of God has been the spokesman in some of our hearts and we have said to the Lord - Thine are we Lord Jesus and on Thy side Thou Son of God. O, enmity has been killed. It may rise, but it is killed. The Spirit enables us, more or less, to mortify that deed of the body, and so we live.

"They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of Mine head", and they are today. Modernists and Papists, and all who are their own, and feel and think and believe and act as if they were their own, they all hate Him. They say, No, but look at their acts. When a man is brought, by the Holy Ghost in His sovereign work in the heart to entirely submit himself to Christ and to His righteousness, he, that man, is a friend of Christ, and Christ is that man's Friend.

Christ is the Friend of sinners. I am glad of that and I can never describe the pleasure it has been to me to say that in this pulpit again and again. Christ is the Friend of sinners. O, be not afraid poor sinner; He wont repel your advances to Him. He wont say do not come to Me. He wont turn His back on you because you often turn your back on Him, nor will He frighten you away from the throne of grace unto which He draws you by His good Spirit. Wait on Him with all your wants and pains and griefs and sins and fears and sinking; wait on Him. Be constant, though weak; wait on Him. And may we be thankful, as many of us in this congregation as can say, through divine grace, we do not hate the Lord Jesus. May as many of us be enabled to fall flat before Him and thank His divine majesty for the sovereign grace bestowed upon us in that particular.

"They that would destroy Me". There are kings in this world, and there is one King - there is the great image of gold and silver and brass and iron mixed with clay, representing, as it is told in Daniel, various kings - but there is one King, a stone cut out of the mountain without hands which grows and is destined to fill the whole earth and grind to powder and scatter, like chaff before the wind, all those other kingdoms. They would destroy Him, but He destroys them. The God of all grace grant that we may not be of those who destroy the Lord Jesus. They said, "Away with Him, away with Him", and when He was buried it was as if they said, now we have got rid of Him; the troubler of the earth we have got rid of; now we shall be happy. They would destroy Him. Their hearts destroyed Him, their words destroyed Him. "Away with Him, away with Him. Crucify Him, crucify Him". O, but He liveth. What is a great stone to Christ? What is a seal on that stone to secure the grave and the corpse within it? What is a watch of soldiers? What are all things, the whole world? He bursts assunder all restraints, all bands; moves all stones and destroys the would be destroyers. "Enemies wrongfully". "Wrongfully". Think of it. You think He has injured you. Nay, you have injured Him. But, that He has taken away, which I wanted to keep. It was His before it was yours, and always more His than yours. But then, a broken circumstance is better than a broken soul in hell. What if He had left everything in your hand, and left you to yourself till you sank into perdition. O what a Christ He is, and what a mercy it is to love Him. They are mighty. Yes, God allows men to be strong, strong protectors of

themselves, strong in their own judgment, strong in their designs, in their own ways, unrebuked; but then He comes. They are not as He is; they are mighty, but He is Almighty. O sinner, what a mercy it is to have a subdued will. What a mercy it is to bend before Him, to come bending to Him. Mighty to save He is; mighty to rule. And He does save and He does rule. There are some of us in whom He rules and we would fain have ruled ourselves, but He would not let us. Honours be given to Him, praises be given to Him, that He proved Himself in us, Almighty; that a stubborn will, a hard heart were nothing to Him. O, He touches the mountains and they flow down. Blessed Be God, He has done this for some of us, touched the mountains of opposition. And when all this was done, spoken by Him, and accomplished by Him, and is being accomplished still from time to time, He comes to this great word "Then I restored that which I took not away".

"Then I restored that". This points to the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus. This teaches us the position which He occupies. This tells us that He had something given to Him to do and that He undertook to do it. Further, it tells us something of which God had been robbed. That is to say - though no man can really rob God of anything that belongs to Him - there is a relationship established between God and man in His creation and in the giving of the law; there are claims which God has on men, insistent claims. There are duties which are due to God from man, and man, fallen, said - I will never do what I am told to do. You have not said that perhaps. You protest that you have never said it. If ever you get a sight of your own heart and what is there, and has been there from your birth; if ever you get a sight of that word as attaching to yourself - The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God - you will see that you have been guilty of robbing God of His Being in your mind. And if you get a sight of Pharaoh's spirit as being in yourself, you will see that you really have robbed God with respect to obedience to the law. "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" Well, what a sight that is. I have had that sight of my own heart. I know, not only that the Scripture charges me with sin, but that I have seen it and felt it, and see it and feel it. So I may say to you, and do say it, affectionately, that you have got all this robbery in your heart. Some have been so wicked in their thoughts, who are in heaven now, as to say that if they could pull God from His throne they would. And some living today, with a

hope of getting to heaven, have said that. And some have said that they did not want to be where God is, and yet they are going to be with Him, and believe it comfortably sometimes. What a change. But we took away many things. We robbed Him of the allegiance that we owe to Him in our creation and under the law; that allegiance which is naturally implied in our very being and stated under the law, but we have never yielded it, never professed it, naturally. O, sinner, you owe your being to God; you owe your well-being to Him. And all that prayerlessness, that unbelief, that unthankfulness, that unholiness that you have, all, all in your nature just saying as it were constantly, we owe God nothing; what we have is our own. One says, I got it by my labour. One says, my health is due to this and that precaution. And another claims this to himself and for himself. It is all robbing God of the allegiance which is natural. The Jews robbed God of that allegiance which was expressed, expressed in the covenant, when they said "All that the Lord says we will do", and they did not do it. There is a two-fold allegiance naturally which is implied in the very being; and the express allegiance which comes from, is implied, and is expressed in a covenant. In all this we have robbed Him. Will a man rob God? Some might say, of course not. The Scripture says, yes, you do rob Him. There He sits, Almighty God, on His throne. And what if there is nobody to restore that? What if it should take place in us, through eternity, that there never was a Surety to restore to God what we took away? Then we must be cast into prison till we have paid the utmost farthing. O, sinner, God make you think of it. If the Lord Jesus did not restore what you took away, then there is the prison of hell, and into that you must go and be shut up till you have paid the utmost farthing; and what a debt. Take the first then; He restored to His Father in His own Person and by His perfect obedience to His Father, that allegiance which was natural to us all. Yea, He was His Father's faithful Servant. Nothing laid on Him by His Father as a commandment did He disobey. Not a duty due to God from us but what the Lord Jesus rendered absolutely for His people. Take the law as it stands - "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and thy neighbour as thyself", and there is the Lord Jesus, who brings a full tale in His hands, and says, looking at His elect people, says - For their sakes I sanctify Myself and I bring this offering of perfect obedience. He rendered to the law

everything; He magnified it. We belittled it; we thought, in our father Adam, it was not worth an apple, and He said, it is worth all My heart, all My life, and all My obedience, and He rendered to it everything; absolute allegiance, absolute obedience. And when a man knows that for himself, he can sing with good Toplady

The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do

for Jesus rendered all the obedience. O, my friends in the Lord Jesus, see the perfection of His obedience. He rendered it the perfection of His allegiance; He gave it. And there was an express allegiance which He rendered - "I delight to do Thy will". I come to do it; it is My delight. It is laid on Me and I come to do it. That which was given to Him in commandment He did. Did you ever see this in the Lord Jesus? O brethren, did you ever get a sight of Him as the end of the law? The law, which says to you in this land, you must pay your rent, and you can say, I have paid it, then that law has its satisfaction in your fulfilment of your obligation. Jesus rendered to the law of God that perfect allegiance, that express allegiance. Is not this the ground of our access in that particular?

Then there was this, the law inflicts death; that is its sanction. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". Dying, thou shalt die. And what did Christ do in this particular thing? O, He said, "I lay down My life for the sheep". He rendered to God everything. He never robbed God, but He gave to Him what He took not away. We robbed Him and He paid the debt. We incurred death, and He died. He died, died a voluntary death; a death that no man could have inflicted on Him. "No man taketh My life from Me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father". And in restoring this, Christ pleased His Father, and His Father loved Him in it. "Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life". One of the best sights a weeping eye - weeping for sin - can get in this world, is the sight of Christ on the cross, and the hearing of Him say - it is the sweetest thing that can be heard here - to us, "It is finished". And O, to see yourself there, your sins there, your law there - your law, your curse due to you - to see all there, and to see

Jesus restoring that honour that you had taken away, that obedience which you had refused, and paying the penalty due to you in His own precious death, this, this is heaven; this is heaven. If I could preach this gospel as it should be preached, and as I wish I could preach it, I should preach a good gospel, and indeed, in the measure I can do it, I do preach a good gospel; I know I do. O what a gospel this is. You will never get near to God but in this blessed way - Jesus restoring to the law all that was due from you to it; Jesus restoring that honour to His Father that was due from you, and you never rendered to Him. Blessed be God for this word and all that is implied in it. "Then I restored that which I took not away"

Restoration is of persons. Abimelech restored to Abraham, Sarah, his wife. Restoration is of a land. Restoration is of health. Restoration is of that which has been destroyed. Of persons - did not Jesus restore the persons of His elect? They sundered themselves from God; they said, we are our own; who is Lord over us? And He came, and in His own Person took them all. When He was before God and on the cross He took them all, as it were, and said - Here are the people who cut themselves off, the people who separated themselves, the people who said - We are our own, who is Lord over us. Lord, here they all are; receive them in My death; I restore these persons to Thee. I deliver the captive from the god of this world and I bring him to Thee. I restore this sinner, affected and infected sinner; I restore this devil afflicted sinner; I restore this guilt burdened sinner; I restore this sin polluted sinner, by my death. A nation was born in one day. The Church is the Lord's garden, and the devil said - it is mine, and he sowed tares in it. He sowed tares in it and they grew and filled and covered it. And now the Lord restores that land and takes this Church and says - "Fear not O land, thou shalt be tilled and sown". And He restores the ravages of the cankerworm, the palmerworm, and the caterpillar and the locust. He restores all these ravages and says of His Church "I will make you as the garden of Eden". He never took away any goodness, but He gives goodness. He never took away any fruitfulness, never, but He brings fruitfulness. Hell was born in us; hell-born sin is in us, and Jesus took that away. My friends, did you ever get anything of this into your own souls, the restoring love and goodness and grace of the Lord Jesus. How is it that any sinner lives near the Lord? Jesus restored all that he had

robbed God of. How is it a sinner sometimes lives under the sweet, melting smiles of God to whom He is reconciled in the Person of His Son? Because Jesus paid the mighty debt and removed the black guilt of the soul. How is it that sometimes some of us get a sight, that astonishes us, of a full Christ? Full of mercy; more full of mercy than we are of misery; more full of forgiveness than we are of sin. More full of justification than we are of guilt and injustice. The Holy Ghost gives the sight because Jesus paid the debt. Payment was made by Him and

Payment God cannot twice demand
First at my bleeding Surety's hand
And then again at mine

Here then every wound is to be healed, all sicknesses removed, health and comfort restored. Here God reigning in love and mercy and here He says, come to Me. I will restore health and cure. Come to Me and I will give you riches, durable riches and righteousness. Come to Me; the Strong will give you strength. Come to Me; the Wise will give you wisdom.

There is a door of access to God, an entrance into the presence of God. O, but what of such a person? I say this, that there is no guilt, no pollution, no dereliction of duty, no refusal of allegiance, that a guilty person has to confess to and is made sorry for, that shall hinder the approach of this wretch. Nothing shall hinder the coming to God of this poor wretch, the convinced sinner. The man says I have never done a thing that was right and that is no bar; no bar. Jesus, made in the likeness of His brethren, and pleased to be so made, took away all iniquity, and He takes it away from His people. Now if you look for some qualification in yourself - you say, I do not - well, but now what are you looking for? Well, one says, if my heart were soft then I think I could go. He says, if I could but repent, then I should think the Lord would look on me, but I am hard, and I cannot repent. Well, if you look for repentance to take as a penny, you do not go to buy wine and milk without money. If you look for a soft heart to take as a reason why the Lord should bless you, then you do not look for free grace; you do not look for sovereign grace. You look for a little qualification, and the enemy

makes it look so good to you, so proper. It is good to repent; it is good to be contrite, but not as a qualification, not as a penny, not as a price. "Then I restored that which I took not away". May the Lord show us what free grace is. We do not half know it; we do not half know what free grace means. There is always that lurking, miserable, bondageing spirit - O, if I had not done that; O, if we had but that, a good feeling, a good desire. But when you would take it to please God with, then you are on wrong ground. This is the ground

Sinners are high in His esteem
And sinners highly value Him

He came to save the lost; He came to save the lost, and a lost man is a lost man. He has not a bit of rock to put a foot on. He has not a rope to lay hold on. He is nothing but a lost man, and such a lost man, Jesus came to save, by restoring that which that man took away. The Lord never took anything away that was right. May we believe it; may the Lord show us this Lord Jesus. May His good Spirit make Him known in our hearts.

AMEN.