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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 9 March 1919

PSALM 73 verses 24/25

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and
afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in
heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth
that I desire beside Thee"

I spoke this morning a little about the Psalmist's painful experience, his brutishness in quarrelling with the providence of God, his felt and confessed inability to understand the dealings of God with men, giving wicked men blessings, and giving good men afflictions. I noticed the change that came to the Psalmist when he went into the sanctuary of God, the place where the Lord dwells, where He sits between the cherubims, and that light shone upon the soul, the understanding of the Psalmist, who then saw the huge error he had been walking in. He was corrected, the mist was removed, and the astigmatism upon his vision was taken away. He saw things as God sees them. He saw the wicked in slippery places, that their prosperity was an evil thing. O, unblessed good is ill; unblessed prosperity is a curse. The Psalmist saw it. He saw also that sanctified adversity was a blessing. He saw too that he himself, notwithstanding his sottish, brutish behaviour, he had been always with the Lord. He had been held up by divine power and he was content. He makes acknowledgement of God. "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee". I change in my feelings, but never in my state. I slip with my feet, but I am built on the Rock of Ages. "I am continually with Thee. Thou hast holden me by my right hand."

And now he says, continuing his praise to God "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel". He had had enough of his own counsel. He had had proved to him most painfully the foolishness of his own heart. He had proved that leaning to his own understanding was nothing but folly. He wanted no more of that. When you get well drenched in a sense of your own foolishness and get some painful experience of your own madness, when you attempt to understand God and His ways, then you

will be content to be guided by the Lord and pray to be guided by Him. A fool goes on in his own way and is punished; his own wickedness corrects him. But a sensible sinner, feeling his own ignorance, says:

Guide me O Thou great Jehovah
Pilgrim through this barren land

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel". And I would bring to your notice in speaking of this part of the text three points by which God does guide His children

First, by the Scriptures

Second, by the Holy Ghost

and Third, by providence

First, by the Scriptures. Here is a revelation of God, of His mind concerning men, good and bad. Concerning angels, elect and fallen. Concerning providence; what it is, what it is sent to do. This Book is a revelation of God's mind concerning men, good and bad; tells them what to believe, who to believe, who to worship and how to worship. What to do, what not to do; what to follow and what to avoid. O it is a great Book this. One of the greatest sins of England today is the rejection of the Scriptures as inspired. 'Tis a vain thing to talk about the Word of God and to deny its perfect inspiration. Young people, listen to me for a moment. I have grown old in serving this people; now listen to me. This Book is God's Word. Of it the Apostle Paul says - "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God", that is to say, it is God-breathed. It means that, as Peter declares, "Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Spirit of God was in the Psalmist and His Word was in his mouth. The holy writers of the Scripture were under the absolute control of the Holy Ghost when they penned the various parts allotted to them and there is no error in the Bible. The writers did not write under Jewish prejudice; they did not pander to Jewish prejudice. They were not simple, ignorant fishermen and others, but they were just instruments used by the eternal Spirit of God to write

a perfect Book on which you can depend; to deny, to despise which, is in you sin. Attend to this; this Book is the only Book existing that is infallible. O, if God should cause you to take heed to your ways, according to this Book, you will be wise. "Wherewith" it is asked in the Psalms "shall a young man cleanse his way?" "By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word", is the answer. May this congregation, so long as it is a congregation, be mercifully distinguished by this, among other things, an implicit belief in the perfect, plenary verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture. By Jeremiah, God speaking of the elders of the people, said, they have rejected the Word of the Lord and what wisdom is in them and he who rejects the Holy Scriptures as being inspired is no better than a man bereft of his senses in respect of God and His things, and you could as soon expect to get light out of darkness as you could expect such a man to be a wise man in respect of God and His things. The man who rejects the Scriptures is indeed a blind man and he is a proof of the Scripture, namely, that after the world by wisdom knew not God. He does not know God. The wisdom of the world cannot teach the knowledge of God, but only teach ignorance of Him. This Book then is made a guide. The Lord give you reverence for it. The Lord help you to pray when you read it. The Lord open your eyes to see it in its beauty, to understand it in its authority, to feel it in its power. The Lord bless you, dear friends, with a sacred feeling toward this blessed Book, the Holy Bible. Now in the church, this Book is revered, is received. He is no Christian who denies the inspiration of the Bible. He may think himself one. Yes, and he may preach about God, but he is no Christian who denies the inspiration of the Bible. This Book is made a guide. The eye lights on a passage or a chapter, a doctrine of God, of sin, of the incarnation of the Son of God, of the atonement, of the death of Christ, of His resurrection, of His ascension into heaven, of His pleading there. And that passage or those passages which bring such intelligence to the soul, such information to the understanding, become a guide. God is in them. He guides by them. He sways the soul by a passage. He orders the footsteps by a Scripture. He shows the path of life and of peace by a Scripture. Every Christian comes, sooner or later, to understand something of the power of God's Word. How penetrating, in the light of it, it is. How exacting in its authority it is. How prevailing in its influence it is. How wonderful it is so to be guided. And the Scriptures, as I have, many a

time said to you, the Scriptures are very strict. They teach doctrine, and they allow no deviation. Let me give you one instance as an illustration of what I mean. There was the Apostle Peter, highly honoured of God, sent to be the Apostle of the circumcision. He became inconsistent in his walk, at one time eating with Gentiles and another time forbearing to eat with the Gentiles because of the presence of Jews whose prejudices were not thoroughly broken down and the Apostle Paul, meeting him, openly before all rebuked him. He withstood him face to face for, said Paul, he was to be blamed. O but what harm was there in that? The harm was this, that Peter's conduct invaded the doctrine of justification, weakened that doctrine. We who are Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles, even we believe that we shall be saved by Christ, was the teaching of Peter himself and yet, for the time, he walked, as Paul says, not according to the gospel. Any deviation from the doctrine of the gospel leads into serious wrong. Take heed to it. If you are guided by this you will get right into truth, into the truth as it is in Jesus, into the truth of His eternal love, of His infinitely meritorious death, of His vicarious burial, of His vicarious resurrection, of His entrance into heaven to take possession of heaven in the names of all His children. Take heed to the Scriptures; they are made a guide. There is God's counsel. He says in the Scriptures - If thou shalt believe with thine heart and with thy mouth make confession unto salvation thou shalt be saved. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. This is the Scripture, this is the guide. Paul says, if you be circumcised, if you submit to the law and seek to obey it Christ shall profit you nothing. Whosoever of you come under the law ye are fallen from grace. That is the guide my friends. The road is straight as marked out here. 'Tis a narrow path but 'tis a straight one as in the Book set forth. Two things are spoken of as characterising converts and they go through all the saints in all their journey, these namely, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. May this be a guide to you, to me, all our days. The precepts shall be a guide; what you are to do. We each need guiding. How we are to behave ourselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the ground and pillar of the truth. How a Christian shall comport himself; how he shall behave in his family; how the master must rule in his business; how the servant must obey. Job's hireling is not to be a pattern. He longeth

for the shadow. God's Word is the guide; God's Word is the guide. Parents are not to provoke their children lest they be discouraged. Children are to obey their parents in all things for this is the first commandment with promise. Disobedience to parents is a mark, sad mark, of the present day. May you who are children here be in subjection to your parents. Do not think it manly to disobey your parents. Do not think it good to speak disrespectfully of them as generally is the case today. It bids Christians to walk in a gracious way, to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. It bids us take heed to our tongues, the unruly member of the body. Great ships, says James, are guided by a very little helm and the governor turneth it whithersoever he listeth. All things, all creatures on the earth and in the sea are tamed and have been tamed by man, says James, but the tongue is an unruly member and no man can tame it. It is set on fire of hell. Regard this dear friends, regard this Scripture, regard what it says about the tongue and do not, O do not let us, as we often, some of us, have done, speak unadvisedly and make ourselves busybodies in other men's matters. Think carefully of the character of people before you take it away with your tongue. Think of the feelings of people before you wantonly hurt them with your tongue. Take heed to your tongue. "Thou shalt guide me". This is the guide my friends, this is the guide. It speaks of the assemblies of saints, how they are to behave. They are not to forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is. Forsaking the assembly of saints is often the beginning of a bad state if not of an apostacy. The falling away is to be terrible, a great apostacy and the Scripture guides the church as to what she is to do. She is to assemble herself whenever God, in her holy providence, makes a way. Take heed to these things. Take heed to your business. Not slothful in business. He is a great waster and he is brother to the slothful man who does that. But be not absorbed in it. Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Remember the last reckoning day is to come and the Scripture guides as to that. Lay up in store a good foundation by preparing against the time to come. I say then, here is God's counsel. Knowledge of Himself, of the Trinity, of God's thoughts of men, good and bad, of their states before Him, of the issue of life, of what it is to be lost, what it is to be saved, of eternity. Revelation, revelation, revelation will give you information infallible of these things. And God guides by the

Scriptures. The helm of the Scriptures, moving you, will move you in a right direction across the sea of life. May the Lord grant that it may be so.

The second point is that the Holy Ghost guides. No child of God, as I judge, can ever adequately express the singular, the pervasive influence of the Word of God when He uses it, the light that He sheds upon it, that He sheds in the understanding, the influence that He brings to bear on the conscience, the affections, the decisions He causes sinners to arrive at when He speaks in some Scripture; the boldness, the courage He gives to His children in certain cases when He gives some Scripture. I say, when He gives some Scripture. They may be fearful one moment and as a lion the next. They may be doubting their state before God one moment and be assured of it perfectly the next, because the Holy Ghost has come; He has spoken. O 'tis a great thing to be advised by the Spirit. Sometimes, without the Scripture, an influence comes on the heart, a view of Jesus Christ is given, an attraction to the throne of grace is felt. The loadstone of a crucified Christ draws the sinner through all difficulties and dangers and obstacles. The eye is turned at once to Christ; the arms of faith embrace Him; the affections of the soul at once attach themselves to Him. He becomes the sinner's trust, the sinner's foundation, the refuge of those who are in danger, and all by the Holy Ghost. This is the counsel. One part of the counsel is this "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". When that comes into the heart there is no longer a shutting up, a bondage, but an opening of the spirit and a pouring out of the heart before the Lord. All the matters go out before the Lord then. If they be family matters, if they be business troubles and perplexities, if they be some peculiar necessity, all is laid out before the Lord, as Job said; if I could get near the Lord I would order my cause before Him. I would fill my mouth with arguments. I would not be silent and I would not leave out this and leave out that. I would lay it all before Him. Who, but the soul that has been led to do it, can understand the unburdening, the unbosoming of all your cares of every sort and kind, temporal things and eternal. Matters of today and matters of eternity are laid before the Lord under the wonderful counsel of the Eternal Spirit. Watch for His blessed influences as they come upon you. They are very gentle sometimes. Hart says

So gentle sometimes is the flame

That if we take not heed
We may unkindly quench the same
We may, my friends, indeed

But a gentle influence from the Holy Spirit has some distinguishing mark about it making it known to be different from every other influence. As, for instance, if you have been feeling very hard and there comes an influence from the Spirit upon you, there will come a strange softness of mind over you and a desire to be near the Lord and a sorrow for your hard state. If you have been haughty and perhaps determined to take your own way in a thing and there comes an influence from the Spirit upon you, that haughtiness will go, that determination will be shaken, and you will be saying - What if it is not right? Lord show me what I ought to do. "Show me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee". Sometimes the influence is more powerful and marked. It is so distinct that for the moment you cannot doubt it, for He leads you to Christ, He leads you to the fountain of the Saviour's merit, He leads you to see there is a fountain filled with blood. O that I were put within it. O plunge my soul into that flood that I may lose all my guilty stains. He guides. "He shall guide you into all truth". The difference between an intellectual view of the doctrines of grace and the spiritual, living view given by the Holy Ghost is very, very great. It is about as great, or even greater than, the difference between light and darkness. The intellectual view will leave you cold, unimpressed, make you proud of your knowledge. The spiritual view will enliven your affections, warm and intensify your desires to be interested in what you see, to feel yourself wrapped up in divine mercy and love and the Covenant of Grace, to feel that you are interested in God and God interested in you. Thou shalt guide me into truth. He will guide you into a promise. A promise spoken to Abraham may be as new as if it had just been spoken to you only and you alone in all the world, if spoken to you by the Holy Ghost. O the fulfilments which the Word of God is capable of. O the applications it can have by the Holy Ghost. It is never empty. A promise is always full, always the same. Once you have had a promise fulfilled it is still a new promise and will be as long as you live and whenever new life and light come by it you will say it is the same as when I first had it. The same blessed promise comes, the Spirit is in it; He guides. Well may we pray with the Psalmist "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me". "Thou shalt guide me

with Thy counsel". He will counsel you to be quiet sometimes when your mind is disturbed, perturbed. When you feel agitated by your circumstances or by temptation, the Lord may say "Be still and know that I am God." Be still. "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart. Wait I say on the Lord". "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him". And the counsel is a penetrating counsel; it enters the case, enters your heart, touches the spring of life and grace within you and faith instantly begins to respond to it. This is the counsel of the Most High. He counsels you to be quiet; counsels you also to plead. Put Me in remembrance". We think perhaps we should tire the Lord if we go too often; we should weary Him, as He said, you wearied Me with your sins and we think sometimes it will be sin in us if we go on following this course. He says, No, "Put Me in remembrance" "Open thy mouth wide", "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". "Pray without ceasing". Trouble does not cease; may not the prayer cease.

The third point is providence. God guides people by providence sometimes. Sometimes you may be greatly perplexed because two ways appear open and into one of which you must enter and you do not know which. Then you need the Lord to show you. Sometimes only one way appears and you must go that way. There is often a wonderful conjunction of things when God is about to guide a person and do something. Take, for instance, David, the stripling, how the Lord fitted in the time when Jesse, David's father, said to him, now take these 10 cheeses and such and such things and go, take them to the captain of your brethren's thousand, and enquire of your brethren. That was timed by God. God guided David. It was just at the time when the giant was blaspheming God and defying the armies of the God of Israel, and David got there to hear that blasphemy, and David's heart was stirred within him. The Lord brought that to pass you see. When David was in danger and Saul's hand almost shaped to put it on David's shoulder, what happened? O there comes a messenger to Saul to say the Philistines had invaded the land, so Saul must leave off hunting David to save his kingdom. God's way in providence is very great and strange, but very wonderful, only we must not always expect to see His way as a plain way before us, for He hath His way in the sea and His path in the mighty waters and His footsteps are not known. "Thou

shalt guide me with Thy counsel". Ah, 'tis a beautiful thing to have a back look now and again on the way the Lord has led you. To see, as Jacob saw, how that, though his wages had been changed ten times by Laban, and though he had been bitten by the frost and consumed by the heat, and Laban had required all losses at his hand, the God of his father had been with him and He had prospered him. And when you get a back look, you will see that though there has been this adversity, though there has been that trouble, though there have been such and such difficulties, and though you have thought at times, surely the Lord is against me, surely men are against me, surely God has given them a commission against me, and I shall be brought to death and ruin - I do not know where I am going to - you can say O goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. You are obliged to own, and thankfully you own at times, He has guided, He has wrought skilfully with His hand for me. He has found out knowledge of witty inventions for me. He has guided me. Now Christians put these three things together. Lay yourselves, lay your experiences, lay your paths beside them and say, has God guided you? Can you say He has not? Has not His counsel shone here and there? Has not His counsel appeared beautiful to you in this and in that? "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel". And what is to be the end of this? O, said the Psalmist: "And afterward receive me to glory". When Thou hast done all Thou wilt by me and for me and in me, when my little race is run, when I have served my generation by the will of God, I shall fall on sleep. When my time in my family, says one, is ended, when my difficulties there are coming to a close. When, the minister may say, when my ministry is ended, when I have got through all its difficulties and the arduous labour attending it and God has no more to say by me to anyone. And a poor, tried child of God may say, when I have got through these business troubles, when I come to the end. What will remain? these men may say, now what will remain to us? So faith says, God will take you to Him. You will lay down a poor body, you will leave the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. You will leave your temporal mercies as you will leave your temporal sorrows. You will just leave them all and go; where to? O, says the Psalmist "And afterward receive me to glory". The work begun will then be finished. The bliss tasted of, occasionally, will then be entered upon fully and without interruption through eternity. The light that has shone occasionally will then beam without any night,

beam for ever and ever, and the Lord who, by occasions visited me, will then have me with Him and I shall go no more out of His presence. "To glory". What is glory, but to be with the Lord. What is glory, but to be like the Lord? What is glory, but to live in the presence of God, without the weary veil of mortality? It is to see God; it is to serve God; it is to be led by the Lamb to living fountains of waters, to thirst no more. It is to have all tears wiped from your eyes. It is to have every prayer fully answered, every desire fully satisfied, every longing most absolutely gratified. It is to have your whole being swallowed up in glory with God. "And afterward receive me to glory". You will know where to put the emphasis sometimes. You will know where to put the crown, on whose head to put it, at whose feet to cast it, what Name you shall sing to, how you shall harp with your harp. One says - it is not in our book, but it belongs to that hymn: "There is a fountain filled with blood" -

Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared,
Unworthy though I be,
For me, a blood-bought, free reward,
A golden harp for me

'Tis tuned and strung for endless years
And formed by power divine
To sound in God, the Father's, ears
No other Name but Thine

And that will be the sweet, absolute, consummation of every desire that a living soul has ever been inspired by in prayer and in praise.

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee". To whom will my eyes be directed, on whom will my soul feast, but the Lord? No Intercessor, but Christ. No temple, but Christ. No Sun, but Christ. No worship but to God in Him; the Trinity there. "Whom". Looking in heaven by faith and seeing all the ransomed and spirits of just men made perfect, the four beasts, and four and twenty elders, and the ten thousand thousands of angels around them, looking on them all, who is there there? Paul, the Apostles, the Patriarchs, they are there. Ah, but said John, I saw One in the midst of the throne of God, a Lamb as it

had been slain. He is the One. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" - you will have everything there - "and there is none upon earth that I desire beside (or in comparison with) Thee". May I not have such friends? Yes, you may, if God gives them to you. May I not walk in such ways? Yes, if God opens them to you. May I not have such and such streams of pleasure? Yes, if God sends them running to you. The only caution you will need is this - use them wisely; idolise none; think not too much of anything. God will make us hold the world loosely. As we get older it comes to that; things we thought when younger we could not lose, we could not bear to miss, now we find if we have them we hang more loosely to them. There is One whose presence is most desired and that is God. "Whom have I in heaven?" Go through your friends, go to the Church - the best part of earth - go to the Church - too good for earth - it is not to be your ultimate home. Go there, and who there, compared with Christ, would you want? "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". But what a favour it is to desire God. What a favour it is to see Him, so beautiful, so full, so good, so gracious, so glorious, as to say, I do desire Him. May He be the desire of us. I will shake, says God, all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.

AMEN.