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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 27 August 1922

PSALM 73 v 28

But it is good for me to draw near to God:
I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may
declare all Thy works

If it were put to us as a direct, personal question whether we believed there is a God, and further, if the question were pressed, why do we profess to believe there is a God, what is the answer to be? And if, further, it were asked of us what is meant by drawing near to this, so believed, God, what would be the answer? It is a great thing to believe in God - not half as common as is generally believed - and it is a great thing to be helped, if it is required of us, to give a reason for the hope that is within us. Do we get manifestations, indubitable proofs? Do we get sights of God, of the throne of grace? Liberty at that throne, and answers sent from it? It is a great thing to be really right before God; to be so dealt with, so as, at times to say, each one for himself - "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day". Shams, pretences, natural knowledge, all will perish one day. Grace and grace alone, mighty operations, sweet manifestations, the coming of God to us, and our getting near to Him, these only will stand us in good stead if we get them. I made some remarks this morning on this passage with regard particularly, for a few moments, to the whole Psalm, a Psalm of very great import, descriptive of the case of the wicked, descriptive of the sore backslidings of the Lord's people, for Asaph may be taken to represent the Lord's people in this particular as in other particulars. Dealings with God, as I mentioned this morning, some intercommunications between God and our souls, some operations of the Spirit, some movement in our own souls, alone will stand us in good stead. This evening, as helped, I would a little more speak about prayer and then pass on to notice the profession which the Psalmist makes and why he makes it. Prayer is that expression of the heart toward God; that is the fruit of two things, first of the

Spirit's operation, and second of felt necessity. The first is the absolute necessity for all prayer. "We know not" - this is universally true; in the church of God it is felt to be true - "We know not what we should pray for as we ought". If asked what we should like, we should have a ready answer. If asked what we think would be best for us, we should be sorely put to it, but the Holy Ghost comes and He gives that power, that instruction, that guidance of the heart that are necessary to a proper address to God. And, as He is the Teacher, He is careful to teach the way of approach - "Through whom" - that is Jesus Christ - "we both" - Jew and Gentile - "have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Mind the way. "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near." Mind the way. If Christ be not the way to you, then you are not in the way to heaven. You will never get an answer to prayer, that is to say, there will be no prayer in you. But this, the soul's access to God, is a most sacred thing; singular, astonishing, to all who receive it. Coming to God is not physical movement; it is the movement of the soul, the acting of faith, the trembling desire of a sinner who would fain know God for himself and have the kingdom of God in his heart and the grace of Christ to overcome his lusts, and the Spirit of Christ to indwell him and teach him, and be in him as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. It is a great thing so to pray. You will pray acceptably if you so pray, and this comes sovereignly into men's hearts. If the clouds be full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth and do not wait for men to get home, and if the Spirit of God sovereignly comes down into your soul as a Spirit of grace and of supplication, you will find it will matter not where you are, nor how engaged, your heart will be caught up, or ever you are aware of it, and in particular cases, your soul so led out in prayer will be hindered by nothing. Daniel was not to be hindered by that wicked law which jealousy had caused to be enacted against praying to any God but a false god. He went as usual, into his house; as usual opened his window, and as usual kneeled down with his face toward Jerusalem. A beautiful orientation that was, a setting of his heart to the highway, and he prayed to God and got an answer. O my friends, praying in the Holy Ghost, is a great matter. Jude speaks of it -

"Praying in the Holy Ghost". He is not restrained, He is not constrained often; He comes sovereignly. And yet there is a constraint that the Lord allows and gives, indeed when men can say "I will not let Thee go" and in this kind of praying nothing is left out. Body, soul, spirit, life, difficulties, troubles, temptations, burdens, sorrows, cares; they are all taken to the Lord. More than you could enumerate as far as words go, but not more than your sighs express to Almighty God, to His patient ear. O, it is great to pray. As long as you live on Christ you will pray and find that you are alive when you pray and, as it were, dead when you do not. But we are unworthy; we are not worthy that God's Name or Being should be in our thoughts. We are not fit that that Name should be on our lips. How is it then that people who believe that - I believe it of myself; some of you I know believe it, believe it because you are sensible of the awful depravity of your nature and the corruption of your minds - how is it then that such people ever pray with the hope of an answer, yea with sometimes a singular confidence that an answer will come. It is as Paul expresses it to the Ephesians - "By whom we have access". The very Person, the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus alone will suffice for us as a plea and as a ground of hope of receiving an answer. We little know for the most part what is included in the ordinary conclusion of our prayers, "For Christ's sake". Heaven's worth, heaven's best, infinite mercy, infinite merit, almighty goodness, eternal love, all, all of them expressed in that one word - "For Christ's sake". The Father's pleasure is in Him, the Father's fulness is in Him, the Father's will is in Him, the Father's purpose is in Him, and the infinite merit of His death extends over all the wants and the unworthiness of His dear children. Pray then, O Christian, pray for Christ's sake. This drawing near to God is then a very wonderful thing, a remarkable thing, in a person's life. Drawing near to God. And He draws near to us too. James has it - Draw near to God. "Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you". When these two, removed from each other by an infinite distance as Creator and creature, and by a more terrible distance as a holy God and a polluted sinner; when these two come together, O what love, what humility, what condescension, what liberty, what familiarity, what boldness. And then it comes to pass one day that the word is fulfilled: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt". Well, it is a great thing to be a praying person and a great thing for a church to be a

praying church. God grant that His children here may individually pray more and more and that the Church may pray more and more. Wonders have been done by prayer. The power of prayer is very remarkable. Elijah, a man of like passions with us, prayed and there was no rain for three years and more. Again he prayed and rain came. Well, if you can pray so as to get answers, not that kind but answers to your own petitions, for your own cases, it will be a very great wonder and you will bless God.

Now I would like first to notice in the next place - for I must not remain all the evening on the one part though it is very inviting and very full - the second part of the text, the profession that the Psalmist makes here - "I have put my trust in the Lord God". This argues in the first place some knowledge of God, as who would trust a person of whom he is ignorant. If you have no knowledge of God, never profess to put your trust in Him, for such a profession is but vanity. If you know Him you certainly will put your trust in Him. Who could help it? Who could do otherwise? But in what respects is God to be known? In all the communicable respects, He is to be known in the very Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark that. He will never bless you out of Christ, never commune with you in any other way, never do you good in any other way. Christ and Christ alone, the Alpha and Omega of the religion of the Church. He and He alone is the One in whom, through whom, by whom God is known. O when did you see Jesus Christ, and how came you to see Him? What did you see in Him? What is His Person, but the greatest, the most glorious expression of God; the express image of His Person. All the beauty of God, the eternity of God, the immensity of God, the love of God, the grace of God, the covenant of God; all have their expression in the highest possible degree in the Lord Jesus Christ. May there be a knowledge of this conveyed to us? If my preaching should be the means of impressing on any of your hearts a little more of the beauty and the goodness and the greatness and glory of Christ, I shall not have lived and preached in vain, and God knows it has for many years been my prayer that the preaching might have this effect. Then if we know Him, we know the proper object of trust. "I have put my trust in the Lord". Here is the object. Trust is subjective; God is the Object. Trust is in the heart, an act of faith. God is the Object, as He shows Himself in the Lord Jesus. "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the

Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". Christ in His Person, Christ on the cross, Christ in heaven, Christ in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension, in His intercession, in His fullness, in His goodness, in His grace, in His faithfulness; Christ is the hope of the church, her foundation, her life, her animating life, her power, her light, her holiness. O what can be said of Him? How poor, how poor are all human words to express the great God in Jesus Christ. It is well known in the Church that He is infinitely attractive, that He does draw. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out". These two agree; the gift of God to Jesus Christ of sinners, and the coming to Jesus Christ of these given sinners. These agree, and when it is so, says Christ, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out".

He is the object of trust, the only proper, sufficient, object of trust. Now a few words about the subjective grace, this grace in the heart, the grace of faith going out in acts of trust, acts of leaning on Christ; coming up out of the wilderness leaning on the arm of Christ. And I will speak of it in several respects, as first of all the sinner is brought to trust in the atonement of Christ for the removal and cleansing from him of all his sins. He looks to none but Christ for this.

Black, I to the fountain fly
Wash me Saviour or I die

Will that do? Do you believe it sufficient? Do you believe that if cleansed by that precious blood the eye of infinite purity and justice searching and penetrating to the innermost parts of your very being will discover no flaw, nothing blameworthy in you? O, if your trust is here, then you will be praised by God one day. He will tell you that there is no spot in you, polluted sinner. This trust will never let you down into hell. If you depend on Christ for forgiveness, there is no way from that dependence into perdition, but be careful that it is a proper, a God given trust. Yes, sinners trust to Christ alone for cleansing. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanseth us from all sin". All sin means a great deal. You will find that, who

are convinced of your own sins. All sin; original sin, sin in which we were born. Sin, all sin done by us. From our birth we have been doing and walking in vanity all our days. All sin. Sin that no eye of our nearest and dearest ever saw; subtle things within us, subtle sins, sins that are like an atmosphere which you cannot exclude from a room; and all these cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Sins against God. Only one sin, never committed by the Church, by any individual member of it, only one sin is outside forgiveness, the sin against the Holy Ghost. All manner of sin and blasphemy against the Son of Man shall be forgiven. If you are troubled about all your sins, and if you are thinking that your sins are not ordinary sins; if any poor creature here may be saying, yes, but my sins are not ordinary sins, may the Lord make that Scripture to you what He made it to me more than 50 years ago, when I was saying mine were not ordinary sins and therefore there was no hope of forgiveness - "All manner of sin"; whatever you have said against Christ, whatever prejudices your heart has nourished against Him, whatever corruptions have risen up in your thoughts, whatever blasphemies you may have nursed in your mind, whatever wicked things you have said with your tongues, and some have said wicked things against Him, all these His blood can cleanse. And the trust then will be here and here alone.

"Black I to the fountain fly"

In the second place the trust of a sinner is in the righteousness of Christ. Fellow sinners, you must have a perfect righteousness, or be eternally lost. This truth excludes at once and for ever everything that a sinner may pretend to with respect to righteousness.

Righteousness, to full perfection

Must be brought

Lacking nought

Fearless of rejection

The doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ will ever stand and be known in the church of the living God. Here is the justification of a soul from all the charges that the law can bring against him. Here is the beauty of a sinner in the sight of God; here is his title for heaven; here is his right to eat of the tree of

life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, for herein, in this righteousness, the soul overcomes all. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" He justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. And this is received, and when it is seen by faith, the sinner says, here I can trust my soul. I fall upon this righteousness. My soul I rest secure on this righteousness. So you know what this is? Did you ever get a sight of this righteousness, such a sight as your intellect could never bring to you? Such a sight as no natural study could ever bring to you? A sight that the Holy Ghost alone can give, for He is to glorify Christ by taking of that which is His and showing it to His people. O, there will be no boasting. No flesh shall glory in God's presence, but you may, and you will, glory in this. You will say when you get it, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength", and this will be a solid comfort against all the lapses and the backslidings that you may be guilty of. And, as and when it is brought to you, you will see here no excuse for your sins, but justification from them. Here you will find God not dealing with you after your sins, nor rewarding you according to your iniquities, but dealing with you in the Person of His Beloved Son. And in this, His justifying robe, the King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. And this will divide Jordan's icy waves; this will land the soul with God.

And in the third place the feeble sinner trusts in the strength of Christ. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". How else can you expect or hope for a victory over sin, death, and hell? How can you expect or hope to get through the mazes of deceitfulness in your own hearts? How else can you hope to be held up in your profession of Christ; to be held up in the narrow way that leads to life, in the path of tribulation that every saint more or less must tread? Only this power can help you and bring you honourably through. Only this can hold you up for one single minute in real prayer. Only this can enable you to cast your care on the Lord, persuading you that He cares for you. Only this can sanctify trouble to you. Only this can bring your will into an unfeigned and unsought, unreserved submission to the will of God. Did you ever trust this power? Did you ever see it in Jesus - the Christ of God, one of the best sights you can get? If you have feared naked omnipotence, if you have feared that the Almighty power that you have

provoked to destroy you would destroy you, O then to see that same power clothed in the incarnate Saviour, how attractive has that power been. It used to repel some of us, make us afraid. It kept some from their knees for weeks together, feeling that if they dared to kneel in prayer that omnipotence, being provoked, would bring sudden destruction. But then, the sight of that same power, revealed in Christ, made all the difference to the feeling about it. How attractive it became. So sinner, if you put your trust in the omnipotence of Christ you will never be destroyed. What can He not do?

Let us look at two or three things that this omnipotence of Christ will do, as first, subdue your iniquities. He shall subdue our iniquities. Iniquities are not an empty name; they are not a notion. They are a power, an evil; they are a death; they are a pollution. They drive, they deceive, they hurt, they rob, they wound, they make us feel more than half dead sometimes. Iniquities, they deaden the mind Godward, they seek to seer the conscience, they load it with guilt. Iniquities. O what can we say? They are dreadful. Take a single one of them and try to arrest it, try to overcome it, and you will soon know that you are weakness itself. Well then, if you can say sometimes to the Lord, Lord, with this heart full of sin, I venture to cast myself on Thy saving power, that is trusting in the Lord, in Almighty God. He shall fight our battles for us. Yes, we have this set forth in a striking way in the Scriptures. "Greater is He that is in us than all that can be against us".

Trust Him, He will not deceive you
Though you hardly of Him deem

Trust Him, He will fight your battles. Trust Him, He will overcome your enemies. All Dagon, all idols, all sins shall be overcome by Him. This power will also work wonders, divide Jordans, multiply loaves and fishes, bring friends, open hands, open purses, open hearts, quiet men's minds, make frowns disappear and clothe the face with smiles. It did so with respect to Esau and Jacob. This power can multiply your experiences. Jacob said that he passed over Jordan just single; he returned two bands. This power can establish the weak, confirm feeble knees, keep trembling feet steady, and keep the

eye and the heart on Immanuel and on Immanuel's land. This power will subdue Satan and bruise him shortly under the feet of afflicted saints, will lock the jaws of the roaring lion, or keep him from coming near. O what cannot the Lord accomplish? Trust this, trust this power. This power may be expressed in the word grace. "My grace is sufficient for Thee" Grace to sanctify trouble, grace to enable a person to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. "I have put my trust" - a weak creature, a worm for feebleness - "I have put my trust in the Lord God". I have put my trust in Him as it respects the faithfulness of God. I look to that. David had his eye on the faithfulness of God. He prayed a particular prayer, on a particular ground. The particular ground was God's promise to make him a great house, and the particular prayer on that particular ground was this - "Lord do as Thou hast said". Now you people of God may have some particular things, doubtless have in your own souls, some promise, some intimation of good, some view of Christ, that contained a promise of life in Him, though perhaps you hardly perceived it as containing that. Something that has come from heaven into your heart is like part of the earnest. Now, having received the earnest, though it be but a little bit, what is to become of it, what is to become of you? Is the earnest to be withdrawn or disowned? Could God do that? Could God disown His own gift? Will He withdraw it? Neither the one nor the other. Well then, I will put my trust in Him to fulfil His gracious promise, to make good to me what He intimated. O sinner, is your trust here? Is your confidence in God to believe you will have sufficient, although you will have lapses and there will be again and again such a letting slip of the things the Lord has given you, that you wont say, now Lord I have depended without the least misgiving or forgetfulness. So you will have to go and say, Lord remember Thy holy promise. Remember what Thou didst say to me. Do as Thou hast said. We shall be only recipients to the very end, and through eternity. Perhaps some of you young people who fear the Lord may think that I am hard on you, that you wont be quite so base as all this. Well, I wont try to persuade you, I will only say this, you will find as you go on what you are. You will learn something perhaps tomorrow that you did not know this evening about sin. I have learned what I know very slowly, and I am too proud to wish to retain the knowledge naturally, but God does not let me forget what I am, and He wont let you forget

what you are. And then, as you grow worse, for that will often be your expression, as you grow worse, more wicked, more ignorant, more weak, and as you learn painfully that there is more hypocrisy in you now than you ever thought of a few years ago, or even months ago perhaps, you will say, well if I get to heaven it will be alone by the sovereign mercy and love of God, by the atonement of Christ, by the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit to the work of grace in me. And then you will say, adding another word, and I will crown the Lord. I will crown Him. My heart shall be tuned to His praise. My voice shall lift up itself in heaven to bless Him, and the crown of life I will cast at His glorious feet. "I have put my trust in the Lord God." I will trust Him to bring me through, I will trust Him to provide for me. I will trust Him to help me. I will trust Him to bring me through trouble. I will trust Him to sanctify trouble to me. I will put my trust in Him. Trust in His love. Sometimes you will trust in His love as to rest in it. It is very beautiful when a sinner rests where God the Father rests. He will rest in His love. And you will say sometimes that is my bed, that is my bed, softer than any downy pillow could be. The eternal love of God expressed first in the election of Christ and then in the election of the Church for Christ. Trust this precious love, rest in it. So one might speak of trusting the wisdom of God, and the fullness of God. There is wisdom in God and Christ is that wisdom. There is fullness in God and Christ is that fullness. So we must hang about this one thing, Christ first and last, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending saith the Lord. It is all there; I have nothing else to preach. I never want to be a modern preacher, just to stick to those things which the Scriptures teach and which I myself in some small measure know. I want to bring nothing else to your ears, for I am sure nothing else will save you, nothing else will sanctify you, nothing else will bring you honourably to your grave, nothing else will land you in heaven. And what will you do when you know this? Why declare it to be sure. Sometimes you will say, come all ye that fear God, whom I know as my friends, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul. Come and let me tell you what I have recently received. Come and let me say that I have once more seen Emmanuel's face, once more heard Him speak to me, again have felt His visit of love to my soul. You will declare His works of grace, sovereign grace o'er sin abounding; His works of forgiveness cleansing you from all sin; His work of support holding you up under your burdens. His work of supply

sending streams in the dessert and rivers in high places. It is good to speak of God; it is good to have something to say about Him; to have to say, why He came to me, I did not go to Him. I was found of Him when I did not seek Him; and to say, when I was a backslider He put me into a furnace to bring me back. Then He forgave and reconciled me again to Himself. Declare His works my friends, tell your friends when you can of some visit that you are favoured to receive from the lover of your souls. "That I may declare all Thy works". This communion of saints is good. Bunyan well expresses it when he says, "Saints fellowship when managed well will keep their souls alive, and that in spite of hell". And that is one reason why the enemy tries to close our lips with respect to the things of God. May the Lord help us to declare His works, bless your souls, do you good, communicate of His mercy and His fullness to you and grant that we as a little church and congregation may fear His Name, call upon Him, trust in Him, and declare what He has done for us.

AMEN.