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Sermon preached by Mr.J.K.Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
On Sunday morning August 27th 1922.

"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." Psalm 73: 28

As I was walking out yesterday morning and asking the Lord to give me a subject for this day, I met one of our friends, who is happily present with us now, and in the course of conversation, this passage of scripture was mentioned by him, and as he uttered it, it sank into my heart and has continued there and so I have brought it before you. O if we were but praying people; if we did but believe there is a God; that very terrible He is in His glorious Being and unknowable to us as fallen creatures, yet has condescended to make Himself knowable and approachable in the Person of His dear Son Jesus Christ. If we but believe this and had more lively apprehensions, not of our own cases first of all but of His mercy, should not we feel an irresistible attraction to Him? If we did but believe in God as He has revealed Himself in the Gospel, surely we should oftener be finding our way to Him. It is unbelief that makes our hands hang down; that seals our hearts and lips against the Lord. It is our vile ignorance of Him that makes us ready to turn away from Him. May He pardon us -this is our sin, I speak to His people - and give us power to pray.

He is approachable; He is knowable; He is merciful; He is a God of salvation but there is solemnness in God and where true faith is, it keeps the sinner from taking the name of the Lord in vain. Not lip service is enough; He requires pure desires; all the heart or nothing. That is as true in the gospel as it is in the law. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." When did you get an apprehension of God on your hearts? When did you feel that you were not worthy to have this glorious Being in your thoughts; not fit to take His holy name upon your lips? When did you feel at an infinite distance from Him? Not the infinite distance that belongs to you as creatures, which will always be yours, but the distance of sin? That is the distance that will ever burden and grieve the people of God while they are in this world.

Let us look at this scripture. First of all take a passing view of the whole Psalm. The psalmist appears to us in several different, very, very widely differing states of mind. First of all He declares that the Lord is good to Israel. "Surely God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." That declaration will stand; stand in the church, while there is a church on earth; stand for ever in her glorified state. Good in Himself He is eternally; good in His dealings with Israel He is by manifestation. O do you get manifestations of God? Or are you living on notions? Do you get touches, drawings to Him? Or are you satisfied with respectable profession. If there are no dealings, no inter-communications between you and God in this life, there will be in that terrible lack a fearful proof that you are dead in trespasses and sins; and woe to the man who lives and dies in that state.

Then the Psalmist turns to himself and takes a view of the state of mind he had been in, "As for me" - God is right; God is good; God is holy. This is as if he should say I will maintain; but for myself, a beast, a dog in the sight of God and now in my own; as for me, my feet, so trembling, so weak, had well-nigh slipped. I was disposed to turn away and did turn away from God, for I was perplexed. I took a view of two different people - I saw the wicked prospered; I saw the righteous afflicted, and I

was stumbled. I saw prosperity given to one departing from God always and I saw adversity poured out like water into a cup; yea, wine mixed and given to the godly to drink. I tried to find out the cause of this but it was too painful for me; too much for me. It was beyond my understanding, and I fretted. I was not able to submit to it. Like as later on the prophet Jeremiah was expostulating with the Lord. Lord let me speak to Thee about this, how is it that Thou dost prosper the wicked, how is it that the righteous whom Thou favourest are afflicted? Do you know this? Note the quarrelling of your own hearts? Have you had objects before you which have attracted this dreadful spirit? Have you seen people, some to perhaps near you blessed as men speak, wonderfully prospered, everything they touched turned as men speak to gold and another near to you fearing God, always in trouble, afflicted morning and evening every day; and you have tried to understand this. Why has God done this to so and so? Here one who never prays and gets everything; here is another who constantly so far as I can judge, seeks the Lord and he gets nothing but trouble. Leave off trying to understand it and beg of God to bring you where He brought the Psalmist. Outside the Sanctuary you will understand nothing properly; inside, in Jesus Christ, you will find explanation that will satisfy your faith.

"I thought to know this" he said - He could not it was too painful for him. "Until I went into the Sanctuary of God," until I was again drawn by the Lord to Himself and enabled to bring these perplexing questions, these peculiar dealings of God in providence to Him; enabled to leave myself, to give up my will; to abandon my reason and all things connected with the matter, and submit to Him who cannot do but what is right and must be righteous still. And then He got some teaching. You will learn many a lesson on your knees that you could never get out of books, never derive from your own reasoning; many a sweet ray of God's great goodness and sovereignty and majesty will fall on your heart and tell you that He is good that He does what is best; that He knows what is best. He knows the best way to bring you to heaven, nay to bring you to your knees. He knows the best way to supply your every need. He knows what is best for us. Crossed hands bring straight things to God's people. Do not try to straighten God's crossed hands; you will only weary yourself out and bring guilt to your conscience. When the Psalmist went into the Sanctuary he was instructed. The Lord no doubt gave, in some manner and measure, sweet light and warm life to this afflicted man and in God's light he could see light. "In Thy light shall we see light." My friends in trouble come as you can, there. There you will see God in His beauteous light; dealing in His infinite wisdom with you and with others, All creatures in His hand, particularly the saints, who are also in His heart, in His love, embraced by Him in His covenant which is ordered in all things and sure; and then you will believe that what He does now, you cannot see or know, but that you shall know hereafter. And if it is proper to a child to trust his parent in certain matters which the little one cannot understand, how much more for the child of God to submit himself and all his matters, all his perplexities into the hand of a good God and Father in Jesus Christ.

Two things were set before the Psalmist; First the state of the wicked, the prospered wicked. Ah if you see them in that light, you will never covet to tread on that slippery path; you won't walk on ice down a hill, No, your very soul will cry to Him to keep you from slippery paths. For these ungodly, these prospered ones were sliding, unperceived to themselves, rapidly slipping away into destruction. How are they cast down in a moment; they are utterly consumed with God's terrors, these prospered ones. O, do not envy if you can help it. Said one, even Solomon "My son, envy thou, not sinners, be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long, for surely there is an end." An end to

God's dispensations both with them and with you. There is an end, the end of God's dispensations with the prospered wicked is their dissolution and consuming with terrors, the terrors of God; and there is an end with God's dispensations to His saints and their expectation of good, expectation which at times they have found to be right in their hearts, expectation of forgiveness, of justification, of sanctification, of God's presence with them in trouble and of a good issue to their afflictions. These expectations, though damped sometimes, though lost sight of in the mists of confusion, shall not be cut off, for the needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. So the Psalmist saw this. And would you like to be on a slippery path poor sinner, praying God to bless you; would you like to be on a slippery path, an incline down which you may be slipping and sliding swiftly, more swiftly, though you had no sense of it destruction should swallow you up? No! Did Christ walk such a path? No! Would you prefer, would you choose another lot, easier than His, that is to say, a path which He walked not in at all?

Then the Psalmist had a view of Himself as in another case, different from the case he had confessed himself to others to have been. Now said he, in Thy teaching, in Thy light I see this that I am as a beast before Thee, so foolish, so ignorant, so exceedingly foolish, I had no more reason in me than a beast. Humbling confession but many a man since the Psalmist made it has also made it; very humbling: God's teaching will make little people of us and worse than little people, very wicked people, and we shall resemble to our own view, just that - a beast. We are all this by nature. We know it by divine teaching, but then also he got another sight of himself and that not as a stumbling sinner; not as a rebellious child, not as one who had no thought of God's goodness, but regarded the various inequalities and discrepancies, as men would speak, of the providence of God. No, he got a view of himself as being continually with God, as being held up by God's right-hand. O did you ever see yourself in God's hand? Did you ever get a view of your being with the Lord always, in covenant, in grace, in Christ, in the atonement, in the Spirit's teaching; with God, when you were not with Him sensibly, then, even then with Him held up, guided, though you knew Him not as your guide at the moment? Nevertheless, notwithstanding all your wickedness, notwithstanding all your rebellious thoughts of Him, proud endeavours to know the unknowable, for the time being unknowable providence of God, I am continually with Thee. No cessation in the relationship, though a breaking off of the communion. Happy sinner who is always with God; always in His view, from the remembrance and the view of them. "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before me." So is the church of Christ, "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee." No adversity affects our position. Think of it. Adversity won't undo you, it cannot. No fire, no flood, no flame, no river, no roaring lion, no solemn circumstance, no cutting off dispensation, as to this or that shall hurt, I am continually with Thee; with the Saviour; in the eye of infinite wisdom, in the heart of infinite love under the protection of infinite power and under the safety of infinitely wise government; for the government of the church, and the government of each individual member of the church is on the shoulder of Christ. What a congregation two or three people make who are of this spirit and in this state. How many here sitting and listening to me a sinful man, can say they have had this manifested to them? that they are continually with God and that they have been held up in their trials in the face of their wickedness, held up by the Lord.

You owe Him thanks who can say this. We owe Him everlasting thanks who can say as much as this. But what if you cannot say as much as this? What if, on the contrary you can say and can only say, you have prayed and asked to be blessed and still get no answer; you have sought and as yet have

not found? Well, this shall be said of you and thus you one day will say yourself "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee; that I may dwell in Thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy Holy Temple."

Then let me name another thing: The Psalmist had wandered, had become entangled. A maze had caught his feet and how to walk he knew not. Now, finding the Lord with him and himself with the Lord, his confidence rose and he said: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel." Do you, when asking the Lord at times to take care of you in His providence, also ask Him to manage your hearts? If your hearts be managed by Him you will be well off: that is, if His Spirit gives you counsel. One said "I bless the Lord who has given me counsel" - given me counsel to leave myself, to abandon my own wisdom, to lose my own strength, to deny myself ; I bless the Lord who has given me counsel to go to the throne of grace and make my wants known and pour out all my wishes there. Happy sinner who can do this, being thus counselled.

"And afterward receive me to glory." He got a view of the shortness of his life; He got a view of the end that was awaiting him. What an end! Heaven! heaven for earth; Christ's uninterrupted presence; a fullness of bliss awaiting a sinner. O, sinner, good days are to come: A short tribulation, an eternal peace, a little mortification, eternal blessedness. Distance from the Lord for a moment, everlasting presence. What an end! Then also his confidence rose up to heaven itself yea to God in heaven and excluding all others, he said "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" Did you ever find this in your heart? 'Lord I have no one there but thee.' Did your faith ever get to the Trinity? ever embrace God, as He can be embraced in Christ? "Whom have I in heaven but Thee." We must let the papists have all their deities, deified and canonised people and intercessors, let them alone; God will speak to them one day. We, be it given to us (unworthy as we are), wickeder many of us, it may be, in our own apprehension, than wicked papists, let them alone. Be this given to us to say to God 'Whom have I in heaven to look to, derive help from, and everlasting bliss eventually but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.' No comparison can be made between a blessed God and a dying creature. Is He your inheritance? I have admired often the Lord's word about Levi. He gave the land of Israel to eleven tribes and said Levi should not have any inheritance but to live on the sacrifices - beautiful portion; Levi was only to have the cities to dwell in that he needed and their suburbs. He had God; the altar was his. Are you content with God? Have you ever been content with Him? Ever said to Him in faith 'Lord I desire not a creature,' I think five minutes of this life will make such an impression on the sinner to whom it is given it shall never be forgotten and never be erased. O deep sculptured on the heart will be that wonderful thing - sufficiency in God, God sufficient for all you need in time and all you are to enjoy in eternity. And yet, poor, silly, foolish creatures as we are, we are always hankering after something material, substantial. We grasp at this and seem to get it and find it to be a shadow. We turn from God and find we have turned from substance. Durable riches and righteousness are with Him. And says Christ: "I will make all who love Me to inherit substance." Love divine, grace divine, mercy, salvation, substance.

He knew himself a dying man. He said, "My heart and my flesh faileth." Did he wish it to be otherwise? Did ever you know an old Christian who, when under any favour of God, could say he wished himself young? You never will meet one. He will say with everyone blessed with grace from time to time as he grows older and when he gets to be old and grey-headed, that he would not have his days which are at his back before him. Few and evil have been his days, and favour has crowned

him so far. Now he says under the sweet smile of his God, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness and therefore to depart and be with Christ will be far better. "My heart and my flesh faileth." O did you ever rejoice at the thought of your mortality coming to an end? Did you ever feel glad that you were not to live always in this world? Grace can make the vilest sinner holy and the witness and, demonstration of the Spirit can make the poorest sinner certain that he is going to heaven, so that he can say 'I would not live always.' "God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." So, what a mercy to come to this! Now the Lord is far from the wicked; they shall perish; and all who worship false gods shall be destroyed. "But it is good for me - though I have been what I have been and am still as a beast before the Lord," it is good for me, to draw near to God." A solemn exercise.

Flippancy in so-called worship is bad. Beware of a flippant religion. He who draws near to God will perhaps often have few words; will find that true worship is in the Spirit, not tongue. Do not covet to say much. Beg to pray. Beg for prayer. If one must speak in public then utterance is needful; but it is not so with you. Pray for the Spirit of prayer. Drawing near to God is a solemn business He is too great to be trifled with. Says the Holy Ghost by Paul "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Can you put your hand on a few times in your lives and say 'Then I prayed; then my whole being seemed to be engaged in it.' O, a worship that could find no utterance, except in groans Prayer is the soul's motion Godward. Prayer is the soul's utterance and its adoration. Of this worship as I have said sometimes to you, you could very properly put the whole of saving religion into that word worship. He who worships is right; right in heart, in spirit, in conscience, in understanding, in will, in practice, Elkanah went up early to worship. Israel had three times a year to go and worship. Go brethren, "Go worship at Emmanuel's feet; there is room for all the exercises of faith; all the warmth of love; all the simplicity of the heart with which you may be blessed. It is good to worship. There is sometimes a concentration in worship, an abstraction in worship - abstracted from the things of this life; while yet you are mentioning them it may be, a concentration of your heart on God as here the Psalmist said "Whom have I in heaven but Thee." Think you not that at that moment his whole affections went out. Yes, he worshipped, worshipped God in His Son in whom He is approachable. It is a great thing to be a worshipper. He is near to God who worships. That man whose eyes Christ opened was near to Christ. When Christ said "Dost thou believe or the Son of God" he did not know for the moment; but when Christ said "Thou hast both seen Him and He it is that talketh with thee" then he was nearer, his soul was nearer; he worshipped, as we read "He fell down and worshipped."

This is a very sweet part of religion; I wish we were acquainted with it, those of us who know it more intimately. Seek intimacy my friends and the more intimate you are the more worshipful you will be, the more reverential and humble and tender and profoundly you will fall before God. It is good; this pulls you out of the world - it pulls you out of what, if I may say so, is worse than the world - it pulls you out of yourself. For the time being you will forget a good deal when you worship, but you will forget nothing that is essential and what is essential the soul finds in God. Am I right? If I say the truth God give you to notice it and lay it to heart. When you draw nigh to God there will be this namely, a feeling of free confession of sin. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" is a bigger word than some of us believe. The lack of that acknowledgement may verily be a serious bar between you and God as it was between God and Israel of old. Only acknowledge; If you try to cover your sins in your

hands as a child disobediently taking something he was told not to take, and seeks to hide it, you won't prosper with it. "Whosoever covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whosoever confesseth his sin shall have mercy." And this is not to man but God. Some sins you will never name to men. If you commit a fault against your brother you are told to acknowledge it, to confess it, but there are some sins you will never name to any but God. How glad I am that I have not to confess to men some things, and you perhaps have felt the same, very glad; but you have been more than glad have not you, to be enabled freely to let out the whole before the Lord perhaps in one word, so to speak, put the whole bulk in a word -"Behold I am vile." Sometimes particular sins as when the Psalmist confessed his particular sin and said "Against Thee,-thee only have I sinned" but in every case there will be when you draw nigh to God a full confession, a frank acknowledgement; the heart will go with the word or if there be no word, the heart will go out in an acknowledgement of sin. Sin! O, who knows how much that little word contains; who knows what a world of wickedness, of the unfathomable deceit, of the awful hypocrisy, of the fearful blasphemy; what wickedness of mocking there may be? Yea there is all this in sin. You will never come to heaven in ignorance of the hell you deserve. When God teaches you, you will know what sin is, that you are a sinner, and sin will become exceeding sinful. It is good to do this; it is good to draw nigh unto God with petitions. Men who pray have requests, they prefer requests to God; matters not to be made known to your friends; wants not to be told to a fellow first, so to speak, but things made known to God. There are cases in the scriptures which illustrate this very beautifully. There went to Christ that poor Greek, a woman whose daughter was grievously devilled. "Lord", she said, "Have mercy on my daughter", and she got her request. Held back for a time by silence -repelled by a seemingly unkind word, she was all the while being drawn by a gracious Saviour and then she got that encomium, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt." Do you go with requests, or with flattery? An empty man must be a beggar and is made a beggar. Then he says 'Lord give me this for Christ's sake.'

The publican drew nigh to God and found it good. "God be merciful to me a sinner" and he went down to his house justified. The thief found it good to draw nigh to Christ the Almighty God on the cross and got his request; "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise. It is good to come with your cares and cast them on the Lord as directed by Peter "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Good to come with a single mind, not a double mind. A doubleminded man gets nothing. If you try to look at God and the creature at the same time, you see neither properly, and you get nothing perhaps, from either; but if your eye is single, your whole body is full of light. If your eye is single you are a blessed person on your knees.

Let us draw nigh unto God. "O come", said the Psalmist in another Psalm "O come and let us worship before the Lord; let us kneel before our Maker for we are His sheep", and He has plenty of pasture for His sheep. It is good to draw nigh to God in these particulars. It is good also because He Himself has called upon His people to do so. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." To be in the way of a divine commandment is a mercy never to be fully estimated. What! has it pleased God, whom we have offended, against whom we are continually transgressing, to say 'Bring your sin-procured wants to Me. Bring your sinful hearts to Me. Bring your necessities to Me. Bring your poor wandering thoughts, not one of which you can apprehend and hold in. Bring them to Me. Bring that wicked heart to Me.' "Open your mouth wide", respecting this matter, "I will fill it." That is, I will give you answer: What a wonderful thing it is that God should say to sinners 'Come to Me.' Why, they often feel they are not fit for His presence; perhaps some of you have

many a time felt that you were not even fit to come here and sit by the side of a child of God. I used to feel when I was a young man, not fit to be where a good person was, much less to call upon the name of a holy God. O, but necessity is laid on us, we must pray. With the child of God it is cry or die. It is so in the feeling, in the conscience: cry to this God or die for lack of Him. Prayer does not save but it is the way God has appointed to bring mercy to His people. You will never make a saviour of your prayers, but you will find that they are the medium God ordained, as Hart well expresses it,

*Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give.
Long as they live should Christians pray;
For only while they pray they live.*

(Joseph Hart)

Is it not a base thing for a man who knows that and has had some answers to prayer, to turn away from the throne of grace? I think of all the sins we commit, this is one of the greatest; that, knowing the goodness of God knowing His mercy and His readiness to bless, we should turn away in the pride of our hearts, and seek unto some vain thing that cannot profit. Yes! my friends, may I say again to you what I said before as a very timely illustration: When you get a chill, and every pore of your body is shut up, it is not good at as to get to the fire and load yourselves with blankets, the remedy must con from within. And when you get far from God no religion, no profession, no talk, will do you good; the thing is to be favoured to get near to God and then you will say; 'I am better; I am well.' When the Lord blesses you with some communication you will say 'I am well.' Is it not good to pray? Why, it is getting near the Sun. Why, it is being in the temple not built with hands; the temple which the Lord pitched and not man. It is walking in the light of God. It is being near to the fountain, near to the fire. It is near to eternal life. O the folly, the folly and the wickedness, of a prayerless spirit; and the mercy, the sweet mercy, of a spirit of prayer and the grace of supplication. Hart says to the Lord's people "The remedy's before thee, pray." Pray; poor sinner, God has blessing to impart. Christ has mercies to give sweet mercies, everlasting mercies, temporal mercies. Take your child wayward or afflicted your husband troubled, your wife afflicted in some way for business that seems to have a consumption decreed upon it: Take these things. A church in her trouble; the ministry in its emptiness: take these things to the throne of God's heavenly grace; and as you are enabled to do it, sweet and wonderful and comforting and enlarging and establishing returns to prayer you will find in your hearts experience. It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God that I may declare all His works.

Amen.