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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 1 April 1923

PSALM 85 v 6

"Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy
people may rejoice in Thee?"

Some think that this Psalm was written after the captivity, the 70 years captivity, and certainly some parts of it seem to agree with that, as we find in the beginning - "LORD, Thou hast been favourable unto Thy land: Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin. Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath: Thou hast turned Thyself from the fierceness of Thine anger. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger toward us to cease. Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations? Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" The anger which had taken them away, ceased, and mercy, and faithfulness had brought them back, but there were signs that the Lord had not fully restored them. There were evidences that, in some particulars, God had still a controversy with them. Does not this show a child of God may be delivered from some gross backsliding, from some general course of declension, and be made very solemnly sensible of his grievous departures from God, and come back in some ways to himself, and to his former ways, and yet not have all the breaches made up; not be fully restored. This appears to be what is set before us, that God had taken away all His anger, had covered all their sin by which they were, and for which they were, taken into captivity, but still they said - "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger toward us to cease. Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever?" Does this fit in with the experience of any of you? Do you feel that, though brought from a course of general indifference or backsliding, and God has, in mercy, convinced you of the causes of your captivity, there still remains some matter of controversy, and there is still some sense that He is not wholly at peace with you. It may be a close exercise, and it will be, wherever it is, a very solemn exercise. Here I am; I am not indifferent as I was some time ago, I am not careless of my

state, as I had become; I am not indifferent to the favour of God, as I seemed to be for a time, but I do not get near to Him. I have not His smile on me. He does not communicate with me as formerly. I want Him to do it, so I pray - Turn away the fierceness of Thine anger. It is very solemn to have any evidence in your conscience that God has a controversy with you. Very solemn to find that, though you are allowed to pray up to a certain point - if I may use that word "allowed to pray" - not forbidden, not hindered, not repelled, and yet there lacks in your heart that solid, sweet, blessed peace of His which passeth all understanding that is sure to come when the fierceness of His anger is turned away from you. And the prayer of the text is a very great one, a very serious one, a very solemn one, a very hopeful one. They were revived. Ezra said to the Lord, in the midst of his confession - Thou hast given us a little reviving in our bondage". You feel that perhaps. Some days, O the energy that you feel in your hearts, the desire, burning it may be, that God would come. That He would make up matters, that He would do away with every subject of controversy, that He would graciously be at peace with you, and establish you in the Covenant of Peace, but you feel it is not quite done; partly, but not fully, and this prayer, therefore, suits - "Wilt Thou not revive us again?" Lord, we are brought away from what we were, and where we were, but do complete the business, do make matters quite straight. Let there be nothing between Thy gracious Majesty and us. Intimate dealings with God are a great mercy. Intimacy with God is an unspeakable blessing. He is familiar with some people. He has been familiar with some of us, has He not? Cannot you say in your very consciences, He has been familiar with you? Has not allowed any distance, painful distance of sin, and guilt, to intervene, but has just embraced you and made you embrace Him. O, the love that has been between some of us and God. O, the love that He has showed to us; the love that His love has evoked in our hearts, and we have wickedly gone astray, but He has brought us back, brought us to a point. The altar has been set up - as we were speaking the other evening - the altar has been set up on its bases, there have been burnt offerings, namely the blessed sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. This has been mentioned in faith; we have drawn near to Him and He has not forbidden this. But still we must, some of us, say, there remains something. "Wilt Thou not revive us again?"

I would like, if enabled, to mention a few particulars in which we may feel our need of divine revival, and the first particular I will name is knowledge. "Wilt Thou not revive us again" in knowledge? Now you may say, this seems as if it is out of place. There ought to be several things named before knowledge, but I am disposed to try to maintain this position before you this morning. Now we do know that we hold the form of sound words. I know I do, and I would be thankful that I do, and you. We, as a people, do hold the form of sound words. I do not mean that; I mean this; there was a time - it may have been just recently, but we may have to go back far for it - but there was a time when we so knew the Lord as that we found an effectual operation on our hearts of that knowledge; when it was so operative, so effectual, as that it left no room for our gadding. It left no room, for the time, for the motions, and operations, and effectual working of the old man. It was a sanctifying, a powerful, a gracious knowledge that we had, and O, what a blessing. Now that is what is wanted, that whatever we know, whatever we profess to know, of God should be effectual in us. If you were to ask me for a key to one thing that troubles you, namely the readiness with which you turn aside from God, the readiness with which you allow the flesh to have its own way, I believe I could give it to you. I believe it is this, the little effectual knowledge that there is in your hearts of the living God in Christ. Do you follow that? Whenever, even for five minutes, there is any effectual knowledge of Christ in your heart, do you then gad about? No. "I will give them a heart to know Me, and they shall not depart from Me." That is the effect of knowledge. When knowledge is operative, when it is powerful, when it is brought to us by the Holy Spirit, then we find what Solomon says to be true - "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun". When we behold the sun, we do not turn to a candle. When we behold the sun, we do not switch on an electric light; we have the sun, the beautiful sun. And when Christ shines into our hearts, we do not turn to the world, and the things of the world. Carnality for the moment is subdued. Worship for the moment is lively, and spiritual, and pure. Then we answer to Christ's word - "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" Now perhaps some of you may think that I have really made my position good. I say again that we do need to be revived in knowledge; not of the letter - though of that we may not have very much - not of the form of sound

words - which we are not ready to give up - but that knowledge of Christ that is effectual. When you see His cross, when you get to that, you are willing to die there that He may live in you. When you taste He is gracious, the old wine is so sweet, so acceptable, goes down so sweetly, as that you do not want the new wine of this life, but you say, the old wine of eternal mercy is better. When you walk in the light of God, when in the light of His reconciling mercy, and love; when you receive reconciliation, then matters are so well with you that you will walk with God in peace. If this be so, is it in your heart, O child of God, to say with the Psalmist - "Wilt Thou not revive me again?" Once I knew Thee; once the knowledge of Thyself was effectual in me; once it weaned me from the world; once I found so much power in it, that the whole world was crucified to me, and I to the world. I lost all that through sin; Lord, return and give me again that knowledge that will sanctify my soul, that will purify my affections, that will make my thoughts so humble, so loyal, so affectionate, as that I shall say

Hold me fast, and keep me near Thee,
For Thou know'st I'm but a worm;
What concerns me,
By Thy power and love perform. (769)

"That the soul be without knowledge is not good", Solomon says, and I know it is not good. You think I should go after some silly, vain thing, if God were with me? Would you do so? No. There is no remedy for our wanderings but God coming to us. There is no making up of breaches, but God coming to us. There is no sacred reviving so as to bring us into fellowship with God, but God coming to us. How many of us then can pray this prayer? But one may say, why hang about knowledge? Why not go into other things? I will show you, if the Lord will help me, that the knowledge I am speaking of, the knowledge of God as He is in Christ, as He is on the cross, will effectually work in other directions, as first of all this; you will pray, not formally, but truly. O, heart worship, heart worship what a blessing that is; when, no matter how busily you may be engaged in the things which your duty takes you into, your heart is engaged, and the soul's thought, the soul's eye, the soul's desire, the soul's longing cannot be kept out of heaven; when the Lord is near you; when you have

knowledge of how good He is, how merciful, how gracious, how tender, how loving. Prayer, 'tis a great thing, and this is revived when the Lord gives you knowledge. You see this in the matter, that a mere coming back from gross things, or from a general course of coldness, and deadness, is not enough to fully reconcile you. When Israel came back, see how the princes and Levites behaved; the very thing that God forbade Israel, these returned captives fell into doing. They took the daughters of the land for their sons, and gave their daughters to the sons of the land, and the Levites and princes were chief in the offence. They knew better, but knowledge was not effectual in them. And so you may know better than to do some things, but your knowledge is not effectual. But when God comes, then the knowledge is effectual. What, shall I nurse that that is an enemy to Christ? Shall I indulge that that crucified Christ? Shall I walk in that that made Him sweat blood? that brought Him to the cross? And you pray - Ezra prayed, Nehemiah prayed, Daniel prayed. O, when the Lord draws near to people, and they know Him, they pray.

And another effect is this, the will is engaged. That word becomes effectual - "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power". Ah, you may have a lazy desire, and yet you wont have sufficient energy to put your hand to your mouth, but will be saying lazily - A little more slumber, a little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands to sleep - and you do not think that your poverty is coming as one that travelleth, and your want as an armed man. (Proverbs 24 v 33/34). O, but when that word becomes effectual - "I will give them a heart to know Me; when they do that - "Then shall they seek for Me and find Me, when they search for Me with all their heart"; the will is in the matter. You say, I do not want now to make a trade of sinning. The whole soul goes out in a gracious act of the will which is faith moving. The moving of faith is a great thing, and when God revives people, He revives their willingness. It is thus written - "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure". The form of sound words does not accomplish this, but the motion of the Spirit does. He does revive us. "Wilt Thou not revive us again?" How about your will? Does the will come into the matter of our being here this morning, or is it wholly of custom? Is there a will in the matter, I say, of our coming? When we kneel before God in private prayer, is it habit wholly, or is the will moving?

"Thy people shall be willing". Their whole will shall be in the matter. The old will is, for the time, mortified through the Spirit. "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Do not some of you know for the flesh to be willing at times? You will to do this, and that is to go against God. You will that, that is to indulge yourself in some carnal thing. Now when the Lord works it is just the other way. There is a will to go to Him, a will to wait on Him, a will to ask His blessing. You will be willing to die at the cross, that you may live in Christ, live by Him. That is a gracious revival. May we experience it often.

"Wilt Thou not revive us again" in our affections?

God requires, pure desires,
All the heart, or nothing

"I will give them a heart to know Me". "They shall seek for Me and find Me, when they shall search for Me with all their heart". That is a great point in vital religion, the heart engaged. O, blessed sinner, who can say, "Christ only I seek". Lord, let me go and bury my father. Lord, let me do this, and I will follow Thee. Let me have that, then I will follow Thee. Let me be there, then I will follow Thee. Many, many things there are that our old nature wants. Lot saw Zoar. Yes, you will see a Zoar; but let me get into it. But when you are revived it is otherwise. A naked soul, and a mighty Saviour. A poor conscience needing the blood of Christ, and fervent petitions for the application of that blood. Blessed soul that is thus directed, thus revived, thus held up. This man has his face God-ward. O, he may say, I wish I were right. When a man's face is God-ward he is not far from being right. He may be feeling very wrong. O, where is your face? What direction? What is the orientation of your spirit? Is it set God-ward? There is a revival in this. The affections will manifest a man. What you are, your affections will declare.

Men's actions with their minds will suit;
By them the heart is viewed; (851)

and what your heart is will come out sooner or later. Ask what a man is, ask what company he keeps, ask what books he reads; so you may

say, what is a child of God known by? By the motion of his heart. What is the motion of his heart under the working of the Divine Spirit? Why, it is God-ward. Yes, it is God-ward. Each child of God follows His Redeemer in one thing, among others. You find the Redeemer saying in the Psalms - "I have set the Lord always before me", (Psalm 16 v 8) and that is what you will do. If the Holy Ghost is in you working, that is what you will do. "I have set the Lord always before me". Then there will be times when Christ's confidence will become yours in measure - "Because He is at My right-hand I shall not be moved". O, blessed man whose affections are set on Christ. "O God", said the Psalmist - "My heart is fixed; my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise." Ask yourselves this question - Where are our hearts? If they are properly set, they are set by God. If they are properly set, they are Christ-ward.

"Wilt Thou not revive us again" with respect to our hope? Hope is a grace that is wrought by the gospel; a grace that has in it expectation; it is indeed an expectation. It has not to do with present things. What you have got, you cannot hope to get. What you wish, what you seek, as the Spirit is with you, for that you will hope. Poor David said that his soul was cast down. There was a cloud on his face; his countenance was sad; as it were, he was unable to smile. But a gracious power came upon him from heaven, and turned him from his sad self, and his sad cogitations, to God, and he said - "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God". What was it he hoped for? The health of his countenance, that shining of God that could make his face shine. That is what he hoped for. He hoped for all that heaven has good. Sometimes you will find your soul led out, by the reviving breathing of the Holy Spirit, to God in His promises, in His Covenant, in His mercy in Christ crucified. And then you will say to your soul, O what a heaven of saving grace I perceive to be in God. O, what glory I see in the love of God in Christ. Then your hope will begin to move. It will be in you just what now the sun is to the trees, and to vegetation. Is it not a beautiful sight that meets us at every turn now when we see the trees bursting into bud? O, it is a beautiful thing, when, here and there, the grace of the Spirit working mightily, we find our souls breaking out into the bud of hope; hope for better things; hope for power hope for grace, hope for the love

of God, hope that He will be with us and keep us to the end, and hope that He will make up every breach by the blood of Jesus Christ, and leave nothing undone. These things are the proper objects of a living hope, a good hope through grace. Divine revival is a great thing with respect to hope.

And in the next place, and lastly on this point - "Wilt Thou not revive us again" so as that we may be divorced from every sin? There is a prayer in the hymn-book which sometimes you sing, which some of you may have found great difficulty in singing. It is this

Is there a thing beneath the sun,
That strives with Thee my heart to share?
Ah! tear it thence, and reign alone,
And govern every motion there. (1075)

How often have you prayed that with your will, with your understanding, with all your heart? Look inside, look at your family, look at your business, look at your wife, look at this, and look at that. You can hardly then ask

Is there a thing beneath the sun,
That strives with Thee my heart to share?

You say to yourself, O there are quantities of things that strive to share the throne with God, quantities of things. But when the revival comes, that is, when the Holy Ghost is at work, then you can say honestly, Lord, take this heart, and make it Thy throne. It is not worthy, I am not worthy of Thy look, not worthy of Thy presence, but do condescend to take it. You say, perhaps, I know some sins do damage to my conscience, and my spirit; I know certain things are wrong; but that knowledge does not separate me from them; O, it is a naked knowledge. But when the Lord comes, it is otherwise. He lays His hand to the work, and then effectual, cleansing work is there; it is done. Religion, real religion, stands in the power of God. It has its foundation in the new birth, and all the subsequent operations of the Eternal Spirit are the gracious up-building, on that foundation, of God's blessed salvation in experience. The revival we want - God only knows; in what particulars anyone here may be needing it. He

knows in what particulars we are entangled. Our affections, our understandings, our wills, our all so to speak; in what particulars we need that He, the God of all mercy, should answer this prayer - "Wilt Thou not revive us again?"

The prayer seems to be an appeal to the Lord's mercy. Lord, Thou hast done something; wilt Thou not complete it? We are brought back, we are not where we were some little time ago. Wilt Thou carry on this beneficent work, this gracious work, and bring us close to Thyself? Does Hart express the wish of our spirits? He says

Lord, make our union closer yet,
And let the marriage be complete (234)

One says, are we in danger of losing that? With respect to God's decree, no. With respect to your experience, yes. With respect to your experience, let me quote what Paul says to the Corinthians - I am jealous of you lest Satan should beguile you as he beguiled Eve. I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to one husband. (2 Corinthians, 11) How could he be jealous? Could anything separate? Except with regard to experience, and many things do separate as some of us painfully know. So we need the Lord to give us this prayer, and then mercifully to answer it. And is it not gracious in Him even to allow us to pray this prayer? to teach us to pray it? Is it not wonderful that He should cause a man to pray like this? Lord, do complete in me that which I so much need. It is a great thing, and may the Lord give us to realise it.

"That Thy people may rejoice in Thee". Does not this prayer account for our lack of joy? How if you feel far off, if you feel there are some matters unfinished, incomplete? If you feel that though God has begun some things, He has not yet completed them? Can you, with respect to those things, rejoice in Him? No, there must be some completion before there is rejoicing. There must be a gracious, fresh, sweet, powerful revelation of God in us, and to us, before there can be this blessed rejoicing. We may be very thankful to be where we are, on praying ground; very thankful that God's ear is open to us; thankful that He does not repel us when we come with chains, and rags, and confessions, and bones which were not seen formerly now

stick out. We may be very thankful for that. O, I would be thankful that I can pray; that sometimes no clouds, no guilt, no fears, no sins, no devil, can keep prayer back or repress it. Thankful that a throne of grace is open, and that a good God says, by His Spirit, come to this throne. Come away, poor sinner, from yourself. Come away from these things which have thus far hindered, and hurt, and wounded, and weakened you. Come to My throne. Bring this petition, urge it, press it, bring this prayer - Revive me, O Lord. Do be thankful, you who can pray, that there is a good God, both dictating prayer, and listening to it. O do be thankful. Look at Ezra, at Nehemiah, at Daniel, at Ezekiel, and others who laboured before the Lord. It was not that they were clear - No, they felt sin, they went with sin, they went about sin, they went confessing, confessing, and confessing - it seemed at times all confession - and yet God brought them close to Himself. Therefore may we be encouraged by this to press on, and the day will come when the second part of this, my text, will be answered - "That Thy people may rejoice in Thee".

Now I will just name one or two things in which we shall rejoice, and the first will be a sense of pardon. When God says, now no more controversy, I have finished it. Ah, my brethren, if any of you feel that God, in some particulars, has a controversy with you, when He opens any of those particulars, or all of them, I know you will begin to confess them, and I know you will accept the punishment of them in the chastening of the Almighty, and the next thing will be, He will put it all away, end it, drown it, wash it away in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Ah, then you will shed tears of joy and shame. Then you will mourn that ever you broke the heart of Christ. Then you will be grieved that ever He was grieved. Then you will be ashamed that you put Him to shame. Nothing like forgiveness to finish controversy. Nothing like forgiveness to break a man's heart all to pieces, and fill him with an intense hatred to sin as sin, without respect at all to punishment. O, the joy of forgiveness. O, the glory of being a pardoned sinner, a justified person. O, the sweetness of God's forgiveness, when one brought from captivity and delivered from all evil, rejoices in being accepted in the burnt offering, the one offering of Jesus Christ.

And the next thing you will rejoice in will be the free, the

great, the wonderful love of God

On such love my soul still ponder

And the next will be in the blessed prospect that is set before you, specially if you have grey hairs upon you. O, the prospect. Why, you will say, I am going to heaven, one day I shall be there; perhaps it wont be long before I get there; I am going to heaven without sin. Now I shall be clear for ever and ever. Here burdened with a body of sin and death; there no sin. Here a candle is sometimes welcome; there no created sun is needed. Here a place to worship in, is good; there the Lord God and the Lamb are the light of the place, and the temple in it. So there is a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God".

I hope the Lord wont leave us as a cause to backslide, or leave us in backsliding. I hope He wont leave us to any gross things, any gross practices, any gross errors, and things of that sort, but that He will make us, and keep us well exercised, and make us pray that prayer, against which nature rebels

Make us well our vileness know

Keep us very, very low

That is the first step to joy, that is the beginning of heaven. Poverty will set you at large. Weakness will be your strength; that is so you will rejoice in the strength of Christ as it is revealed, and made known in your weakness. Let us then, as many of us as have it in our hearts to do it, pray this prayer, that God in His goodness, free love, and Covenant mercy, may revive us, and establish His Covenant of Peace with us. Do not object your dryness, do not object your scattered condition. Remember the dry bones, and remember who brought them together, and who covered them with sinews, and flesh, and skin, and who then breathed the breath of life into them, and made them stand up, a living people, before Himself. And may the recollection of this be a spirit in us of unction, and lead us to believe that nothing in us shall be a hindrance to this great work of Divine revival.