

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel,
Brighton on Sunday morning 17 September 1933,

PSALM 86 verse 5.

"For Thou Lord art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee",

You cannot say this for yourselves without some experience. Mere theory of things is of no real value. A theory about God does no good. It does not subdue sin, it does not lead the soul to God. There must be some experience before you can say this, as from your hearts. "Thou Lord art good". This exceedingly beautiful Psalm has ascriptions of praise and glory to the Almighty. He is first in Himself, and will be first in His people, and all of them, through the humbling teaching and unction of the Spirit, through trial and tribulation, difficulties and temptations come to know this. "Thou Lord art good".

But I would just make a few observations upon this goodness of God in a general way, because it is eternal truth, it is the divine perfection. Just an absolute truth, that the Lord Jehovah is good. His nature is that, and it embraces every perfection that the scripture speaks of respecting Him. His love, wisdom, grace, prudence, power, providence. The whole of creation will declare this - the Lord is good alone. When one, as it is related in the gospel, went to Christ and called Him good master, Christ said to him, "Why callest thou Me good, there is none good but God!" as if He should say if I am not God you ought not to call Me good. If I am God, then I am good. I am that I am. May we not forget the perfection of Jehovah in our profession of religion. Too little is thought of Him by all men. Nay, He is not in the thoughts of most men, but He should be in the hearts of His people. All the goodness that is in the world is derived. ^{from Him} There is no independent goodness in the world, never will be. Goodness in creation is derived. ^{from Him} God saw His works, the six days in which He wrought, and the account is very beautiful in the gradations of it. Working five days, until came the sixth day, when, having prepared the world for men, all necessary good, all sustenance, and all authority, then came His crowning work, ^{from Him} and the goodness of creation is derived. So the goodness of providence just the same. Whatever morality, whatever kindness, whatever charity, there may be in the world, God is the author of it. It is not

independent. It is just derived kindness. Now some of you may be more or less reflective, and often may reflect on creation, its beauties, and the beneficence of God therein, and perhaps, being religiously inclined, your minds tend to a kind of worship of God. So far, so good. Natural religion is beautiful when it is reverent, when no evolutionism, no modernism, shall be connected with it, but it shall be derived from viewing believingly, with a natural faith, the works of God, the kindness and wisdom of God in the whole creation and providence. You may admire Him. May the Lord grant you may not stop there. Do not think that is sufficient. It is what is called natural religion. The things that may be known of God you know in creation, as Paul speaks in the Romans. That which may be known of God men know; even His eternal power, and Godhead are declared by His works of creation, and I wish everyone here, had more reflection, more disposition to regard God in His works of creation and providence, but would to God that no man, no woman here may stop at this. It is natural.

God has no comparison possible. There is a comparative goodness among men and in men, but there is a goodness beyond this. This is beautiful as far as it extends, but there is a goodness beyond it. That goodness is declared, was declared by the angel that came and announced the birth of Emmanuel, to declare good tidings of great joy unto all men. Yes, this is goodness infinitely above creation, above creation goodness, and in a very beautiful sense it is not derived. It is natural, it is eternal, because He whose birth was thus announced, was God, is God. Yes, God in human nature. Emmanuel, God with us. This is goodness. In respect of the divine Person of the Son of God, it was underived, His own eternally, as one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Cleave to the Lord Jesus, cleave to His divine Person veiled in our nature, united to our nature, indissoluble. In this goodness is everything that the poor and needy can seek, can desire, can have. In a word, it means salvation. I have given Thee, said the Father, to His incarnate Son, for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles. Thou art My salvation to the ends of the earth. Ascribe, brethren in Christ, ascribe to God, all praise and glory of the incarnation of the Son of God. You say I want good feelings. If you ever get right feelings, that is good feelings, you will receive them from this man, Jesus Christ. If ever you have a real experience worth having, that will bring you to God and heaven, you will derive the same from Him in whom all the fulness of the

Godhead dwells bodily and in whom also the Father's pleasure dwells. "Thou Lord art good" in this. Good in His Person, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and now made higher than the heavens. Ah, the day is coming when the passing glimpses of Jesus which are given, shall no more be, but one ceaseless, uninterrupted view of the King in His beauty. This is the prospect set before the church. "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty and the land which is very far off". Blessed are the eyes that see Him here, blest the ears that hear Him here. Seeing Him here, hearing Him here, is but the blessed prelude of what is to come. The best that the saints have is in reserve. They get a little here out of their endless, their rich, wonderful inheritance. They get a little, as some have said, a little pocket money, but the inheritance is reserved in heaven for them. They are reserved in heaven for it. Good in His work. The works of the Lord are perfect, just and right is He in them, without iniquity. Oh what goodness Jesus Christ manifested when He was obedient. It became Him to obey. Behold My servant. It becomes a servant to obey, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, though the very, the only begotten Son of God, was in the covenant of grace, His Father's servant. And the perfection of His service is intimated in that word which He uttered to His Father, "I do always the things that please Thee". God is pleased with nothing but perfection, and as His Son did always the things that pleased His Father, these things were perfect. Good in His death. His death had two necessary qualities in order for that death being efficacious. Namely, a voluntary death, a vicarious death. I like that word vicarious. I have said so before to you. Look at these two qualities. The voluntary nature of the death of Christ. If it had lacked that there could have been no good to others in it. Vicarious? It was in the place of others. A vicar, in the place of the Rector, in the place of others, was Jesus. Therefore there is this glory in the goodness of the Lord. Thou Lord art good. Good in that wonderful death in which He swallowed death, in which He made an end of sin and brought in an everlasting righteousness. Hold this fast O tried, trembling, believer. Bind this sacrifice with cords of faith to the horns of the altar, for there is no hope for a sinner but in this death.

Good in His burial. If the scripture had not attributed so much as this to His burial, it would not be worth speaking about, but by inspiration the Apostle Paul said that Christ died for our sins,

according to the scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again, the third day, according to the scriptures. What scripture speaks about never treat lightly. Treat the burial of Jesus as an important truth. If it had not been, the Holy Ghost would not have given it a place, such a place as He has in the scripture. Why good in this? Because He would destroy the terror of the grave, and as Watts finely says - He left there a long perfume. Buried saints are embalmed in the merits of Jesus Christ and the grave is a beautiful resting place for them spiritually regarded. Naturally abhorrent, horrible to think about, spiritually beautiful. Good in His resurrection. Think of His resurrection, not simply as the resurrection of a person, but the resurrection of the Head. The resurrection of Him who died for His people, and who, for them, is the first fruits. My brethren, you who know the Lord, or rather are known of Him, you have One before you sometimes who was laid in that dark abode, and, lying there in, He robbed it for His people of all its terror. He plagued it. ^(HOSEEA) _(13:14) Good in His ascension. Oh yes, why did He ascend? Because He went home? Not that only. The Son of Man, which was in heaven, went back to heaven, though He first came down from heaven. "Now that He ascended what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth". What did He go for? For the interests of His people. To take possession of their home, to prepare their mansions, to make intercession for them, to stand before God for them, to present the infinite merit of His Person, obedience, death, burial and resurrection. He ever lives to make intercession for all who come unto God by Him. Now my friends, to come with an experience of this, you must be poor and needy. You will take, by the operations of the Holy Spirit, the lowest room. You will say I am not worthy of God's notice. I am not worthy to have one thought of Him in my heart. I am so vile, depraved, wicked and lost. You will take the lowest room under the dispensation of the Spirit, sanctifying trouble to you. You will say of trouble, why is this? Then faith will answer, your sins have brought this. And that will bring you down into the dust. The dust is not the worst place for a sinner. Very mortifying to his pride, very humbling to him, but it is not the worst place for him. No, no, God comes to him, the Spirit intimates mercy to him, speaks of Christ to him, glorifies Christ in him. Therefore do not despise the dust. Self-abasement, denial of self, a great thing this. "Thou Lord art good" Good to humble us, good to whisper mercy in our hearts, good to raise the eye to the Lord Jesus, to give prayer to the Lord saying "Bow down

X? Thy ear O Lord hear me, for I am poor and needy". They never think they're laid too low who have this prayer, if Jesus on them pity show, and He does show pity on them. They come to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. Human nature needs a great deal of humbling, beating down; and the weapons whereby God does this work are not carnal. Not carnal arguments, not Calvinistic theories. No, mighty in the conscience, through God bringing down high looks, and imaginations, and every thought that exalteth itself against Christ, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And when God takes pains to do this, He does a great work. Heaven awaits the man who fears God, and cries "I am poor and needy".

Next, "and ready to forgive." Some may be almost ready to contradict the Psalmist, and say I have been ready to be forgiven for many years, and I am not forgiven. You make a mistake. Dr Goodwin, speaking about waiting for God said, "He waited from eternity for you, is it much you should wait a few years for Him?" What is this readiness? When the King made a great supper, and sent His servants to tell the bidden ones to come, for all things were ready, it meant that the whole of the supper was prepared, and the table laid, and the guests were to come. They did not want to come. That respects the rejection of Christ by the nation to which He came. Then said the King to His servants, go into the byeways and hedges and bring in the poor, the needy, the maimed, wanting a limb, the lame and the halt and the blind. Compel them to come in. This compelling means that a minister or ministers of Christ are not to allow the objections of those people. They may listen to them. What minister would not gladly listen any day, to the complaints of a poor child of God. But they are not to be allowed. That is to say, it is not a valid reason that you give when you say, I am too ragged to go to that great house. When you say, I am blind, and do not know the way to it. When you say I am maimed, I have lost a limb, and am not fit to appear there. When you say I am lame and cannot walk. None of these objections are to be allowed. They are not contradicted. No minister will say to a poor child of God, you are not as bad as you think you are. You are not blind, you are not maimed, you are not lame. He wont contradict them. I am never troubled when a person is very bad and very troubled about sin and God. One hymn writer says "You can't come too filthy, come just as you are". Proud nature says I cannot come like this. You will have to be worse yet, and if one instruction in your heart, is not enough to humble you, then God will give another. If one sentence of the law is not to do the work, then another

sentence will come. If one stroke in providence does not accomplish the business then another will come. You will come to the ground, you will come to the bottom. What has that to do with this readiness? "I will wait to be gracious", The Lord waiteth to be gracious. Look at the readiness it implies; the provision is made. Who made the provision? Who provided salvation? God. Jehovah. Father, Son and Holy Ghost. What is the provision "I am the bread of life"? This is the bread that came down from heaven, which if a man eat he shall live for ever; Never see death. This is the provision, which means this is the gospel. The precious gospel, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Readiness means, that now God having provided this, nothing is to be added to it. All things, that is all the supper, all the necessary things, all things are now ready. Ah, says a poor creature, 'I am more ready.' No you are not. You are not more ready than God is. Hezekiah found this "The Lord was ready to save me". Perhaps you are not half humbled enough. One of the old deacons, godly old deacons at Gower Street told me between 30 and 40 years preaching there, that he heard William Gadsby preach. William Gadsby died in 1844. He heard him preach, and heard him say this - We are not half enough lost. Oh thought this good man if I am only half lost what will become of me if I have to be more lost than I am. It may be true of some here. The Son of Man came to save that which was lost. Do not try to add anything to this readiness. It is God's provision, the rich store of love, of grace, of wisdom, of prudence, of goodness, of the divine purpose of God. God worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Ready? The loving heart of God is here. Ready? Christ is here. Ready? The Holy Ghost is here. The Trinity, ready to save poor sinners. Lost souls to forgive. Thou art ready to forgive. O grand thing in experience is forgiveness. Christ had power on earth to forgive sins. He has power in heaven to do it. Forgiveness on God's part is the removal of sin from the heart; the purging of guilt from the conscience; the removal of all frowns that were apprehended to be on the face of God in Christ; and the removal of every bar that was apprehended to be between God and the soul. Think of it. These things are included in forgiveness. A friend displeases you, and comes and makes an acknowledgement and you say I forgive you, but I do not want to have anything more to do with you. I have lost all confidence in you. Well, of course, that is not forgiveness. When God forgives, He leaves no bar between His divine majesty and the forgiven sinner. I know that. I experienced that many, many, many years ago,

considerably 60 years ago. No bar, nothing between God and the soul. The sinner can say now it would be as easy for me to die, as it is to lay my head on this pillow. O happy man who is forgiven. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Do you lack this? Yes, some say, we do. What do you want to put to it, good frames, good feelings? God wont have them. He forgives sinners, not good people. He forgives sinners. You may find this, that when you are at the worst, when your cries are strong cries, when your eyes are wet with tears of penitence, and your heart is broken with grief, and you are lying flat before God, at His mercy, He may say "Arise, take up thy bed and walk". "Thy sins are forgiven Thee".

And plenteous in mercy. Peter has a word quite equivalent to this. He says "according to His abundant mercy" And the word abundant there, is the same. Here it is plenteous, just the same. Plenteous? Yes. Can you measure it? No. The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. The Psalmist brings the goodness of God in, in one place - "How say ye", looking at his persecutors, "how say ye to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain". The goodness of the Lord endureth continually. There are lapses as to its communications, there are interruptions in God's communications to His people, but there is no end to the mercy. No end to the goodness. Plenteous. Plenteous forgiveness, plenteous love. O dear friends, our horizon is very near to us and sometimes we cannot see an inch beyond it, but there is an eternity of mercy, of goodness, of wisdom, of love, and of grace in Him, for His people, Do you want this mercy? Every man who seeks it gets it. All cries of the soul moved and lifted up, by the power of the Spirit, are attended to. All tears shed by grace divine are put into God's bottle, and the day comes when He says - "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt"; O think of it. What? God, condescend to say, "you shall have just what you will have." "Let him take of the water of life freely"; No price, no toll, no tax, without money and without price. A great offence to a proud heart, but a wonderful attraction to one who is humbled in the dust.

"Unto all that call upon Thee". Now my friends, if I were to set up ever so many signs and evidences, and say if you do not come up to these, you would be lost, then I might strike some poor crying sinner dead, but God says - "That call upon the name of the Lord". What says the Holy Ghost by Paul, in the Romans "Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved". Whosoever, is a particular person. It is not universal. Whosoever, means some particular person, some troubled man, some afflicted woman on whom the hand of God is, in affliction, in

correction, in teaching, in humbling, and then under these and with this, the Spirit of God comes as the Spirit of grace and of supplications and the sinner says 'Lord, I cry unto Thee.' I cry unto God. O what a mercy, there is a God to pray to. a God who understands a sigh divine, a God-Man, who on earth prayed. "Cold nights and the midnight air, witnessed the fervour of His prayer," and He listens to His poor people when they call upon Him, and the answers come in God's own time. They are sure to come. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. Mercy in your soul, mercy in your circumstances, mercy for your family, every sort of mercy, God has plenty of, for all that call upon Him. What a mercy it is to be praying people. You who have prayer wrought in you, do not know yet the fulness of the answers that are awaiting you.