

1354's
Lap 812
50
127

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 30 July 1930

PSALM 89 v 15, 16 and 17

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful
sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light
of Thy countenance. In Thy Name shall they rejoice
all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they
be exalted. For Thou art the glory of their
strength: and in Thy favour our horn shall be exalted"

If we look to the earth we see nothing but dimness, and darkness of anguish. If we look at present happenings in the world, the judgements of God, the permission of evil, the rise and progress in some important particulars, of Popery, the rapid spread of modernism, and the increase of profanity, flourishing under the name of pleasure, and if we are taught to believe, and feel, the dreadful depravity of our own nature, and feel the workings of sin in our members, the thriving of many evils in us, and if we perceive, in the light of God's teaching, our negligence, our slothfulness, idleness of hands, unbelief, carnality, prayerlessness in the midst, and beneath the cloak, of our profession, what can we say, but that there is unspeakable reason for being depressed, dejected. Surely the people of God today have abundant reason to read, and believe, and take to themselves, the confessions of Daniel, of Ezra, of Nehemiah, and O, it would be a favour to get a sight of God that would produce in us the experience of Ezekiel, and of Daniel, and of John; all natural comeliness turning into corruption within us. If we, for a moment, contemplate the signs of the times with respect to the future of the church, of the nations of the earth, surely we must feel an added depression, and dejection. If these things were the only things to look at, if these things were the only things to feel, what could we say? We should sink to rise no more. When you think, if you do think, of the hour that is coming, the hour of temptation that is coming upon all the world to try them that dwell in the earth, and that the people, to whom the promise of being kept in that hour are

the people who keep the words of Christ's patience, and then contrast your own unfaithfulness, unbelief, hardness of heart. One might go on for some time in this line - nor perhaps would it be altogether unprofitable; sores are not the better for being forgotten or neglected - but I would, as enabled, out of that that I trust is in my own heart in some little degree, draw your attention to another, and more wonderful matter, a light above the darkness, and shining in the darkness; a voice above the floods, above the waves of the sea, and all the roaring things ; a hand, better and stronger than all the power of the enemy; a controlling power to control the waves of the sea. If we, by grace, have given to us a sight of this, all this, and see that all of it belongs to God, comes from God, that all of it is for sinners, mourning sinners, confessing sinners, weak sinners, repenting sinners, sinners ashamed of themselves, so ashamed sometimes that they hardly can lift up their faces to God, and scarcely have power to offer up a prayer; such a wonder we have, I judge, in the text. This wonderful Psalm is a Psalm of Covenant, Covenant with Christ, God's only begotten Son incarnate. It is with Him in the first instance that the faithfulness of God is, and is to remain. It is with Him. The hand of God is to be against His enemies. God will lift up Himself, His enemies shall be stricken down; they shall not exact upon Him. This is the key to this Psalm, a Covenant Psalm, a Covenant made with Christ. A Covenant that cannot be broken. In that there is a rod for the fool's back. In that there are stocks for the wandering feet of the people of God. In that Covenant there is a chastening, and there is a restoration. O, that we might get such a sight of it, and such a sense of it, this evening, as to say:

This God is the God we adore;
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as large as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end (220)

Faithless sinner, mourning sinner whose face sometimes is foul with weeping tears of a God-given repentance, look, as you can, to this God, to this Covenant God. He has a strong hand, and high is that hand of His. He is faithful. The character that God gives of Himself by the pen, the inspired pen of the Apostle Paul is this - "God that cannot lie". That has been an anchor to me at times; that has set

forth God in all the illustrious glory of His nature - "God that cannot lie". And when that God enters into a Covenant with a sinner through, and in, the Lord Jesus, then there is, in the face of all discouragements, dejection, depression, affliction, oppression, and trouble, ground for confidence, reason for comfort.

There is a people here spoken of as being blessed. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound". They are distinguished in the Scripture. The Scripture gives the character of these people. They are people to whom has been given a new heart, and a right spirit. They are called - "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling". They are called the children of God with whose spirit the Spirit of God witnesseth that they are the children of God. They are called saints. They are said to be near unto God. They are said to be reconciled unto God in the body of the flesh of Jesus through death. They are said to be bone of Christ's bone, flesh of His flesh, and members of His body in particular. They are called saints because they are made holy, because they are separated from the world. They are called a flock, and a beautiful flock because they are gathered out of all the herds and wild beasts of this world, and they are fenced; they are in a divinely given fold. Many sweet descriptions are given of this people, a believing people. Faith is given to them, faith in the bleeding Lamb. By faith they enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way. They are people with love; they love the Lord. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha". This people love Him. It is a great thing to belong to the Lord's people, the nobility of heaven. They are before holy angels; they sing a song the angels cannot sing - Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His Own blood; unto Him that redeemed us unto God out of every nation, and tongue, and people; unto Him be glory. Now this people, God visits; He visits sinners still. If we never get a visit from Him it is a proof that we do not belong to Him. And not only does He visit them, but He calls them His rest. "This is My rest for ever". "Heaven is My throne, the earth is My footstool". What more the n can He need? Why move, and not be content with that throne, that footstool? O, but He is good, and He is gracious, and He says - "To that man" - leaves heaven, leaves His footstool, and says - "To that man will I look, and with him will I dwell, that is of a contrite and humble spirit and

that trembleth at My word". Now the Lord, in that kind way, lays hold of His people, catches them, as it were, when they are ready to condemn themselves, looking with mournful eyes at their sinfulness, and unfaithfulness. He says, I see these poor men, I hear them saying, we have sinned and perverted that which was right, and I will be gracious to them. I have found a ransom, and I will say, deliver them from going into the pit. So there is a sound, and the voice is God's voice. John heard His voice as the voice of many waters, and when John saw the glory of that glorious Person, he fell at His feet as dead, and then the voice spoke to him and said - "Fear not, I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death". What a sound. What a blessed man John was to hear that sound of a living voice, a living Saviour communicating at once strength to him.

I would like to make a few remarks about the sound in one or two particular things. First of all there is the sound of the righteousness of God in the gospel. I am more and more enamoured with that part of the gospel, righteousness, and good Hart tells us of it

Righteousness to full perfection
Must be brought, lacking nought,
Fearless of rejection (800)

and the Lord speaks of that. "I bring near My righteousness", the righteousness of God without the law, for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. But now He brings this righteousness, and He so speaks of it as that it becomes a sound, and it becomes a joyful sound to malefactors, to guilty people, for it is this righteousness that delivereth from death, as Solomon says - "Righteousness delivereth from death". It delivereth from death because it says to a man, This is your righteousness, and the man who is righteous is not liable to punishment; he is righteously free. Now when that sound enters your hearts, and my heart, is it not a joyful sound?

The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view

How can a sinner be made more happy on earth than by that sound, that wondrous sound? God's character shining in the illustrious gospel, in the glorious gospel of Christ, in the gospel of the blessed God, in the everlasting gospel. Such names are given to the gospel of Christ to set out the fullness of it, and the beauty of it. O, sinner, if you had ten thousand witnesses, human witnesses, all honest men in the church, that you were a good man, that they saw you had grace, and faith, you might say, but there is a spot in me that is not the spot of God's children; you might be troubled by their testimony. You might say to yourself, and even to them, what have I said to you to produce so favourable an impression? But if God whispers, if God whispers into that sinner's soul the doctrine of justification, brings Christ's righteousness near to Him, all the defects he sees in himself, all the unrighteousness of his nature, all the weakness of his religion, all the fears of his fearful heart, flee away, and he says - "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". So that is a joyful sound.

Some of the Lord's people, more or less all of them, no doubt, but some particularly, are occasionally engaged in looking at their sins, and at their sinfulness. Sinfulness is dreadful, sins are innumerable, and when you cast a back-look on your life, on your profession, and then are led to look into your nature, and the sinfulness, and the sins, the transgressions, the innumerable transgressions, well you get dejected, and you may say sometimes

Can blood such horrid crimes atone?

and if you have not faith at the moment to answer the question

Yes, blood so rich as Thine

then you will go very low. I know what it is that I am speaking. 'Tis part of my life in these, my last days, and it is not a little trouble to look at your profession, and look into your heart; to see your heart as God describes it - "Deceitful above all things and desperately wicked - so that you say, I have no sincerity to boast of. I cannot go before the Lord - Bless me for I am really sincere. When you look at your life, your transgressions, the over-steppings of

which you have been guilty day by day, then it is difficult to hold fast. Now the joyful sound comes, the gospel meets this case. It does not contradict the sinner, it does not say, This introspection of yours, you ought no longer to indulge; it does not say, You exaggerate the case; it meets it. It allows all the confession - you will know that, who are thus led - it allows all the confession, and then it says - "I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud, and as a cloud thy sins", and "All manner of sin and blasphemy against the Son of Man shall be forgiven". All the debt forgiven; blotted out as a thick cloud, nobody can see. God wont look at it. Blotted out as you wipe a slate clean, and no debts are left visible. So the Son of God's love and blood, the Son that shed His blood, Jesus Christ, that filled a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, He testifies of this, bears His divine testimony in the conscience. That is a joyful sound to a professor of long standing; what a sound it is. To the beginner who hears it for the first time, what a heavenly sound it is. Divine music, bringing heavenly merry-making. This is the joyful sound. It makes a sinner go forth in the dances of them that make merry. Well brethren, they must be blessed people who have these two words, or sounds. Justified in the righteousness of Christ, cleansed from all sin by His precious blood. O, we should be thankful that the Lord does not say, Now you must bring something of your own. He does not say, Your consistency must be such as to be accounted something by Myself. No, "lost" is the word, "lost", and Christ came to save the lost. It is a great word, and it must increase in meaning to us. What a difficult thing it is to learn that, that it increases in meaning, so that a sinner at last comes to say - honestly, humbly, believingly to say to God - Lord, I believe that the deepest, richest, strongest experience that the Holy Ghost could work in my soul would not add one thread to the robe of divine righteousness, and would not bring me with one clean spot in my nature, and on my spirit. I must be, I am, a lost person, and no righteousness, and no cleansing, and no hope but by Jesus Christ. Ah, he is a blessed man who hears this voice. What Berridge says, he enters into:

My soul is in my ears

It is a joyful sound when a sinner hears the voice of adoption.

Adopted into the family of God the church was by predestination, "Predestinated to the adoption of children unto Himself by Jesus Christ". That sound, that truth, written first in the Lamb's Book of Life, is sounded in the hearts of sinners, and this is how it is done: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father". He owns the kindred. When you can lay claim to Him as your Father, you will find that He will be owning in your heart, the kindred. O, kinship with Christ, sonship of God, what a sound. An alien made a child, adopted into God's living, blessed family, and the knowledge of it made so living, for the time, so powerful, that the sinner cries, Thou art my Father, the guide of my youth. The Lord says this - "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth". And the Spirit of Adoption may lead you that way. You go back and say, He guided me there, and He guarded me there, though I knew not that He was doing it. A light shines upon the road, and we look back. Sometimes a back-look is so painful, so distressing, and dejecting, that you can scarcely bear it. But this testimony is so blessed that you go back and say, He was with me, He prevented me, He upheld me, He guided me, He supplied me.

Thus far my God has led me on
And made His truth and mercy known

It is the voice of a Covenant that God makes with His people, having first made it with His Son, and they make a Covenant with Him. "Gather My people together unto Me that have made a Covenant with Me by sacrifice", and when the Lord takes you up into the Covenant, gives you to see that you, an unclean person, He put into that great sheet that was let down to Peter; lets you see that you were there, notwithstanding all the disabilities, and disqualifications, and sins of your nature, and your practice, that you were in that Covenant, then that leads you to make a Covenant with Him. "Gather My people together unto Me, those that have made a Covenant with Me by sacrifice." What is the sacrifice? Denying self and taking up the cross, and following Christ. That is not much, some people may say. It might not be much to a liberal person to empty his purse to assist a poor creature, but that same person will find that denying self is to be crucified with Christ; to take the cross up is really to go

exactly, to go precisely, against the bent of the mind, against the whole movement of fallen nature, against all the wishes of a depraved heart, and sometimes the sinner says, Now Lord, here I am. As far as I know my heart I take the Lord Jesus to be my Saviour, and I give to Thee this poor heart of mine. I have nothing else, I have nothing better, to give than a poor, depraved nature, and I would, and I do, receive with the little faith I have, the Lord Jesus. And then these two come together in the Covenant, and it is a joyful sound to be told that God has taken you up into the Covenant, and that He has given you gracious power to enter into a Covenant with Him by sacrifice of self. Blessed is the people that know this joyful sound, more joyful than any sound in nature can be.

And there is the sound in another particular thing, namely the promise of God never to leave you, never to forsake you. What a promise. I live, therefore you shall live. I am your God; I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. I have taken you up into Covenant. My faithfulness will I not suffer to fail, nor alter the word, the oath, the promise, the Covenant that is gone out of My mouth. Here is a sinner, very frequently trembling for fear, frequently perceiving danger on every hand, frequently feeling the chief danger of all is the danger of his own wicked heart, and God comes to him and so assures him of His favour, that he says, I believe I shall get to heaven. I believe I shall get safely, and honourably to my grave. Every step he would fain take in the fear of God. Sometimes he is a fool, and like a madman, like a horse rushing; at other times like the mule, stubbornly standing, needing the exhortation to be spoken to him - "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule that have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." Now comes grace to tame, and the sinner says, I will run in the way of Thy commandments for Thou hast enlarged my heart, and he finds wisdom's ways to be ways of pleasantness, and her paths to be peace, and he would fain live in this spirit, walk in this way, all his days. The promise is to the end. You have not finished with a promise when you have had one fulfilment of it; when you have had a hundred fulfilments of it; it still is a young promise. Christ has the dew of His youth; His promise is just the same, always fresh, always true, always living, always the same; no end. - "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven". This makes a trembling sinner, a worm of earth,

firmer than heaven and earth. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away unfulfilled." Dear friends, this word is very sweet. It is very beautiful, very powerful. No creature can break it; it is in God, it comes from God. It is cast around the sinner to bring that sinner back to God. What has been called a chain you have in the 8 Romans - "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified". There is the chain. The two ends are in God, and the sinners who are in that are to come to Him; He brings them to Him. It is a joyful sound; the promise that God will never leave you nor forsake you takes in all the troubles, providential troubles, all the chastening - "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten" - all the difficulties, all the temptations, and the very person of the devil, as it were - "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". These are all inside the blessed promise of God never to leave you, never to forsake you. What more can we want? What greater blessing can we ask? "The joyful sound".

"They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." Sometimes they walk in the light of God's countenance when He says to them - "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." And the light shines upon that path of tribulation, and you see it is a divinely ordained path, and you see the honour that God puts on you when He chastens you; the tokens of love He gives to you when He scourges you. You not only feel the need of it all, but the honour of it all, the blessing of it all. Look at trouble from a natural point of view, look at trouble in your own light, which is but as darkness. What a different thing it appears to be, does not it? What a sword to a guilty conscience a chastening rod may seem to be. But when God chases all that ignorance, and foolishness away, and lets the light of His mercy, and the light of His chastening countenance, and the light of His divine faithfulness, shine upon the trouble, shine upon the path of difficulty, then you say, O, I have been a foolish creature, I have made many foolish reckonings, and have come to many unwise, troublesome conclusions. That has been my case many, and

many times. Then says Solomon - and we may enter into it a little - "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good". And when by faith you handle your trouble, and perceive that God has sent it, that makes all the difference. Then you humbly submit and say, Here I am Lord, a bit of clay, a bit of clay, poor, worthless bit of clay, but I am a vessel of mercy, and it is a comfort to believe that the beauty of the vessel lies in this, that God has made it a vessel of mercy. They shall walk in the light of God's countenance as chastened.

What can I say more this evening? I have said quite enough. I think if the Lord should lead any of you to contemplate the points I have brought before you, you will say there is quite enough for meditation in these great matters, but I will just say one word more. They shall walk in the light of God's countenance with respect to their death. Now physical death is part of the curse. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". Mortality is the fruit of sin. Graves are dug by sin. "We must needs die and be as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again". It is gloomy, it is forbidding, and in that view of it, very terrible. That the curse, that part of the curse, must take place in respect of all of us. "We must needs die". If you look at it in no other light, you can only say, O what a terrible thing death is. What a horrible place the grave is. There is another light, the light of God's countenance in Christ, and it is this; this is what it says, this is what it writes on the mortality of the saint - "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord". Is not that different? If you get that into your soul, then you look at your mortality with another eye, in another light, and see that what is part of the curse naturally, becomes the very means of your entering into eternal life in the fullness of it in your soul, and further it will tell you that - "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" That is sin-brought mortality. As by one sin death came upon all men, now by the death of Christ many transgressions are forgiven, and sinners are justified, and one day their entire persons must be with the Lord, and their bodies be made like unto His body, His glorious body. It is a great sound. May the Lord make it so to us in the day we need it. Who shall change our vile body and fashion it like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

AMEN.