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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday Morning 4 October 1908

PSALM 90 v 15

"Make us glad according to the days wherein  
Thou hast afflicted us, and the years  
wherein we have seen evil"

There are three parts to this Psalm, first the opening verses which are an acknowledgement of God's goodness to His people - "Lord Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" - and it behoves the people of God in the midst of their troubles to make acknowledgements of God's goodness to them. It ill becomes us if we have received goodness at His hands, to close our eyes to it and fix them intently, and always upon any inconveniences and afflictions that we may be under. O, you people of God, give Him thanks, let not His mercies lie unacknowledged. Let not His pardons which have been sealed on your spirits pass by without thanksgiving on account of the present confusion, and it may be, distance from Him; do thank Him. O let us come before the Lord, let us kneel before Him and let us give thanks at the remembrance of the cross which has been manifested in its power in our souls, and bless God for ever sheltering us from the wrath to come, for ever making Himself our Hiding Place, our dwelling place. "Lord Thou hast been our dwelling place". You may run into a hiding place as a refuge, and when the storm is over go out again, not needing it; but O, a dwelling place it says, much more than a refuge; a house of defence whereunto we may continually resort, and blessed is that man who can say - Lord, Thou hast been my dwelling place.

And this is accompanied also by an acknowledgement of the greatness and eternity of God. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God". How many of us have ever entered into the language of Watts

Thou art the ever living God  
Were all the nations dead

It is beautiful language, and more beautiful truth. As known, as received by faith, it puts the creature in his right place, will have him to be a nothing that God might be all and in all. As believed it will make the soul enter into this truth, that really no creature is needed for Him, except as He has decreed that creature shall for a time be needed; He Himself is sufficient. What a ground this affords, what a rock to build upon. "Before the mountains were brought forth" and when they have gone, God is and will be; Before ever He formed the earth, from everlasting to everlasting He is God; therefore when He has destroyed all that He has created and formed, He remains - "Thou remainest". Ah the Holy Ghost has said it - "Thou remainest", may we believe it, and feel the solid comfort of it in our spirits. He does not need anything to make Him blessed, but His creatures need Him that they may be blessed. Happy the man who knows His need, who knows that he needs God in Christ, Christ crucified, the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Happy the man in whose eyes there is no beauty in the creation compared with Jesus Christ.

Compared with Christ, in all beside  
No comeliness I see

How many of you were quite honest before God when you were just now singing the world had lost its beauties to you, and that now you saw no beauty in anything but Christ? You will be judged for using those words - you will judge yourselves if God deals with you - those of you who sang them without meaning, for you shall give an account of all such idle words. O, but if they are true, if ever they become true, what a blessed thing; what thanks we shall give to the Holy Ghost for making them true to us.

The second part of the Psalm is confession, confession of the state the people were brought into, they were consumed - "We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled." And this confession goes on for several verses; and if you could leap from the first part to the third, knowing nothing of the second, I should be sorry to possess your religion. If you never know what it is to be consumed in any way by the Lord, to be turned to destruction, and to be dealt with for your sins in this life, woe to you when you leave

this world. And, says the Psalm, "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance". The common light of an enlightened conscience is sufficient for a common knowledge of sin, and it is to be feared that many people go no further than that, and that drives them from profanity to religion, from the world to religion, perhaps from the ballroom to the chapel or the church, and then they get a slight healing, and they are happy and laid like sheep in the grave. The Lord grant that it may not be our case. If you behave wickedly in the world you may have enough conscience to make you know you have done it, but O, what a difference there is between that knowledge and this experience - "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." There were some sins of Israel which the Lord said He did not find by diligent search. They were apparent, being upon the skirts of their garments, as they were constantly doing them so as that they were visible. But there were some sins which were not visible, which He searched out. "I will search Jerusalem with candles". It is a different, and a much more solemn thing, and painful, but in the issue, blessed experience than the other. Ah, it is a great thing, but an awfully solemn thing, for God to bring His word to your heart and let the light of it fall on some hidden, covered up sins; just as you take a candle into a dark corner to search for something which you believe to be there but which the general light in the room would not discover; this is just what the Lord does, He searches rooms with candles, goes into the innermost thoughts, and sees in those thoughts the nature of idolatry, some wicked thing you have worshipped in secret. When He comes in the light of His truth, that is setting it before His face. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee". Lord, Thou always had them before Thee, but now Thou hast done it so that we see them, we behold our iniquities, and our secret sins are now seen in the light of our countenance. If there is any solemn work, this is it, if there is anything that will reduce your strength, this is it. "Can thy heart endure, can thine hands be strong, when I shall deal with thee for these things, saith the Lord." Well, this is an important part of the Psalm, confession, confession of sin, confession of iniquities, of secret sins, sins no other creature, no eye but your own, ever looked at, and now God's eye has looked them out, searched them, brought them to His light, and you now look at them in His light. Before you

regarded them as acts, now you see them as sins. Before you knew you were doing things in secret, now you know you were doing in iniquity and in sin against God, and now you know the awful nature of them, you know you have got a hell of sin in your nature, and that it is not needful that any person should do open iniquity to be a sinner, but that he is a sinner in his nature, and that he does sin in his heart, that he thinks evil thoughts. God sets these things up.

And the third part of the Psalm is prayer, petition; and the text I have read has a back look to sins for which the soul was afflicted - "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us" The affliction is God's chastening, often attended by trouble in providence. We look very short, and fall below the truth, when we look at troubles and have no regard to sin respecting them. Solomon might say "What have I done to provoke Hadad that the Edomite should come against me?" If God had dealt with his conscience at that moment, he would have said, I now know why he has risen up against me, God has stirred him up. Why? For my sins. Solomon loved many strange women, Solomon insulted God by building a house for his heathenish wives before the house of the living God, and God stirred up an adversary to him. We read this wonderful thing; that before that there was no evil occurrence in the land, that God smiled upon these people that thus walked before Him. And is not this true in the church? Who, that has grace, and is exercised in things, having backslidden and has trouble, who has not been distinctly made to question the connection between his backslidings and his afflictions? "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" Let the honest conscience speak; when you have got trouble, may you not stop at the second cause, if there be a second cause, but go to the first cause and find that in your heart in the dreadful sins that you have committed.

"Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us". Why were the flying fiery serpents sent into Israel to bite them, why did pestilence come? They knew when they were made to understand, it was for sins. What were the hosts that came against Israel from time to time, but those whom God sent to lay the lash upon them? What had merited the lash? Their sins. They had not observed His Sabbath, nor walked in His ordinances to keep them. So it is

still, God sends trouble. Beloved friends, if we are the Lord's people, all the hell we ever shall suffer we shall suffer in this world; and we shall suffer the afflicting hand of God, not because He will make an end of us, but because He loves us. And this is that that gives God's chastening such a peculiar beauty sometimes; that makes sin more ugly than anything else. The curse of God does not make sin half so ugly as Fatherly chastening does; it does not half win the soul as a merciful chastening does. Therefore "happy is the man whom God correcteth" so says the Holy Ghost, and also therefore He exhorts "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." This affliction is bitter. It will take the sweetness out of all your natural sweets; it will seem to not only take your appetite away for everything, but it will take away all the goodness of the good things you have had. O, if the Lord chastens us it is heavy work. I speak to wise men and know some of you understand it.

But now look at this prayer and first of all let me ask this question - How comes it to pass that an afflicted person who confesses that his affliction is for his sin, that he has deserved it, and more, that God exacts of him less than his iniquities deserve, that if he had what he deserved he would be in hell for ever and ever; how is it that such a person finds in himself courage to pray like this - "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil" Now the answer to this question must be found on the cross, in the blood of the everlasting covenant, in the Person of the Mediator, who, "Knowing in Himself that all things were now accomplished, said "It is finished", and bowed His head and gave up the ghost". But how is it that he has found now this heart to pray like this? The answer is, the Holy Ghost has come down as the Spirit of Christ, and showed to the soul the new way, the living way, the way in which God is propitious, a way wherein He shows His love, and His kindness, and His pardons without number. And then, as thus dealt with, I believe that if the sins done were a thousand times more, and the guilt of them a thousand times greater, and heavier, I believe faith would be bold enough to go before God with this petition - "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us". And what is the great point here? What is the

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stand of faith? The infinite satisfaction that the Lord Jesus gave in offering Himself to God without spot, making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. O, if we have but a sight of that given to us, we shall see it will swallow hell up for us, it will take all sin away; we shall see that it wont leave any bar

There is no new demand, no bar remains  
Mercy now triumphant reigns

That is what God the Holy Ghost does, He shows that new and living way, He shows that whatever sin has been done, and whatever guilt lies on the soul, whatever affliction has come because of sin, He shows that there is now no bar to this ever blessed God. Lord Thou hast been our dwelling place, O let us come again. O Lord Thou hast put away sin, put away this from my soul, remove this guilt from my conscience. My friends there is such a thing as a real access to God. You need not trouble about access to wealth, or access to comfort, or access to health, or access to any temporal good that may be before you as desirable. If you have access to the blessed God of all grace you will have everything you want, you will get all your desire. O, my brethren, if the Lord should but give us this access, what happy people we should be. I have had it many a time, and I would rather have it than have access to all the things that the whole world calls good or great in my right mind. The Apostle Paul sets this before us in the Ephesians when he says of Christ "Through whom we both have access by One Spirit unto the Father". Canst thou pray, poor sinner? O if thou canst pray in the Holy Ghost the door of heaven is open and no devil shall shut it, and no sin shall shut it really. Well this is a point that a man must be at if he has got guilt on his conscience, if he has convictions in his mind, and if his understanding has got any hold on his sins, and if the Spirit is charging them upon his soul. Until he is brought to this point he will never have boldness to pray. We know what it is to be shut up without this view, and everybody amongst the Lord's people will have the same experience doubtless at times, in a measure - to be clean shut up as it were, and so to speak cut off because Christ is not in view, because His atoning blood is not seen. But when the Lord will bring a man, He will bring him at times to this point - I will open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain for sin and for uncleanness.

Come then, repenting sinner come,  
Approach with humble faith  
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum  
Is cancelled by His death

and there is nothing that will keep you away. Here it is that men have power with God and prevail. Here they have power over their guilt, and over their sins, by faith in the bleeding Lamb. And this is so practical a part of religion, and so blessed a part of religion, that in their right minds they choose rather to have power five minutes with God in prayer than possess any earthly good that might be presented to them. O it is a great thing to have real power with God in prayer. And what is this that the man, being at a point about there being a remedy, seeks? It is that he may be glad. Why? He has been made sorry. He can tell you why he has been made sorry; because he is a sinner. What will make him glad? Forgiveness of sins, the smile of God on his soul. O what a great thing it is to be at this. Now the smile of God upon the soul is the revelation of God's mercy in Christ, and I am sure neither the earth nor our bodies could ever be as glad for the summer sun, and for the sun today as it shines upon us, as a poor, afflicted creature - afflicted by God for backsliding - is made glad when Jesus Christ shines, when mercy's beams fall upon the soul. O, it is so wonderfully good to get that blessed smile, that if your very heart were bound up in frost, and like an iceberg itself, instantly it would melt and give way under the power of that goodness of God which comes by Jesus Christ. Now to be made glad then is to be sweetly brought into the presence of God in Christ, and to find not only has the Lord been your dwelling place, but that He is that now. "A dwelling place". Well you know your dwelling places are places of real comfort, and delight. It is one of God's kindnesses to us though we are fallen, that He has given us domestic comfort, and domestic happiness, and if that be so to us as we are men and women, O what is it if we are living souls, to get into God in Christ by faith through the powerful teaching and grace of the Eternal Spirit, for the Lord Jesus to be so open to faith, and for you to see by faith that neither God the Father, nor God the Son, nor God the Spirit, nor the law, nor justice, and, we will say, nor sin itself, shall set a bar to prevent your approach, and entrance into this habitation - "Lord Thou hast been our dwelling place" Well, it is here where the Lord reconciles

people and where He shows them His mercies. If any of you are masters and employers of labour, yesterday it may be you paid your workmen and they went to their homes with their wages. You may have a kind of general interest in them, and be glad to know that you are able to find work for them to do, and give them thus something to live upon; and when that is done, when the general interest is accounted for, there is one thing remains; when you had done your business you went to your homes, and you found there that which was better than all else, you found comfort, love, peace. Well now it is so, the Lord's people find that while there is a general providence of God in which He pays His servants their wages, and gives them bread to eat, and so on, there is something that even is different from that, and in respect of their common providences, which they believe at times to be particular, there is something beyond that. That something is when He gathers them to His blessed table, when He brings them into His dwelling place, when He says to them - "Eat O friends and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved". And that is being made glad. Now you must enter into this to understand it, what it is for you to be reconciled, what it is for there to be no distance and no difference between you and God. What it is for you to be happy in His love, happy in the atonement, happy in Christ's righteousness, to feel your sins pardoned, your conscience purified, to feel that the afflictions that are on you in providence are not now by their nature a heavy thing, though they are heavy to nature; they are not a sword to cut you off, they are not now as poison to drink up the spirit and life, but they are a manifestation of God's kindness. The thing is you are so entertained by the Lord, so comforted in His love and mercy, and so blessed in your spirit, so satisfied that matters are straight between God and you for eternity, that you can leave time, and leave yourself, and leave everything else in His merciful hands. "Make us glad according to the days . . . ." Why, what fleeting days these have been, though they seemed long enough often when under the rod, yet now indeed in this wonderful way they are as a dream, as "a tale that is told", and you can enter into the language of the Apostle - "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." What is it that crossed others out? Why, eternal goodness, eternal



love. What is it He gives you to eat? Why, His own flesh. What is it He gives you to drink? The wine which He has mingled, His own precious, efficacious, atoning blood. He gives these things as the entertainment wherewith He delights His saints.

"Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us" Ah, and there is a word in the prophecy of Isaiah that, as it is made over to a sinner, makes him exceeding glad; this is the word, the Lord says - "This is as the waters of Noah unto Me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee. In a little wrath I hid as it were My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting mercies will I gather thee". This is a word which, as God makes it over to a man in the substance of it, makes him exceeding glad. And there is another word in the Psalms like it - "Thou hast made me exceeding glad with Thy countenance". His countenance, the gladness of it, is Christ. "God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" My friends, there is no anger there; if you look at the face of God in the law you cannot but be terrified; the terrors of God in the law make men afraid, afraid of every token that comes that way, distracted with the terrors of God; but O, if you see Him here you will see nothing of the kind, but will enter into that word in the substance of it - "God is love". God laid down His life for us, says John, for this great reason: that He is love. Well, that is being made glad. I daresay some of you, if honest, would have to say, Yes, to this thing I am going to say - that if you were to open your eyes tomorrow morning to find you had become suddenly possessed of everything that a man could naturally desire in the way of wealth, comfort, honour, you would have no thought of Almighty God. Now you know it is true because even without those things you do not think of Him, do you? Now let me say this to you, you that forget God, if you die forgetting Him, you will be torn to pieces. "Now consider this lest I tear you in pieces". Nobody could put you together again, torn like that you are torn for ever. Now there are some people in this chapel who could not honestly say, Yes, if that were put to them. At least we trust we could say this - I believe we could say it - that if today, or any day, God should smile on us in the face of Jesus Christ, we should have a broken heart, a peaceful conscience, a contented

mind, a portion unloseable, an inheritance inalienable; God for our portion, Christ for our inheritance, heaven for our home in sweet prospect. Well now God has done that for some of us, I know He has, and I protest it before His Majesty at times. "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us". Has He afflicted you? O then He will heal your broken bones when He comes like this. Whatever He has done He will undo it in this respect. Love, O how sweet in its healing power it is; blood, how efficacious in its cleansing power it is; righteousness, how complete to justify the soul; and the arms of the Beloved, how wide they are to embrace a wretch and secure him against all harm. Well, this is what the Lord does to some people: He gives them conviction, He chastens them for their sins, He tells them that they have "done evil things as they could, with both hands, and have sinned as with a cart rope", and He brings them to know it all, and then He shines on their souls and they say, We have been blessed, Thou hast been our Hiding Place. Ah it is a great thing to maintain your hold and to hold fast what God has done. You must never think it is God's work to give up what God has done in you and for you; this is the effect of guilt working in the mind, it is the devil's work to give up; to hold fast is the work of grace and prayers will go out to Him - Lord, come again and make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us". And the trouble you lose, the sting is gone, the death is gone, when He comes. No death where God smiles, no death where He blesses; "In blessing I will bless thee". And thus my friends we learn where we are wrong, we learn why we are troubled, and we learn how to pray, we learn what it is to have power with God, to maintain our hold at the throne of grace "As the spider taketh hold with her hands and is in kings' palaces" so a vile creature takes hold of Christ with the hands of faith, though he feels more vile after his confessions than before, yet Christ's blood unveiled forbids the man to despair, he cannot give up - Thy sins which are many, though they be red like crimson shall be whiter than snow. This is what gives every child of God his courage and his hope, and his confidence, and his comfort.

And we are made glad sometimes by the Lord's merciful help to bear afflictions; to bear them submissively. I do not know what you may feel, some of you, at this moment, but I believe the judgement of every child of God is this, that it is sweeter to be able to say

in affliction "Thy will be done", than it is to get rid of the affliction before you have said that. It is a great thing and it will make you heartily glad that God has so mercifully dealt with you as to enable you from your heart to say, "The will of the Lord be done". When you can submit your will in that way, it is a very great blessing, and until you do you will find it very hard to live, for the Lord shows Himself very froward. "With the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward", and "the rebellious dwell in a dry land" You will never get any ease by rebellion, you will never get comfort by rebellion; if you attempt to keep your arms in hand and furnish them against God, you will find He will resist you. That is a true word known experimentally in the church - "With the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward, and with the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure". James tells us "He resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble". Well it is a gladdening thing sometimes to see this, that all power and authority in heaven and in earth the Lord Jesus possesses. He who sent the trouble can take it away; He who sent the want is able to send a stream of supply; He who has made the vacant place can fill it; He who has sent the cross and put it on you can carry both it and you together. So that when faith sees this omnipotence of an exalted Christ, she sees enough to make the soul glad. Thus it is learnt that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth" Berridge expresses the truth in his own terse way

The portion of a beast  
Will not content my heart  
The God of Spirits only can  
Fill up the vast desires of man

It is a great thing to have those desires. Some people's desires have for their rise and termination, this world, and some people can say that this world is not big enough for their desires, not good enough for their desires, for they want the Lord Himself. And it makes them glad also when they believe this - that "there is an end and their expectation shall not be cut off". That enables them to wait patiently for God and enables them to say "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope". Then they can say - "The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him". And

all this is solid, it is not some passing fancy that a man is building upon. No, he says, Now I have got the Rock of Ages beneath my feet, and I have a view of a crucified Christ, and therefore though I am a poor creature, and feel afraid, and am always bent to backslide in my nature, through grace in Christ I hope to be renewed and live for ever more. Well, I believe the Scriptures are on my side when I say this: that where a person is brought to this state of mind by the merciful teaching of the Holy Ghost, though that person may have much trouble, many afflictions, sharp convictions, and God's dealings with him for his sins, and though he will get into many a close place, and come to close quarters with his enemies, sins within him, and the devil tempting him, yet there is no way to hell for that person; Christ has shut that door, and opened the door of faith to him, and one day will open the door of heaven, and he will be with Him for ever, and ever.

"Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil" - seen it in our own hearts, seen it perhaps in our families, seen it in the church, seen it in the nation too, and yet glad at looking at God who reigns, in looking at Christ who is seated at the Father's right hand, and at looking at the promise which is - "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". All the years in which we have seen trouble, they are to be swallowed up my friends. May we be able to say, ere we leave this world, that He comforts us on every side, within and without. The good Lord grant His mercy to us.

AMEN.