

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 13 April 1919

Psalm 91 verse 2

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my
fortress, my God, in Him will I trust"

This morning I drew your attention in the first place to the
terribleness, the exposedness, of all of us to God because of
sin. The fall is a terrible reality and we are all in it and if
we are to escape the wrath to come it must be by being found in
Christ, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law,
but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness
of God by faith. And then I noticed the profession that is made
in the text. "I will say of the Lord". You cannot say this
properly unless you know Him. "They that know Thy Name will
put their trust in Thee". It is, dear friends, the promise of God in
the covenant of grace - "I will give them a heart to know Me that
I am the Lord". O what a mercy it is to have this divinely given
knowledge.

In the next place I drew your attention to the great truth
that the text contains, that God is the refuge and the fortress
of His children, and I said that this is none other than the Lord
Jesus Christ in His wondrous Person, His complex Person, God and
man, Emmanuel God with us; that it is Christ in His work, His
perfect work, His perfect obedience, His vicarious sacrifice of
Himself, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven,
His intercession there. In all these respects He is the refuge,
the only refuge and fortress of His children. And then I entered
a little upon the personal part of the text. "I will say of the
Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I
trust". And in this I noticed that He is the refuge of the
unjust for justification; the refuge of sinners for forgiveness;
the refuge of polluted people for holiness. You must, if you are

going to heaven, come to know this in some degree. God alone determines that degree, but in some degree you must know personally what it is as guilty people, as great sinners, as polluted sinners, to run to this refuge and find yourself secure there. It is a great gospel that suits great sinners; a glorious gospel that meets such cases so evil as ours are; a wonderful gospel that wont permit a fleeing sinner to be overtaken and slain by the avenger of blood; a gospel that stretches out its hands to take in all who are fleeing and whose fears run high that ere they reach the refuge, the pursuer will reach them. O blessed be God there is Jesus Christ, and when the devil stands at the right hand of a sinner to resist him because the sinner is clothed with filthy garments, He rebukes the devil; and says "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire"? It is great and I would urge this on your attention particularly because, though there are other matters of great importance to be noticed, this is the matter of all matters. The dying thief had no time to grow in grace, to be tempted of the devil, to be assailed by indwelling sin, and to get many a sore spirit and conscience by failing and falling but he had the matter of all matters; he had the goodness of God in justification and he went from the cross to heaven. And you may lack many things, may not have even time under God's providence to know much of change and have no deep experiences, but if you have this, this sure support against despair, this wondrous gift, the forgiveness of your sins; this amazing blessing, this mysterious blessing, the justification of a guilty person, the deliverance of your souls from the law by the body of Christ and the sweet assurance in your hearts that it is so indeed, then you will go to heaven, for God can never punish a just person; God can never demand a second payment for the same debt; God can never bring you before Moses and judge you by that law if you are delivered by Jesus Christ. Then, O you who feel guilty, who feel concerned about eternity, who believe that time matters not as compared with eternity, that time things matter not as compared with those of eternity, the Lord give you grace to be continually fleeing, continually looking to Jesus Christ to be justified, to be forgiven, to be sanctified that, come death when it may and how,

you wont be found unready, you wont be found unwilling to die, but be enabled to say, "It is better to die than to live".

"Better is the day of one's death than the day of one's birth."

"I will say of the Lord He is my refuge and my fortress" in the next place in respect of affliction. Affliction to the child of God is called chastisement. The same kind of trouble may be sent to the worldling and to him it is a curse. The difference is made by God Himself. When a child of God is afflicted he is chastised and it is not only because he may have failed here and fallen there, but also and chiefly and better than all else, because God loves him. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten". This puts such an aspect on affliction, such a beauty, such an honour, as when perceived by the child of God who is chastened, makes him kiss the rod and bless the hand that uses it. Then a man so dealt with would not, if he might, escape the rod. Then, though he may have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto him as unto a son, being reminded of it he praises and blesses God for the great honour and mercy of being chastened. It is a great thing to be chastened of God. I like that word in the chapter I read just now, it is a beautiful word - "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." How many of you may have deprecated before God, being dealt with as enemies. O how you have perhaps, with that word sparkling in your eyes, asked the Lord to deal with you as with sons, for it is asked - "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not". As a father chasteneth the son in whom he delighteth, so the Lord deals with His children.

Know whom the Saviour favours much
Their faults He oft reproveth

Well now, when you are chastened, what is the course you are led to take? What is the direction of your soul, the bent the trend of your spirit? Do not look only at the fretfulness, the murmuring, the fainting that you are guilty of (you will look at them; ah, you will be ashamed of them; you will wonder the Lord bore with you while you were in such an untoward, un-childlike

frame of mind; you will wonder that He allowed you to call on His Name) but look also I say at the bent and the trend of your spirit. If you look at a river meandering through the meadows and see some of the acute bends that seem to bend it quite backward as if the stream were turned round, and judge by the course of the river, by that you would make a mistake. And if you judge only of your case by the failing, falling and fretting, you will make a mistake. The guilt of all that you will feel; God will make you feel it; but O if you can discover this - "I flee unto Thee to hide me". Have mercy on me, O Lord. Remember that I am dust. Deal gently with me. Remember not against me former iniquities. "Hide Thy face from my sins and blot out all my transgressions". Let this trouble detach me from the things to which I am too much attached. Make it a means of gathering my affections and my thoughts and my desires to Thyself. If, I say, you can thus look at your heart and say, that is exactly my case, then you will have reason to say - "I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel". You have reason to say "He is my refuge". Here I flee; I seek Him; I seek that the affliction may do me good; that I may not have my own way, but rather be enabled to say - "Thy will be done". Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in my heart even as it is in heaven. And I think I am justified in saying to all who are in that case, it is well with you. It is well with you. You will come out well; you will come out with trouble sanctified; you will believe what one writes

Ill that He blesses is good
And unblest good is ill
And all is right that seems most wrong
If it be His sweet will

I will say of the Lord in respect of affliction "He is my refuge and my fortress". One of old said - I will get me to the tower; I will set me upon my defenced place and see what the Lord will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd of Him. (reference to Habakkuk 2 verse 1). What is that tower, that defenced place, that place of defence? What is it? Jesus Christ. There is no tower of the flock but Christ; there is no

refuge for afflicted people but Christ. There is no helper but Christ. There is none can enable a sinner to bear reproof but Christ. None can give him an answer in respect of his case when he is reproved but Christ. And the answer is this. When, looking at his case, looking at his sins, at his failings, at his many falls, at his barrenness, there is only one thing he can properly and with any comfort and any hope, answer and it is this - Behold O God my shield and look upon the face of Thine anointed. And if you can answer that to the Lord it is well. You will then offer to Him an argument that He will never never speak against, and present to Him a reason why you should be blessed that He will never turn from, never disown.

He is a refuge for His people in times of trouble, not only their personal troubles, but also church trouble, national trouble. When I speak of church trouble, I do not mean merely when people in a church are quarelling one with another. We have reason to be very thankful to God that we do not know what that is among us; may we never know it. But there may be church trouble without that as when people realise how far from God they are; how little communication they get from Him; how little glory they bring to Him; how little they grow up into Christ; how little apparently of being built on the foundation, Jesus Christ, there is, and how little of that the Apostle Paul teaches in the Ephesians when he says - "Ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Do you follow me in this? Do you follow my beloved friends? How little of all this there is, and if you are led to read the Scriptures properly in respect of a church state in the world you will see that the glory of God is connected with the church; that the glory of God is furthered by the condition of the church, or obscured by the condition of the church. You will perceive this and if you perceive it then look at your own case. Let one member look at his case; let him ask - Am I really being as the Apostle Peter speaks brought as a lively stone to Christ the Living Stone. "To whom coming". Not to whom you came once, not to whom you did years ago, but "to whom coming" as lively stones built upon that Living Stone. And that is just the same as Paul says in the

Ephesians - "In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit". Ask if it is so with you, and do you get communications from God? Does He speak to you? Do you grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Do you not sometimes perceive that vital religion is not superstition, not a blind enthusiasm, but knowledge. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent". Growth in grace surely has this in it - apprehensions of Christ; apprehensions of His Person and His work; apprehensions of His love, His grace, His blood, His righteousness, and some applications too of those great realities to the soul. And if that be so with you, do you get such mercies? Now if you should say, one individual here and another there, if several of us should say this evening - we come short; we grievously fail - what will you do, what will you do? Set to work to mend a bad case; promise God you will behave better; undertake to reform yourself? O fruitless, O proud resolve, should you make it. Then if you are not so to act, how are you to act? "I will flee unto Thee to hide me". O cut not down a cumberer of the ground. O build me up into Christ; bond me with Thy people as a building is bonded; brick is bonded to brick. O bring me more and more to use Him, rely on Him, build on Him, live on Him. May I be built up into Him as into and on that only foundation, rooted and built up in Him, as the word is, and surely He is a refuge for this. O sinners, all your shortcomings of which you are truly ashamed when grace is working in you; O poor member of the body of Christ, ashamed of your barrenness and distance and unlikeness, is there any refuge for you in these respects but Himself? Can anyone but Christ make up the defects that you feel, fill up the gaps, the empty places? Is there any but Christ can do you that good which you see the Scriptures teach and which you may at times have fervently desired? I will say of the Lord He is the refuge of a foolish sinner, a shortcoming sinner, a backsliding sinner. You may say mercifully I am kept from gross backsliding, but also I am not kept from daily falling. May the Lord look upon us. Church trouble may become very much more manifest than it is today. Ministerial trouble will come too. Indeed one need only say a

word here, for to every discerning child of God it must be painfully apparent that there are now very few lively communications made to men from God; little, very little of that mighty operation of the Holy Ghost of which there used to be a great abundance. I have lived long enough in the church of God to know and observe a very very great difference between the days of my youth and the present days.

National trouble. We have it; we may have much more of it. I am disposed, as you know, I have frequently said these last few years, I am disposed to say it will become much worse than it is. To all appearance, if one may judge by what one sees, national trouble will become very acute. Who knows what the church of God must yet go through? Who can say what persecution, in some form, she will experience? Who can say how far from her will her Lord and Master be for a time as to powerful working, as to the ministry, and as to the quiet assembling of themselves together of God's people? And why do I say these things to you? Because it behoves me to endeavour to be faithful and to warn you and to tell you of these things not as to particulars which I do not understand myself, but trouble is coming greater than the present. Judgments are to be poured upon us. This nation, so wicked, so superstitious, so full of heresy, must feel as she has not yet felt the hand of God, and see and acknowledge as she has not yet seen and acknowledged the uplifted hand of God. We do not, perhaps, many of us, if any, fully know, nay we do not half know, the state of our land in respect of religion, false religion, spiritualism. Thousands of so called churches of spiritualists there are in England today; hundreds of schools, Sunday schools of spiritualists we have in our midst. The higher criticism demolishing the Scriptures, scattering the Word of God, cutting it into pieces. Atheism, O bold atheism is dreadful, but not more to be dreaded, if so much to be dreaded, as that subtle, that terrible criticism of the Bible that uses its pen-knife to cut out the leaves of this Book and throw them on a fire of human indignation. O beloved friends, it is a fearful, fearful sin I mention and publicly protest against, and may you in your hearts join with me as in God's sight in protesting against, and hating

so awful a sin as the criticism is. It is with us. I remember the time when it was new in this land comparatively. My memory goes back now to more than fifty years and when, what is now called, the higher criticism, was called German neology, and the stir it made in some colleges and places. But today it would be hard to find a college which is not unaffected and all but ruined. And there are not many pulpits comparatively speaking that are not utterly and fearfully affected by it. If it could be said what was said some time ago at a meeting of ministers that not one in ten ministers in that meeting believed in inspiration and that statement was applauded, what are we to think, and what are we to say? And popery, that wicked, that awful system, that daily insult to God, that blasphemy of Jesus Christ, that is with us, and profanity and unrest in the land we have. Now all these things we look on with more or less feeling; perhaps seem hardly moved at times though we read these things in the press; so dead are we, many of us. But here they are and will not God avenge Himself on such a nation as this? And we are in this nation, we are a part of this nation. What then will you do? "Hide me O my Saviour hide". This is the only refuge from the storm that is coming. The day may not be distant; I may not see it; you younger people probably will see it; when there will be a famine, not of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of God, when men will go from the north to the east, as the Word of God predicts, seeking the Word of God, and shall not find it. A great and awful day that. If Israel was many years without a priest and without an Ephod and without a sacrifice and without a king, how long the church will be without a ministry and without finding the Word of God, who can say.

Now then dear friends here is a refuge. "I flee unto Thee to hide me". "I will say of the Lord He is my refuge" when trouble comes. If all the evil I fear comes; if I see it; if any of it falls on me; the Lord is my refuge and my fortress. And if I am there surrounded by mercy, surrounded by Divinity, by divine promises, by divine engagement; if I am covered by the atonement and clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, this, this, this will secure my

soul, this will bring me through trouble, this will land me where trouble is not. "I will say of the Lord He is my refuge" in a time of national trouble. It is clear in the Scriptures that God will have only one thing for His people's safety, and that is what He Himself has provided. "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary". May the Lord help you to remember this. I have told you once more and forewarned you of the evils and the dangers that you may meet with, that may fall upon you. May His good Spirit, His good Spirit who can only do you good, be in you and point out to you by His teaching this refuge. The prophet Isaiah speaks of it thus - "Come My people enter thou into thy chambers, shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." No enemy will reach you to hurt you if you are there. No man, no sword, no devil, no fear, no wrath, no plague, shall reach you. If God is your refuge no plague shall come nigh your dwelling. Therefore the Lord give you to be more concerned about finding yourself in this refuge than all other things.

And next "My God; my God". We belong to God as His creatures; we are before Him as His subjects; but does He belong to us? That is the question. Has He made Himself over to us, come to us in the gospel, in the Person of Jesus? Made Himself the chiefest among ten thousand to us and the altogether lovely? O has He enabled us to say at any time - "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste". "My God" No burning rays of a persecuting sun will reach you if you are beneath that shadow. It is called in another figure a Rock. The shadow of a great rock in a weary land. My God; my redeeming God. O to have a Redeemer who is God is very great. Redemption by Christ is always manifested by redemption, by power. He who is bought by blood, by the blood of God shall be snatched by divine power from the burning fire and from the hand of Satan and from the deceiving of sin in the heart, as well as from its violence. God is a redeeming God who sends from above and He draws His children out of many waters. He does redeem them from all evil and bless them, and He will to

the end. One may say - I wish I could say "My God" Do you? Is that in your heart? Does it go out to Him sometimes in a sob, in your spirit; a wail? Do you say to Him - "Say unto my soul I am thy salvation". Now if it is so, my one word of advice and exhortation to you is this - wait on the Lord; you will never be turned away; you will never be sent empty away; you will never be refused. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." O but my sins! If ever you go to God you will go with them; not doing them, but confessing them and shedding many a tear over your soul because you have sinned. O but I feel sometimes as if I am a hypocrite. You must go to be saved from hypocrisy as well as every and any other sin. But my heart is hard; you must be saved from a hard heart as from all other things. Objections are many, but Christ answers them all. Christ in His Person, Christ in His work, Christ the Redeemer; He answers all objections. "My God". And one day, O what sweet surprise you will get and feel; O what sweet tears may trickle down your face when you find yourself not reaching after it, not ascending to heaven to bring down the blessing, nor descending into the deep to fetch it up, as it is said, but find it in your heart, the witness of the Spirit, the Spirit of adoption crying in your heart Abba Father. And then you will say "My God"; my redeeming God; my God to teach me. "All Thy children shall be taught of the Lord"; shall be taught what sin is, mourning it; shall be taught what grace is, to rejoice in it; shall be taught who Christ is, to trust Him; shall be taught who the Spirit is, to seek to be guided by Him. My teaching God; my God to comfort me. This is my comfort in my affliction. Thy word hath quickened me. The Lord is full of all consolation and comfort. He is called the God of consolation. I will say of my Lord, He is my Lord, my God. How can you be poor? How can you be poor with such a Lord, such a God, the Maker of heaven and earth and all that is therein, the sea and all that therein is, and the Giver of grace, the giver of Christ, the giver of the Scriptures, and the giver of the Holy Spirit. "My God".

And Paul was led by the Holy Ghost to engage this God to every child of God as it is written in the Philippians. "My God

shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." My God; my faithful God, my Almighty God for whom nothing is too hard. "I will say of the Lord He is my God". My God to bring me through; my God to help me in all hours of difficulty; my God to bring me through Jordan's swellings; my God to welcome me into glory, saying - "Come ye blessed of My Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world".

And now, knowing all this, seeing all this, he says "In Him will I trust" Ah, sweet effect! Trust is of knowledge. Know a person well, be assured as you may be of his faithfulness, uprightness, true friendship, what will you do? You will put trust in him. Trust him with your secrets and with your troubles. You will say "I do not think he will mention them; he wont betray me. If you may say that to a certain extent of an earthly friend, O what may you not say of Him whom you know and can call your God. My God, my faithful God, Covenant God, in Him will I trust. I will trust Him for my body's good; I will trust Him with all my earthly circumstances; I will put my family and my business and my ways and my health or my sickness, my strength or my weakness, I will put all into His hand. There are moments when poor people can put themselves, by precious faith wrought in them by the Spirit, into the hands of their good God. There is nothing too hard for Him, nothing too great. And although it may be commonly said, it may be very truly said and is said by faith; nothing too small. In Him will I trust. And if you trust Him, I will tell you what you will do at times; you will go to Him and consult Him, ask Him. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple." One said in a Psalm further on - "Show me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee". All this is trust; going to the Lord. In Him will I trust my precious, my immortal soul. I cast myself on Him by faith, look to Him, ask Him to deliver me from the power of indwelling sin, from the subtlety and violence of Satan, from the difficulties of this mortal state. I will ask Him to sanctify to

me my deepest distress, to sanctify to me my sweetest mercies. "In Him will I trust". I will lean upon Him; I believe He is too wise to err and too good to be unkind. Is not this the language of some of you? Poor unbelieving believers though we are, cannot some of us affirm that we have found God to be good, and faith's eye would say with all the strength of my heart, He is a good God, He is a good God, and would repeat it for your advice and comfort what Hart has so sweetly written

To trust Him endeavour; the work is His own;
He makes the believer, and gives him his crown.

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength". And it is said - "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee because he trusteth in Thee". Trust Him, He will not deceive you; trust Him, He is a good God, a full God, a gracious God, full of compassion and pity and mercy and full of all those supplies, rich supplies of grace which are so much needed by us. "In Him will I trust". And does the Lord take no notice of a poor creature who comes to confide in Him? O yes, of all the works that a child of God ever does, this is that which most pleases God, the act of faith whereby a sinner goes out of himself to God. They enquired of Christ - "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" What good thing shall we do to please God? O, said Christ, "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent"; the greatest poser that they ever had, the greatest maul on their pride that was possible. This is the work of God; not your duties, not your sacrifices, not sweeping out leaven out of your houses as Jews. All those things were commanded, but now there is one word, one matter that supersedes all of them. "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." What, bring nothing! Bring your poor soul, your sins, your failings, your unworthiness and everything else, but duties to recommend you to His favour; no! no!. Paul walked in that blessed way as he tells us of his own case in the Philippians. He disesteemed, he renounced, he counted all things, his best things, to be dung and dross that he might win Christ, for he was a firm believer in

Christ and his one aim was to be found in Him. "In Him will I trust". The Lord give us this real faith, this blessed trust, a lively hope in His mercy that we may be found in Him.

AMEN.