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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday morning 23 October 1932

PSALM 99 v 1

"The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble.  
He sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth  
be moved"

It is likely that we do not know how much we lose by not observing the operation of God's hand in providence. It is a truth that we generally acknowledge, and yet, perhaps, but little feel, that in God we live and move and have our being; that our daily affairs occupy us and for the most part unbelief prevails, and we do but little acknowledge God. This, our sin, is also our loss. In some particulars we perish for lack of knowledge. By Hosea, the Lord said, "My people perish for lack of knowledge". One Psalm concludes - "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." The dealing of God with the Psalmist in the Psalm, I read; very remarkable; much to be observed, and you and myself have our own ways and things in providence. God weakens and strengthens, empties and fills, and in various ways makes known His power, and it would be for our profit more and more closely and prayerfully to watch His dealings with us.

The text is a great truth, the first member of which is wonderful, universal. "The Lord reigneth". He sitteth King for ever; He sitteth upon the floods; He ruleth the waves of the sea. When they toss themselves about, He stilleth them. "He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still". But for the most part these things pass over us unobserved. They have a relation to us and it would be for our profit to observe them. He reigns among men, wicked men. His providences are very remarkable. They have been seen in individuals and in nations; in families, in communities. Nothing escapes God's notice. Nothing is done without His permission or distinct, immediate ordering. The universe is under His control and management. Our lives, our breath, are in His hands. He takes to

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Himself the breath He gives us and we die. Yet, like fools and infidels, we live as if there were no God for the most part or, if we think of Him, we rather fall to judging and we often judge a dispensation by a part of it, as if the Lord reveals His will by one stroke, whereas many things go to make up a dispensation. The Scriptures afford us abundant evidence of God's particular dealings with individuals, with wicked men, though they were unconcious of His work, some of them at least. It was not by chance that the Egyptians, when the moment came for Israel to be delivered, hurried them away, and that the women lent all the jewels and gold that were borrowed of them by the Israelites. Who put into the hearts of those people, who had so long oppressed Israel, to deal with them as we read they dealt with them? God did it. Egypt had spoiled Israel; now Israel spoiled Egypt. God did this. Who called Abram away from his own nation and sent him, guided him, to a distant land which he would not find vacant and empty, but full of wicked nations who had not yet filled the cup of their iniquity, and guided every step? And who was it, when Abraham denied his wife before Pharaoh, kept Pharaoh from Sarah? and when Abraham again denied his wife in the presence of Abimelech king of Gerar? God interfered. God's hand is in providence. He reigns in wicked nations. The Assyrian nation went against Israel by divine appointment. Assyria had no intention of obeying a divine commandment. It was in his heart to destroy cities, and that, not a few, but God sent him to chasten a wicked, backsliding people. "The Lord reigneth"; reigns in His dealings with men. And I wish it might please God to cause us as a congregation and as families and as individuals to believe that He does reign; that, at this time, He is reigning in and over this nation. We have cast Him behind our back; we are trampling His word under our feet. We are disregarding His day more and more. We are opening all kinds of places of amusement on the Lord's Day. How many of us grieve over it? But who is it over all these things? Almighty God. We are filling up the cup of our iniquity. If you cast your minds back and believe that God did give the blessed Reformation to England, that He did give the Bible to this nation, that He blessed the reading of it to multitudes, that He raised up a seed to praise Him, that He gave the Puritan ministry, a mighty ministry, that all these blessings raised this nation to an eminence that had never been known in any nation before; now providence has permitted a reversal, if I may express myself so, of

all these things. I suppose it would be difficult to remember the pulpits that are today occupied by modernists. A modernist is a man, a preacher, who thinks himself at liberty to criticise the Scriptures, to tell his hearers that some parts of it are not inspired. He boasts of his learning, of his inner conscience, that is, his ability to know which part is inspired and which is not. He brags about the assured results of scholarship, which assured results are constantly being turned upside down, that is contradicted, by pick and spade. Sites given in the Scriptures, denied by the modernist, are today uncovered. Now when these teachings come to their fulness and the cup of iniquity is full, what will become of the teachers, and those who received the teaching? May it be given to us to observe, with grief, this state of things and to believe that the Lord reigneth, and grace given to us to hold fast Holy Scripture. If you meet a modernist and he talks to you about the assured results of scholarship and his inner conscience, whereby he knows this Scripture is inspired and this not inspired, ask him to prove to you, to give you indubitable proof, that he knows how to make the distinction and the difference, and to prove to you what parts he allows to be inspired and what parts he tramples under his feet as uninspired. But God reigns in this. He reigns in families. This the Scripture declares distinctly. He called Abram alone and blessed him and said that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed - all nations and tribes and tongues and people. That though, for generations, His blessings should be confined to the Jews, yet eventually the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with the Jews, and partakers of the promise in Christ. Has He not reigned in our families? Cannot you trace certain movements of providence whereby, without you realising the hand of God was in such and such things, He was guiding you, though you knew Him not. Guarding you, though you knew not His hand in doing this. My dear friends, just reflect. Have you acknowledged Him? Have you been thankful for thus dealing with you? Perhaps one step taken by you years ago may have had an influence over the whole of your life from that moment. One movement - you little knew what hung on that. Turning perhaps to the left instead of going to the right, you little knew what God had in His mind and purpose in thus disposing you to that motion. "The Lord reigneth". He reigns in families. The sovereignty of God here is very solemn and very great, much to be observed. He has taken one and

left another. The one taken perhaps was the worst, openly. Nothing prevents the accomplishment of a divine purpose. He has taken one, called the least likely, called the one most worldly, who seemed, to all appearances, to be a reprobate, and yet the hand of God was laid on him and he was called out of the world, called to kneel down and seek mercy.

He reigns over the affections of people. Yes, He reigns over their affections, and this is particular. You may have a peculiar disposition which leads you to move against God, against the Scriptures, and He takes hold of you and just puts the hand of His gracious power on that disposition, that particular affection of yours and, as to its dominion, slays it and gives you another heart, a new heart and a right spirit to seek Him, to call on His great and Holy Name. You did not want to do it. Naturally you never will want to do it, but you have to do it. Grace is a mighty power. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life and there is a mighty power in this. There is your will. You have to live to prove the truth of the Scripture - "It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." And your will that would have landed you in hell is subdued and a willing mind to fear and serve and seek God is given to you and will take you to heaven. O, the sovereignty of God in this. One says, I do not want that religion and I do not like the preaching. I would rather not listen to it, and God said, but you shall want it, you shall wish to hear it, you shall follow after it, and the man is astonished at the change that has come over him. He says I did not seek this but really, though I did not understand it, I want God. I want Him for my portion. I feel I would rather have God for my portion than possess the world. "The Lord reigneth" over the will of a man whom He loves with an everlasting love and whom He will save.

He reigns over His intellect, his judgment. His intellect, his judgment said, well what is there in this religion? - nothing. And God, by His good Spirit, darts a light, a beam of heavenly light into that man's understanding, and in a moment he sees a beauty, a blessedness and feels a weight in the very things he despised and he says, I want that religion. I see it to be the only way to heaven. I realise that if I am not in Christ I am lost for ever. "The Lord

reigneth". He reigns in providence over individuals. One says, I intend to do this, and God does not intend that he should and he blights it. Another says, I will pursue this course and God turns his feet into quite another. One is ambitious for this and God just breaks his ambition and makes him willing to do what the will of God is concerning him. I would set before you the reigning of God. No man is a king to himself. "I will be thy King". Watch His providence. If you have wisdom from heaven to do it you will never lack a providence to watch. You will always have some dealing of God with you that will be of, not mere interest, but of everlasting concern, for what is, in the providence of God, done for us here has some relation to eternity. I would press that on you. The providence of God with you here has some relation to eternity. How can that be? Your affections are affected, your movements are affected, your heart is affected, your spirit is affected either for good or evil. If you follow the advice of Job's wife - "Curse God and die" - what an awful thing that may be. If you follow the practice of Lot's wife, see the evil that followed. Watch providence, my friends. It is not simply a matter of interest but of real concern and of abiding concern. "The Lord reigneth".

He reigns by means. He reigns by means of His Word. It is very likely that not one of us has ever fully entered into the importance of Holy Scripture with respect to ourselves. Israel despised and turned away from God's statutes. The statutes of Israel were what the Word of God had given them. He had spoken to them. Now His Word is in our hands. It tells us of many things which relate to ourselves. It tells us concerning ourselves that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? Now if you do not believe that, if you, on the contrary, say, it is not so bad; I am not conscious of it being so wicked as it is there declared, and you are left to go on in that unbelief, here you may be a Pharisee; not in hell. Disbelief of the Scripture is one of the most awful sins that a man can commit. It may only be in your own mind and your outward conduct may be quite correct, but the unbelief of the Scripture is one of the most awful sins you can commit. Do we believe the heart to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, not because we have heard about it, but because the Scripture declares it? Then we shall be afraid of that heart. Whoso trusteth in his own heart is a

fool, and a fool for eternity unless sovereign grace prevent; a fool for eternity. "The simple pass on and are punished". The Scriptures tell us that no man can save, or keep alive, his own soul; that salvation is of the Lord; that to be justified we must have a righteousness that we did not work ourselves; that to be pure we must be sanctified by the blood of Christ; that to be fit to die we must have a nature like heaven. Do you believe it? But this Word is a reigning, sovereign word, and you will be judged by it. One day you will be judged by the Scriptures. You will believe, from an awful necessity. If you sink into perdition, you will believe the law of Moses. If you are saved you will believe the gospel of Jesus Christ; not otherwise. So in these particulars the Lord reigneth. How many of you have ever believed and felt this in your consciences? Have kneeled before the Lord, your Maker, and confessed to Him that you have a nature utterly depraved; that you are lost.

"Let the people tremble". Very few, comparatively, tremble. Many ungodly people have trembled at the Word of God, the reigning providence of God. Who can imagine the hell that entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot when he found that he had betrayed innocent blood and God pursued him with His terrors and he went out and hanged himself. It was a solemn providence of God that drove that wicked man out of the world by his own hand. We little know - not at all except God teach us - what we are capable of doing and it were good for us to be trembling at the consideration of the sovereignty of God. Abimelech trembled when God spoke to him respecting Sarah and he delivered her to Abraham, her husband, and one would believe, that, hardened though he was, Abimelech trembled when he found that he was going against God. I will go back again, he said, if I am displeasing Thee. God reigned. He reigns among people and, as respecting the world, the day is coming and indeed has come to many in their hearts, when men's hearts fail them for fear. They begin to see that something is coming over which they can have no control. Nations talking about peace and arming themselves for war. Nations turning their backs on God and prophesying good to themselves; pride in our own nation; good days coming, etc. "Let the people tremble".

Now there are some people who tremble in a good way and to them the Lord speaks a very kind word. "To that man will I look and with

him will I dwell that is of a humble and contrite spirit and that trembleth at My word." This looks kindly at some of us. He knows we tremble lest we should not be found at the right hand of God; that we tremble lest we should be found outside the Covenant of Grace. Tremble lest we should not have an interest, and know and feel it, in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. We tremble greatly at times lest, very hard in our hearts, we should be forsaken of God, cast out of His presence, and the Spirit of God taken from us. I know what I am saying is true. It may be true of many of you, that you tremble at the holy Word of the living God. Vital religion is such, that all who are born again desire to have it and therefore, feeling destitute of it, they tremble lest they should so die.

"He sitteth between the cherubims". This has a gospel face. Make an Ark, said God to Moses, of Shittim wood, cover it within and without with gold. Put the testimony that I shall give thee into that Ark; cover it with the Mercy Seat; put cherubims on that Mercy Seat. Why all this? For this reason - "I will meet with thee there and commune with thee." He dwells there still, not in the type, but in the fulfilment, even the fulfilment of that type, in the Person of the Lord Jesus. He sitteth there. What for? To receive sinners and eat with them. Moses approached God before that Mercy Seat, a type of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. And on that Mercy Seat and by that mediation, sinners are invited to come, and do come, in the power of the Holy Ghost for salvation, for grace, for wisdom, for righteousness, for pardon, for strength, and for the work of the Holy Ghost to be carried on in their hearts. There they come with their troubles. He sitteth there to hear cases. If you have a case, the Lord give you to see that you will be more welcome there than to any friend who might sympathise with you. We little know the kindness of Jesus Christ. We little believe that He has delight in the coming to Him of the poorest and the wickedest of men who have repentance in their souls. "Come unto Me". He sitteth; He does not stand as one who has just to make a movement to depart. He sitteth there. He is content. The sitting expresses that He is content to be there. All His perfections are there, and they are quite content. The blood of Jesus contents them all. And so He sitteth. He is in no hurry to go away my friends. I wish I believed it more than I do and I wish you all believed it. He is in no hurry. Jehovah in all His perfections sitteth there in the

Person of the Lord Jesus. Have you then a need? Go to Him with it. A sin that threatens to destroy you? Go to Him with it. A devil that hates you? Go to Him with it. A heart that plagues you? Seek Him. He sitteth there. O this is wonderful, that a poor, guilty creature, should have revealed to him this wonderful thing. "He sitteth between the cherubims". You have it in a further Psalm. O Thou that ledest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. What is this shining but the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? And where is that? In the glorious gospel of Christ. Where is all the fulness to supply the needs of the Church? In Jesus Christ. "Of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace". He, the God of all grace, the God of all comfort, the Father of all mercies, sitteth between the cherubims. Are you under the law? God give you to see that the perfect, unbroken law of God is in the Ark, and to see the blessed anti-type of that, where Christ, in the Psalms, says, "Thy law is within My heart. I delight to do Thy will, O My God". What was God's will in respect of the law which was in the heart of Christ? It was that Christ should die. A perfect law, perfectly fulfilled. What part of it was left unfulfilled? Not one. Not an iota left unfulfilled. And it is a very beautiful truth - may the Lord open it to us - that Christ magnified and honoured the law, and He greatly honoured it when He was buried. So when you feel the law in its power, fear it in its curse, God give you grace to see where the law is, in the heart of Christ, and go to Him with that fear.

Then you have trouble and need sympathy and the dearest friend you have cannot sympathise with you in any effectual way. The Saviour can. He is able to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. He sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth stagger, and it will stagger, it will tremble. Against the world, the Lamb will appear, and when that day of appearing comes, captains, kings, great men, seeing Him coming in the glory of His Father and of His holy angels, will cry to the rocks and to the mountains, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that cometh and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Now I pray the Lord may help us, as a little people, to believe that He reigneth, to be rejoicing that He reigneth, to be thankful



that He reigneth and to come to Him as a King, yea as our own King and ask that He would reign over us.

AMEN.