

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham on Sunday
Morning 23 February 1919

JOB 22 verse 29

"When men are cast down then they shall say there
is lifting up, and He shall save the humble person."

The speaker in the text was one of the three unwise men who misunderstood Job because they did not understand God very fully and the Lord reproved them and told them to go to Job, who should pray for them. But they did, these three men did, ~~they~~ ~~some~~ say some things that were wise, and this text is one of them, I judge. When men are cast down - Jobs, God's servants, seeing them cast down, and knowing God, should say to them "there is lifting up" There shall be a change. Wait for God. Despair not. Look for better things. Lift up your head. There is lifting up. God Himself shall lift you up, and when you are of low eyes, or you see men of low eyes, humble, men who think little of themselves, except that they think of their sinfulness and think much of that, and who, thinking much of their sinfulness, think themselves to be nothing but worms and corrupt creatures, God shall save them. This is the text. God help us to look at it properly,

When men are cast down. There are some particular things which cast down the Lord's people. There are three that I shall mention in particular this morning. First, a knowledge of God. One said "The Almighty troubleth me". If you never are troubled at a sight and sense of God, you will indeed live and die in an evil case. The greatness of God, the majesty of God, His glory shining in a broken law, His tremendous, but just, claims upon us as we are His creatures. These things, perceived by the teaching of the Spirit, will cause all who are blessed with that teaching, to be troubled, for we must needs die and stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ, to receive in our body according to that we have done, whether it be good, or whether it be bad. Ah, sinner, practical atheism may make you happy apparently, but God will open your eyes one day, either in terrible judgement through Eternity, or in mercy here, whereby you will be troubled. Ignorance of God leaves men at liberty to sin, and sin is to them a cheap thing for the time. Oh, but later!

The second thing that troubles men is their sinfulness, their weakness, their unfitness to live, their unpreparedness to die. Sin

is a monster, a filthy thing, the transgression of the law, enmity to God, a power which is likened to a law, the law of sin, the law which reigns, commands, coerces, restrains, keeps men from right ways, hurries them on in wrong courses. This, when felt, is a thing that casts men down. "I would do good", a gracious and a very great saint said "but evil is present with me and how to perform that which is good I find not." And he could not lightly say - I am not going to be troubled, I am in the covenant and God has chosen me and redeemed me and I am safe. O no, that is not the language of the gospel, that is not the teaching of the Spirit. That great saint I have just mentioned, the Apostle Paul, said "O wretched man that I am". Who can say what tears this made him shed, what grief it filled him with, what shame it covered him with, what casting down he felt. - "Within were fears" he once said "without were fightings". Sin, felt, does cast men down. See if you know what that means - sin does cast men down. It hinders them from good.

The third thing is the providence of God which often troubles people and which I need not say to you, troubles all people to-day. Not this particular family, or that person singled out, but nations are troubled today by the awful, but holy, wise providence of God. We have come from one awful evil, but how many more we are to see, to fall under the power, the destructive power of, only the Lord fully knows. But it seems that it would be madness in us to shut our eyes to present conditions, because God is in them. Therefore it is best that we should look them in the face. O saints of God, we shall never get well through trouble by averting our gaze from it. Trouble is before us. What the Lord will do with this nation and with the nations of the earth, I am not going to pretend to say, but I do not think that anyone could deny that all the signs of the times are most portentous, all appearances are terrible. Think of what we are confronted with if God avert not, that great threat that is hanging over this land and when men see their sins, when, as must be the case with all exercised people, when they see the sins of these nations - the popery, the infidelity, the profanity, the wickedness in all classes, running through the whole of society, touching the very church of God herself, what can men say but they are cast down. Personally, I must say I live in great heaviness for what is likely to come upon my beloved nation and what is threatening the church of the living God. What is it to be cast down by these things? It is to feel their weight - the weight of God's majesty, the full weight of His justice in His great claims on a wicked man, a wicked community.

When the hand of God is lifted up and the saints see it lifted up, that is the cause of casting down. "Yea, in the way of Thy judgements O God, have we waited for Thee". They were not blind to those judgements. They did not cast them away as it were from them and say - "We believe heaven is ours and we will take no notice of those things." They were cast down by them. If you do not regard the operations of God's hand, depend upon it, according to scripture, He will destroy you. It is to be cast down when you feel the enormity of your sins, when you feel there is no creature at whom you can cast a stone, that there is no sin you hear of or read about or see, that you yourself could not, would not, if left, commit. O, it is a casting down when you see and feel the hand of God in rebukes upon you for your personal sins, when you are not left to say "why am I thus afflicted" but rather to say "I wonder I am so little afflicted, so little distressed. I wonder the hand of God is so lightly upon me."

Men are cast down by providential things when they are surrounded, when a hewn stone wall is round about them, and they cannot escape the trouble. When a thorn hedge is about them and if they rush here or turn there or press in another place, they will hurt themselves. O, to be surrounded by judgements, is a casting down thing, but it is not despair my friends. To be cast down is not despair. Satan may paint this religion that I try to speak to you about in very false colours. He may make you say "Well, but that is a miserable, moping thing", but it is not despair. Paul says "Cast down, but not in despair". Where are you cast down to? Cast down as to your strength, cast down as before God. "Lord in trouble have they visited Thee". That is the place to go. Rightly cast down, you confess your sins. You confess that you deserve the rod. You say "If it should needful be and it is, O hold me up while I am under it. Sanctify it to me. Save me. It is to have faith in exercise on a chastising God. After I was chastised I repented. One cast down is a repenting sinner. He sees his sins. He feels his sins. He wonders at the dealings of God with him, that they are not worse, and he waits on God for deliverance. When men are thus cast down, little in their own eyes, when they are cast down by God's dealings with them into the dust of self-abasement, when rebellion is taken from their hearts as to its dominion, when they can accept God's dealings with them, when they can fall into His dear and most gracious hands, when they can feel that He is a wise God, and when they can say in their souls "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned

against Him, until He plead my cause"; when they can join with the prophet and say "Although the fig tree blossom not, though there be no herd in the stall, though the fruit of the olive fail, yet I will rejoice, and if they cannot rejoice, they can hope and say "Hope in God", that is, as I judge, a healthy and spiritual condition. When men are cast down, they are vile, but God deals with them, rebels, but their heavenly Father chastens them. They need to be humbled and He takes pains with them to humble them. They are cast down in a right way.

Now it is said in the text that when this is the case with men, it shall be said to them - "There is lifting up" One shall say "You have got a good God, He wont forsake you. He is dealing with you because He loves you. He is chastening you, because you are His son. He will bless you, He will lift you up. Now what is this lifting up? I take it to be first the bright shining of God's grace in the face of Jesus Christ upon a poor cast down sinner. He says - "I am fit for nothing but hell" He feels it sincerely, he confesses it humbly, but, while he is in this condition, while he is judging himself, and is thus chastened of the Lord, there comes into his heart a surprising light. He has had the light before, the light of God's majesty, but now it is the light of His mercy, the light of His mercy in Jesus Christ, and that imparts instantly, that lifts the man up, that says to the sinner "Hope in God" It is like that that Moses got when the Lord passed by him in a time of great sorrow and proclaimed His name - "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands." It is like the Lord sending Ezekiel to the captivity. We read in the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy that the Lord sent him by the river where the captives were and, so, when a sinner is cast down by a sense of the majesty of God, He veils that in the face of Jesus Christ, and shines in the face of Jesus Christ, into a cast down soul. It brings a change at once. It is like a renewal of the face of the earth. It is like God coming to a poor, distraught sinner, and saying to him "O turn your eyes to Me.". The sinner has been looking on God and been afraid, but now he sees God in the face of Jesus Christ - the Person of Jesus Christ, and it has a great effect. It lifts him up. It lifts him up in hope. It does for his spirit what the angel did to Daniel when, seeing God's glory, he fell flat down and was like a dead man, feeling his corruption. There was a kindly look, a sweet word, and Daniel said "O my Lord, speak now, speak to me" for Daniel had now been put upon his knees.

Then he stood up. It is just like that when the Lord shines in the gospel of Jesus Christ into a sinner's heart. From being flat in his corruptions, he rises in a living hope, to kneel in fervent prayer. He waits on his God as he sees Him in the face of Jesus Christ. Now I think I may say that some of you must understand this, that the Lord has wrought a change. Has not told you that you are better than you are, has not made you feel that your nature is anything but what you have confessed and felt it to be, but He shows you Himself as a Saviour, Himself as suitable to you. They shall say there is lifting up. Yes, poor sinner, your despairing feelings may have lasted a long time, your eyes may have often been turned on the majesty of God, and you trembled. They may often have been turned within yourself, and you have sunk again and again, lower and lower in self-despising, and in a feeling that, whoever may be saved, you daren't hope to be saved, but O, when some sight of Jesus Christ has been granted to you, then it has been lifting up. Mark it. If from lying flat in trembling before God's image, you are raised up to a feeling of hope in your spirit to pray, to look to Christ, to plead His blood, to hope in His mercy, to wait on God for His gracious coming, that is a good measure of lifting up. Sweet, O sweet, sweet it is to get a view of Jesus Christ. O it stops all despair, it bids a sinner hope in God, it tells him that his corruptions shall not destroy him, and that the majesty of God will not come out against him to cut him off, for He is gracious to sinners - "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin". That is the sight that God gives to a poor creature who is cast down. It never troubles me to see people well cast down. It is one of the best things they can have. It is like a preparation for the gospel, a preparatory work. Children are sent to a preparatory school, and God sometimes sends His children a preparatory work, a humbling work, opening their eyes to see Himself, and then to see their sins. After that comes a sight of Jesus Christ. When you are cast down by reason of your sinfulness, that sight and sense of your sinfulness would seem to say to you - there is no ground for hope. O, the sight of what you are is a killing thing. It kills self-righteousness, it kills our own strength. It is a distracting thing, fills us with confusion. But dear friends, this is one of God's ways, that He prepares for Himself to come. He does not come to comfort a high-minded person. He does not come to bless one with a sense of pardon, who has no sense of sin. He comes to the guilty, and He gives such a touch of love and mercy

in Jesus Christ, that raises the sinner up. It lifts him up. "O" he says, "I cannot despair" He sings "If free grace, why not for me" You know it don't you? Midst all your depression there is lifting up, this exaltation of the valley, in which you lie, by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. God comes in the gospel. The gospel comes in the power of the Holy Ghost, and it says to the sinner - "Hope in God". It wont let you despair. One writes :-

Zion's mourners, cease your fear,
For lo the dying Lamb,
Utterly forbids despair,
To all that love His Name

and you could not have a sight of the dying Lamb, and not feel instantly a glory of love and hope in your heart. That is lifting up. O blessed lifting up. It brings the sinner out of his grave. "O my people I will bring you up out of your graves" and that is what this does. It sets them on their feet. It sets them on good ground. Blessed is the gospel. No wonder it is called the glorious gospel of the b lessed God. It saves the lost. It comforts every mourner. It strengthens every weak soul. It bids each poor sinner to whom it comes, to look to God for eternal life in Jesus Christ. It tells a sinner that, no matter how bad he is, how lost he feels, he shall be well at last through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. I know of no other good lifting up, nor do I wish to know any other, nor preach any other. They shall say there is lifting up and with respect to circumstances, the same shall be said. When Christ prophesied the overthrow and utter destruction of Jerusalem, foretold the terrible calamities that would come upon that wicked nation, that it should be taken away, what did He say to His disciples? - "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved" and when you are in trouble, when you are in sore perplexity, when you know not which way to turn, when it seems as if, should you turn this way, you will meet a lion, or should you go the other way, you will meet a bear, you will find God at every turn. It shall be said "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved". And what is that but to be hoping in God's mercy and looking for His protection, and seeking to follow the word of direction given by Jesus Christ - "Come unto Me" That is a direction and an invitation, and that is like the word in Isaiah - "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" You will get through my friends, if God is your hope. People who will be saved are the people who have

God for their hope. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God which made heaven and earth and all that therein is, which keepeth truth for ever," That is the God of Jacob. O happy, happy sinner who, in his troubles is raised up to a living hope in the living God, the God of love, and the God of mercy. All providential adversities shall be turned to good account by the Lord in the cases of all who hope in Him. "Hope thou in God" said a good man to his soul. Hope thou in God. And may the Lord help his children to say the same in their troubles. They shall say "there is lifting up".

Now in the next place, what are we lifted up to? Where are we taken to? If we are brought out of one place we must be taken into another place. Well the gospel tells us "Made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ" That is where God's people are happy. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. You wont be raised up to a good opinion of yourself. You wont be raised up to think now I shall stand. But you will be raised up in your weakness and in your distress and in your affliction to sit with Jesus Christ in His righteousness, in His atonement, in His love, in His mercy, and to be supported through all things by His power and that will do. You wont want anything else. Just look at this briefly - the place to which God will lift you. The sweet uplifting of your soul out of wretched self, out of gloom, out of trembling at the majesty of God, whose brightness you cannot bear, and out of that awful pollution of your nature, and out of that dreadful guilt of your nature. Lifted up and lifted out of the despair that your circumstances might verily produce in your mind, to sit with Christ. What harm can reach you here? What harm can reach your soul? Much hurt may come to your person, much dishonour may be done to you, much loss you may sustain, but O, what harm can really reach you as sustained thus, as sheltered thus, as thus sitting with Christ? And one might say here, here is peace, the sinner sits in peace. Who then can give trouble, when God giveth quietness? When He giveth quiet who then can make trouble? If the Lord shines upon you, then you know it and you are comfortable and happy. There are distinct points in true religion and this is one of them, that when the Lord lifts you up out of the wretched place you have been long in, lying helpless in, then you know the change. "They shall say there is lifting up". And He will lift you up to a very humble confidence. "I know that my Redeemer liveth" will be the language of your heart sometimes, that you have a friend in

heaven, a great, a dear friend in heaven, a brother born for your adversity. He will keep His love from first to last and Jesus is His Name. You will have a humble confidence in God's mercy and a humble confidence in your own standing in that mercy, and also you will believe that whatever is necessary for your good here below, God will give it to you, and I say to any of you, who may be lying down this morning, in this word "Cast down" - "When men are cast down" and you in that condition are mourning, sighing, sobbing perhaps, sometimes sending wails of distress to heaven (Nobody knows it except they see it in your countenance, that you are troubled) now I say to you, this awaits you, and the Lord give you power to wait for it, to wait for Him to come to you, this awaits you. This gospel will embrace you, this Jesus will visit you, this light will shine unto you, and that brightness will be such as that your heart will shine with it as it is said in one place "The earth shined with His glory" and your heart will shine with this glory of God coming to you. Wait on Him and you will find He will strengthen your heart. Wait I say on the Lord.

And He shall save the humble person. The marginal reading is - Him that hath low eyes. Him that hath low views of himself. The man whom God has bruised and taken pains with. The man who is enabled to say - "Now I would not be in another path than that which God has chosen for me. And who can say, sometimes, "The cup which God has given me to drink I desire grace to drink it." The man who looks at himself. As Asaph looked at himself, he said "So foolish and brutish was I, I was as a beast before Thee". Who can say with Job - "Behold I am vile". God will save him. He brings down high looks. He saves men of low eyes, humble minds. They look on the world. O what an empty thing it is. They look on their circumstances and O how empty they seem to be. They look on their friends, and while they love and value them, they say "O how helpless they are when I come into trouble." Then they look on God by precious faith and they see in Him all that they need and He will save them. He will save the humble person. And what is this being saved? Saved from despair, saved from rebellion, saved from making haste. Blessed with a spirit of prayer and the grace of supplication. Blessed with a jealousy, with a fear of being wrong, with a desire to be right, with faith in the bleeding Lamb, to petition, to wrestle, to look, to long, to hunger and thirst after righteousness. And this humble person shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Christ and this humble person shall meet together. O it is lovely when Christ and

the sinner meet, when Christ and a sinner mutually embrace. O, it is beautiful beyond all expression, when the Lord of life and glory comes to a black and polluted and ragged creature, and takes away all that has been such a source of shame and cause of weakness and trouble, and gives him Himself. I wonder how many in this chapel there are who are going to be saved like this. I will tell you. As many of you as are of high eyes, will think much of yourself, and much of the world, and mean to do this and mean to do that. He wont save you at present. What He will do with you, if He will have mercy on you, will be to cast you down. He casteth down the mighty from their seats and He will cast you down. But, as many as are truly mean, of low eyes, little in their own eyes, who think it would be an infinite mercy if God should look on them, well this salvation is on its way. It may take weeks to come as the angel was weeks and weeks hindered by the devil from reaching Daniel, but it will come. Wait for it. He will save the humble person. May the Lord save you and save me and grant that we may see this, His power, His love, and His glory, coming into our hearts that they may shine therewith.

Amen.