

1397-59
La 9812

Sermon preached by Mr. J.K. Popham
on Sunday evening, 17th. Sept. 1933

Text: Psalm 145 v. 7

"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great
goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness."

* * * * *

Worship in the church is for the glory of God. Vital religion consists largely in worship. The other part of religion is begging, - the honourable business of begging. It is an honourable business when it is a transaction with God; and when begging has been successful, then praises should, they do in measure, follow. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. - Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me:" saith the Lord, "and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." This psalm is a psalm of celebration of the goodness of God, and blessed be God, there are some people in this congregation who can use words in the next psalm as their own. "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, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever." Let such praise God.

We have in the text, several points. First the memory, second the utterance of what is remembered, and third, what the song is that shall be sung, - that is sung. "They . . . shall sing of Thy righteousness." First, memory. It may very well be, that some here do say at times,

"My memory bad, but what is sad,
Can folly still retain;"

but the prayer is -

"O fill it, Lord, with Thy sweet word,
And let it there remain."

God uses memory. He has given it to men. It is used badly, where there is no grace. It is used graciously, where there is grace, and sometimes it is used to rebuke unbelief. Used to set before the eye of the mind, past dealings of God; operations of His hand. You may, in a hasty spirit, say, "All men are liars." You may say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? - Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore?" You will come to say,

by the Spirit's grace, "This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." God uses memory. Makes it very lively; brings, if I may so speak, brings clear, vivid pictures before you, of what God has done for you in past days. What has He done? Well, He has taken pains to humble us. Do not think that vital religion is all 'up in the sky'. A great deal is in the dust. A great deal is on your knees. A great deal is in the reproofs of life; in what God is pleased to say to you: what He is pleased to cause you to find in your own heart's life and conduct, if nowhere else. Then you have grave fears. What will He do? This is an operation of the Holy Spirit which we do well to ask God to enable us to regard. How much some of us have lost, by not regarding the operation of conviction; of opening to us our corruptions; of reproofing us for our indulgence of sin: our following an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But a saving operation of the Spirit sets these things before us in the light of His own countenance, and stirs up memory so that we see the past days of our lives to have been very wayward, very little for the honour of God. Now that is a part of God's goodness. People may think themselves happy if they miss what seems to them a miserable religion, but they are not happy in their state. It is not a mercy to miss reproof. The reproof of life is given and the wise will receive it. The rod has a voice and the wise man will hear what it says. Now that is one thing that you have to remember, you who are the subjects of the operation of God's hands. It is a very humbling operation. It fills with many fears, many apprehensions of evil, because evil is deserved. Many fears lest God should not speak to you again favourably; lest He should permit sin to have more dominion: lest He should permit you to fall a prey to some evil thing in your nature, some bitterness, some hardness of heart, some wandering, some gadding, some backsliding. If you get this operation, do remember it, - do regard it.

The second operation of God's hand which you will remember sometimes is this. That while you are enabled to humble yourself and get into the lowest room, into the dust; confess with tears in your hearts, if not running down your face, that you have behaved yourself shamefully, disobeyed, wandered, and done evil things as you could, in your hearts; while that is going on, the gracious Spirit of God turns the mind, the faith, the eye, to the Lord Jesus,

in whom is all fulness, goodness, grace, wisdom, prudence, whereby you see a Remedy for that painful malady. And that raises hope; that brings you to feel how good the Lord is, how happy is the man who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope does not fail like the hope of the hypocrite, "whose hope is in the Lord his God." Now this is to be remembered. When Jesus appears; when His blood is your plea, when hope springs, when love moves, and when, if I may so put it, there steals quietly into your heart a sweet peace, you hardly understand it but you feel a sweet peace coming, a peace that passeth all understanding, a peace that is stronger than your fears, a peace that has God for its object, the Fountain of love for its source and for your supply.

Sometimes divine dealings in providence do greatly affect the Lord's people. Straightness may come, emptiness may come, dealings strange, that you would not have, that you found it difficult to be resigned to. These take hold of you, you are filled with fear, with apprehensions of worse things coming. You look at self and there is nothing to hope for there, all props taken away, sources seem dried up. Providence may be a rod speaking to you. Telling you that you have gone astray; that this is sent to fetch you back; saying you have walked in pride, this is to humble you; saying you depended on such and such sources, these dried up: you must go to God for supplies. Now when providence affects the heart in that way, that is an operation of God's kindness to bring the soul into the dust and to cause it to make humble confession of many, many sins. Providence also has been a delivering thing. Some deliverance, some wonder wrought for you. You have been enabled to walk in that Scripture, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," and then you may have felt, 'Now I am sure deliverance is coming. How, when, and by what means, I do not know, but deliverance is coming,' and that makes you very humble. Grace is contrary to nature. Prosperity in nature has a tendency to pride, but prosperity reviving hope in God, has a very powerful humbling effect. Temptation may have been sent to chastise, and you have fallen under the chastisement. That has done you good. Now this, with many mercies I cannot name now, are to be remembered. There has always been, and will be to the end of time, in the church, a succession of men to praise the Lord, - to utter the memory of His great goodness. This goodness is in what I have named to you. Also in the appearance of God for you; in the blood of the everlasting covenant to do you good; in the sweet promises that God has spoken on your hearts,

to your deep humbling and your rejoicing. "Great goodness!" Great beyond all expectations; great beyond all you could have imagined. You have to say, perhaps, 'I never thought God would be so kind to me; I never thought His hand would be so opened to me; I never expected Him to do for me what He has done.' It is great, exceedingly great. Like His promises, - "exceeding great and precious promises."

Now the text is, "They shall abundantly utter," - speak of these great goodnesses. The remembrance of them is a very pleasant thing; very sweet sometimes. "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work," the psalmist said to the Lord. And now that he remembered God from various places, he said he would praise Him, and addressing his soul he said, "Hope thou in God." This memory is very lively. It has God for its object; His goodness for matter of praise. The utterance of it is praising Him. Yes, you may think praise is a great deal too high for you, but when you remember your unregeneracy and remember how God called you; when you remember how He led you in the deeps and how you feared; when you remember how the gospel, the glorious gospel of Christ, came in sweet beams into your mind and heart, and how the Lord Jesus was made precious to your soul, then you cannot avoid, you cannot help, praising Him. "They shall abundantly," that is, without stint, plentifully, largely, "utter." They utter it in several ways. First, in secret. Not many people, comparatively speaking, can understand Dr. Goodwin's word, "Jesus Christ is most glorified in secret," but it is so. When you remember these things you want to get by yourself, get into your room, close the door, and your heart sings. Your eyes shed tears of gratitude and your soul is deeply humbled, and you bless God for His kindnesses to you, - His promises, His rebukes, His chastenings, His heavy rod, His sore afflictions. You cannot leave these out. No, we shall not have any in heaven but we shall have them as long as we live here. Every child of God knows what I am saying is true: that he wants, desires, and seeks to get into a secret place to bless God by uttering before Him all His kindnesses, and that is acceptable and accepted. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." . . . Mind secret religion . . . There is no substitute for secret prayer. There is no substitute for secret praise. The ear of God is open when men get into the secret place of the Most High and utter praises. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

Is not that what some of us have sung sometimes when no ear but His was open to the praise? You looked at your state; where you had been; to what He had brought you; what He has said to you; the comforts wherewith He has comforted you: and you say, 'O bless His name.' I should like to die praising Him. It is such a worthy occupation and He takes it so kindly at the hands of sinners who utter before Him His praise. They are due to Him. O saints of the Most High, bless this good God. Utter His praises and if you have no friend at the time, never mind, let it go out in secret. Yea, when you are walking about your house, doing your duties or engaged in your business, your heart may be up to the Lord, thanking, praising, blessing Him for His great kindness to you.

"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness" - in the church. Where did Jesus preach? In the church. What did He do? Proclaimed and preached the name of His Father in the great congregation. He thus has set us an example that we should follow His steps. You have got gracious fellow members. You may live near to them, and what do you want? To get near them - get with them and tell them. When God pardoned my sins, I walked one day more than five miles to tell a godly friend what He had done for me; and you will find sometimes you must speak in the church to thank and praise and adore this ever-blessed Jesus Christ for His kindness to you. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness." Some of you here who fear God may be now withholding what is due from you to Him and to the church. You owe praise to Him and you owe it to the church, to the brotherhood. The Lord give you grace to withhold it no longer, give you grace to praise and utter the memory of His great goodness. 'I have nothing to say,' one says. - You do not know what God may give you. - Ask Him! He "giveth to all men liberally," who pray, "and upraideth not." Ask Him to be gracious to you in this respect. And you may utter His praise, His goodness and the memory of it in your family. You may feel constrained sometimes just to say that God has been good to you; that He has taken pains to humble you; that He used that painful circumstance to bring you into the dust, to confess your sin; and then He raised you up by some sweet operation of His Spirit, bringing peace and hope and godly fear and true humility; and you have to tell it to some in your house. And all that, is for the praise and glory of God. We may sometimes feel we wish we could live to His glory. Sometimes we may have made a great mistake. - We may have

said, 'Lord, how can we live to Thy glory with this crook in our lot; this burden on our back: this sin working in us. How can we? Wait on Him! O my friends, wait on Him when you are low. He raiseth all that be bowed down. He healeth the sick soul. He pours in His consolation, grants His unction, so that the sinner finds himself constrained to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. - - - Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; - - - Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." And you will have the answer of a good conscience when you utter the memory of His great goodness to you. And not that only - "And shall sing of Thy righteousness."

First, take the righteousness of God to be His glorious perfection. Do you praise Him for it? Have you ever felt thankful that God is what He is; that you would not wish Him to be any otherwise than He is. In other words, have you been constrained to sing the praise of Jehovah out of love to His Being. Perhaps not many of us have attained to that; that for Himself, apart from any good given or any mercy bestowed; just for Himself, you have loved and praised Jehovah. I am disposed to say that that is a great attainment, but not an impossible one. You may one day see Him by faith in the perfections of His nature and then you will bless Him for being what He is. It lifts the soul out of self very graciously, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to show what God is. - Just and right; perfect in all His ways; without iniquity; a pure, glorious, holy Being; eternal, self existent, receiving nothing from creation: but making worlds and giving out of His goodness all that you see that is right. O what a Being He is! Sometimes you may hesitate and say, 'Do I know Jehovah? Has He ever made Himself real to me, as Jehovah, in the Trinity Of His Persons; in the glory of His Being; in the infinity of His Being: in all the glorious perfections of His Being the Scripture sets forth?' They shall sing of this righteousness.

Then, they shall sing of the righteousness which justifies the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. Yes, believeth in Jesus - in His righteousness that brings justification into the soul. And that, then becomes a truth in experience. There is "no condemnation" . . . to whom? . . . To sinners who believe in Jesus. - "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

When this becomes an experience, and it does become an experience, then the sinner sings of this. This He sings: "This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness." Ah sinner, this is the garment for heaven. This is the robe for beauty and glory. This is the perfection with which God is pleased. This is that, that makes a man without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, without anything blameworthy. This robe . . . Let us sing of it, let us sing of it! They "shall sing of Thy righteousness." Ah, it is great to be able to say -

"When I stand before the throne,
Clothed in beauty, not my own."

A great thing. O sinner, if you have no robe of your own; if the Holy Ghost has, by His operation, stripped you of your filthy rags, and then set before your faith this beautiful robe, you will want to sing of it. To "sing of Thy righteousness."

Then, to sing of the righteous teaching of God. Whom shall He teach knowledge? Poor ignorant sinners who do confess their ignorance. The apostle prayed that the Colossian church might increase in the knowledge of God. He labored for them to this end, that they might be brought "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And every grace that we want, long to have, of which we see the beauty, the desirableness, and the blessedness, every such grace, comes from this blessed robe put on the soul. Humility, love, tender conscience, prizing of Jesus, feeling Him to be precious to your believing soul; all, all these things, come from this blessed righteousness that the Spirit of God brings and works. He works righteousness in the soul. He works righteousness in the soul. All His works are done in truth and in righteousness. Righteous feelings, righteous prayers, righteous believing, righteous humility, righteous prostration before the throne of grace, righteous cleaving to and following after Jesus Christ. You will sing all that. You will sing to the Spirit who wrought your faith and hope and love, and praise God for giving you such a righteous religion.

They "shall sing of Thy righteousness" in providence. Ah,

crooked things are righteous things. A crooked providence may heal your lame feet and keep them from turning out of the way. Mark that operation. Watch the providence of God and you will sing that it is a righteous providence. You will say one day, 'He hath done all things well, He hath done all things well.' What a confession to make! What a good feeling it is that all the crooks in your lot and all the difficulties in your way and all the sorrows you have had to endure, - all of them, well done! "Is it well with the child? - It is well." Is it well with a decaying business? It is well. Is it well with a sick body? It is well. Is it well with trouble in your family? It is well. Faith will sing this one day. A murmuring saint sings, 'It is well - He hath done all things well.' They shall sing, and they shall sing together. They shall sing in the church of God, where brotherhood is, where visible churches are. We do not need instruments, we only need simple singing: that is acceptable to God. A degenerate day brings in many evils into the church, the professing church. It has brought evils into our own churches, and now, where simplicity of worship used to be, you find something ornate; an instrument; a choir and something that pleases the ear. God keep us from it. I would rather we stumbled and could not sing sometimes than have what we might be taught and might be led into.

It comes to my memory what happened many, many years ago before I was joined to the church at Lutterworth. A good man, John Cole by name, walked, for more than thirty years, thirteen miles to Lutterworth and thirteen miles back, and was at his work at six o'clock on Monday morning. Well, in the Lutterworth church were a good many farm labourers, and their voices were not very musical. We had a blind leader of the singing who had been powerfully brought out of the Establishment. His voice was so beautiful, that you would be charmed to hear it, but it was not strong enough, sometimes, to control, and so, one Lord's day morning the singing broke down, and John Cole, standing six feet four or more, stood up, and unconscious that the singing was broken down, with tears streaming down his face, he went through the hymn alone . . . God was honoured . . . They "shall sing". Let us, as a little congregation, aim just at plain singing and nothing more. God is owned in that. Praise Him ye saints. Nature is called upon to praise God, -

The whole of nature:-

"Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
praise Him in the heights.

Praise ye Him, all His angels: praise ye
Him, all His hosts.

Praise ye Him, sun and moon: praise Him
all ye stars of light.

Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and
ye waters that be above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the Lord: for
He commanded, and they were created.

He hath also stablished them for ever and
ever: He hath made a decree which shall not
pass.

Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons,
and all deeps:

Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy
wind fulfilling His word:

Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees,
and all cedars:

Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things,
and flying fowl:

Kings of the earth, and all people; princes,
and all judges of the earth:

Both young men, and maidens; old men and
children:

Let them praise the name of the Lord: for
His name alone is excellent; His glory is
above the earth and heaven."

But, the saints praise Him. They praise Him for redeeming love. Sinless innocence is the angels', redemption is ours. Let us then, as we may be able, sing the righteousness of God. Righteous are all His ways, right are His judgements; holy is His truth. Praise Him for the Scriptures; praise Him for prayer; praise Him for hope; praise Him for love; praise Him for your being and praise Him for a hope of an eternal blessedness. Some may say, 'This is too high a key for us.' Well, do not scramble to get it. Pray for it! Ask the Lord to give it you. Ask Him to breathe His sweet peace and mercy into your dejected heart. Do not try to lose your dejection any way. Ask the Lord to remove it. He can do it! What joy it is to those who are favoured with grace to sing His righteousness. Now may this word be useful to us. "They shall abundantly," - not with stint, - abundantly out of their heart, - the abundance of their hearts. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness."

* * * * *