

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed" Chapel,
Brighton, Sunday morning 13th February 1966.

"For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead
bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the
head of all principality and power."

Colossians 2 v 9-10.

"For in Him", that refers us to the preceding verse, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The apostle gives this warning twice in this chapter, in the 4th verse he says, "And this I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." And therefore, we ought to take brief notice of this warning. In the first chapter he has declared that in Jehovah in whom is the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ, in whom, in that great God, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, "And this I say," says the apostle, "lest any many should beguile you with enticing words". All spiritual and heavenly knowledge and wisdom are to be found alone in God, therefore, the Lord Himself said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent".

Then we have the same warning the second time in the 8th verse; "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit". The religious world today is full of this philosophy, very subtle it is. I thought the opening hymn touched very clearly upon that point;

"No wit nor will of man,
Nor learning he may boast,
No power of reason can
Draw sinners unto Christ;
So fallen is nature, such her flaw,
None come, except the Father draw. "

But this is a scientific age. Science is good in its right sphere. There have been discovered those things that are of great service to mankind, they are good, but when science takes the lead - and it is advanced, they claim now to have reached the moon, and they expect to land a man upon the moon, whether that will benefit mankind is a great question. But when science begins to tamper with things outside of its domain, then the light of science is darkness; and if the light that is in them is darkness, how great is that darkness! But there is a great danger today, and I think of our dear young people. I wish them success in their studies and examinations, but I would repeat this warning that the apostle gives here: "Beware lest any man spoil you", that is, rob you, "through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." When one has to study mathematics and science, unless the fear and grace of God is in their heart, they will attempt to approach the things of God in a scientific way. I quite appreciate that, but I would give a warning, it is fatal. Human learning is good when it is sanctified for natural things, it belongs to the earth, but the things of God, the things of the Spirit are entirely different, and I do hope that our dear young friends will remember this.

"Beware lest any man spoil you," and it can have a very powerful influence. Natural science properly demands the reason for every proposition, must know why and how things are arrived at. But if you bring human reason to bear upon the things of God, then reason is out of its place, you see then this warning; "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ," for - and that gives a reason for the text, "For in Him",

He is above science. He is the creator of the world. In the preceding chapter we read of His fullness, "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist". What a blessed majesty ! What a declaration ! There is all divine wisdom and divine power; and if a man by faith, gets a sight of the infinite God, it will put all things in their right place. It will put human science in its right place; "For a natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned". O may these few remarks sink deep into the minds of our dear young friends. I wish you success, that success that will be good for you in this life, but may the Lord make that distinction in your heart and conscience, that you need a different wisdom to make you wise unto salvation than you do to reach the moon. It is not the same thing at all. They have found out how to reach the moon, but that science will never reach God. I will read the warning once more -

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ".

O what a terrible accountability some of our religious leaders will have to give to God for the damage that they have done to young people; religious atheists from the Archbishop of Canterbury down to the poorest Curate ! And then he says, "For in Him", in Christ, "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily". There is a fullness mentioned in the preceding chapter, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell". Those two fullnesses are distinguishable, you cannot separate them, but they are not exactly the same, and we would just show that distinction.

In the text it says, "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily", and that is the fullness of the divine perfection, here in Christ in His human nature, eternity, immutability, immensity, omniscience, omnipresence, all the divine perfections were in Christ, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". Otherwise He would not be equal to God. He did not cease to be God when He became man. Isaiah had a vision of this glory of Christ; he saw Him high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple; that is, the whole train of divine attributes and perfections filled His human nature. O what a person He is ! But that fulness in the preceding chapter is a mediatorial fulness that is communicated to His people. The fullness of the text cannot be communicated, eternity, omnipotence, immutability, omniscience, cannot be communicated to a creature, but the blessedness of it is that the fulness of the Mediator which is communicated to His people partakes of the fulness of divine perfections that are in Him. Therefore, when He gives grace, it is invincible grace, because He Himself is invincible. It is impregnable grace because of His eternal Being, self derived Being. His love which is shed abroad in the heart is immutable love, because He is immutable.

Now for a minute, listen to this O you young people; There is the fulness, there is the glory of God in Christ, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" ... "For in Him", not in scientists, not in human science, that may get you through the world but it will never reach your soul or take you to heaven, it will give you a knowledge of God, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him". But we would bring these two fulnesses together, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell..For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily", O if this is made over to faith it will make Christ precious, make Him great. In this fulness that it pleased the Father should dwell in Him, there is a complete fulness that lacks nothing at all. To my mind those verses in the 1st

chapter from the 16th verse down to the 19th are very glorious. I do feel a jealousy this morning for the glory of God and as Paul says in the opening of this chapter, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you". I feel a great conflict and concern about our dear young people. But if we read those verses 16 - 19 in the 1st chapter, what a beauty there is ! Here is the fulness; "By Him were all things created". The fulness of creation is in Him and from Him. O it would, if men did but know this God, it would clothe them with humility, it would enoble them. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him ?" "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him". That is a part of His communicable fulness. Nothing was created for Himself, but for men, and the fulness of providence is His. His divine sovereignty controls it, orders it, maintains it. And then that 17th verse, what a majesty is there ! "He is before all things and by Him all things consist".

"Eternal ages saw Him shine,
He shines eternal ages hence"

And I will keep referring you to that warning, as you hear that blessed glory and majesty of Christ, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". And so we have set before us the glory of God in Christ. Divine perfections in human nature together with a fulness that is in Christ Jesus, to be communicated in creation to all His creatures, in grace to His unworthy people.

"For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". What a good word this is for empty sinners ! With regard to those perfections, while they cannot be communicated, yet look at the benefit of them. In the 1st chapter to the Corinthians we read, "Therefore let no man glory in men..." "That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption". O the completeness of it ! It sets before us a fulness, a fulness of grace, a fulness of life, but it is very solemn to be beguiled and spoiled through philosophy.

In the 10th John, concerning the Lord Jesus as a shepherd, we read of thieves, and these thieves are these religious philosophers. The thief cometh in for to steal and to rob and to destroy, and that is just what our religious leaders are doing, they are thieves, robbers, "But I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." O what a good thing, what a mercy it would be if the Lord should so shine with a true light into your understanding so as to make Christ a necessity, as a refuge, as a hiding place, as a Redeemer and make Himself precious in our hearts !

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The two things are so precious, and it sets before us the glory of Emmanuel, the mystery of godliness. That the eternal God the Son should take into union with His divine Person a real human nature, and that in that human nature should dwell all the divine perfections of God; brought down to this world, so that all the work that He accomplished derived its authority, its virtue, its salvation, its saving benefits from the perfections of God in Christ. "Beware lest any man spoil you". Modern religion is aiming to destroy the foundation, "And if the Foundation be destroyed, what shall the righteous do ?" There is nothing else. If we are going to deny the inspiration of the Word

of God, what have you got left, where are you ? There is no anchorage, there is no moral code, no moral law, and it is for this reason - we for the most part have rejected the word of God, that we are where we are. We are all adrift, we have drifted from our moorings. O that the Lord would awaken us as a Nation and as individuals and stamp this 8th verse indelibly upon our conscience. My poor words are so feeble but I could wish that all the young people here present, not to hear me, but for the Holy Ghost to impress that 8th verse upon each of their hearts. The world is full of this vain deceit and science foolishly so called; but blessed be God the Holy Ghost will still carry on His work. His teaching is infallible, His grace is invincible.

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". O that word bodily has been like a sheet anchor. What the Lord Jesus condescended to bring to this earth, made a contact with it which nothing else could have done. When Adam fell, death flooded the whole universe and the whole of the souls of men, O what a flood of death, of iniquity, when Adam fell. And everyone would have perished. It makes that word very great, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly".

I remember this text on a Thursday preceding the Good Friday, and thinking of the Good Friday and the object of it, the sufferings of Christ, it was as though the Spirit took me by the hand to Calvary and to look upon Christ there and say, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". And when you come to trace these divine perfections in every thought and every motion, in every act, in every suffering, in all His temptations, all His reproaches and all His perfect obedience rendered to the law, in the perfection of the payment that He made for the debts of His people. Divine perfection, in His groans and agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and the perfection as upon the cross of Calvary. And then this fulness too, of grace and life and merit and mercy and redemption and unsearchable riches - "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him".

Of course, if it was merely this, that there was a fulness in Christ and it remained there, there would be no benefit; but that this precious fulness is in Him bodily, by His condescension, the church, His redeemed people, the election of grace, were brought into an eternal and indissoluble union with Him, so as that all that He is and all that He has, and all that He has accomplished is theirs. "And ye are complete in Him". It is a tremendous word. I believe that we shall know, before we know the blessedness of this declaration, what it is to be complete in ourselves. O the completeness of the ruin of human nature. I did feel that that opening hymn was very wonderful,

"So fallen is nature, such her flaw,
None come except the Father draw".

"His Spirit must disclose
The deadly plague within,
Uncover all our woes
And show the man of sin
And feeling thus our ruined state,
We humbly fall at Jesus feet".

Has the Holy Ghost, or is He beginning to show us really the completeness of our ruin in the fall ? It is an essential part of divine teaching, indeed a part of the work of grace in the soul, to show a man the completeness of the wreckage of his absolute corruption and death in self, and this is without respect of persons. Complete. I do believe that I sadly know a measure of it in myself.

"Make me well my vileness know,
Keep me very, very low."

I think about young people continually. When I was a lad I know what I should say if a minister said that, I should say, I would not pray that prayer, I don't want to know my vileness, I don't want to be kept very low, I must get on, get through the world, make my way. I quite understand that, I have been there, but that is not the meaning of the hymnwriter. Why my dear friends, I do believe that the wisest man in this world, if the true light should shine into his heart, would confess that he is a fool with respect to the things of God; and if the light shined into his nature and discovered the vileness, the ruin that was there, he would be brought into agreement with God in the Word. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags". Has the Holy Ghost given you to see that you are complete in ruin? And we are born and bound for eternity. Since the fall no man is born in this world to stay here, and therefore, whatever pathway we may take through the world, it may be the highway through intelligence and science, it may be the low way through adversity and poverty and ignorance; but whatever way it is we shall soon have passed our allotted span, and therefore, my friends, it is a mercy to be brought to see what would become of us if we live and die as we are born, in sin.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Are you agreed with God in His word about the depravity of your nature and that you are born in sin and shapen in iniquity? O it will give the Gospel a joyful sound, because it speaks to you, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses," not half dead, "dead in trespasses and in sins". It tells you. Complete. I believe that I am being taught the completeness of my state out of Christ.

Now you look at the text, and the former text, "For it pleased the Father that in Him", not in you, "should all fulness dwell", but it dwells in Him for you. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead", all the perfections and attributes of Jehovah are in Him, in whom is that fulness of salvation, the fulness of the Gospel, "And ye are complete in Him". O it will make Christ attractive; how you will go after that salvation. Some of you may know in measure what you are. I have thought of Isaac and Abraham going up to the mount where he was to sacrifice. Isaac said unto his father, "Behold the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?", and I feel that there is a stage of experience when a poor sinner sees the wood and he sees the fire, those are the two things that destroy, sees destruction, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering. But you may depend upon it, if you have been given to see God in His holy law as a consuming fire and realise your desert, "

"If my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well",

the time will come when He will perfect that which concerneth you, and bring you inside of this text. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him". O to have that word brought, by the Spirit, into our hearts, to give us an assurance of our interest in it. What would some of you say if that should be accomplished in your experience this morning? O the unspeakable joy, those of you who know what you are, and deserve hell, who may be looking for it, to hear this blessed word, "In Him," not in you, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him", in that fulness. Complete in Christ; complete in His righteousness, completely holy in His holiness. "Accepted in the Beloved". Complete in Him being united unto Him. Complete in Him as being born of God. Complete in His life and regenerating grace. "Ye are complete in Him". O I cannot tell you how I need it. And when it is set before a sinner, if you

have faith, it will go after it, it is living water, the Gospel streams of living water; and if you have a living root there will be times when you will feel that root distinctly striking down to get a scent of that water, and there will be an influence, the branches will spread, and there will be a bearing of the fruits of righteousness in our lives.

"Ye are complete in Him". I have sometimes felt and I have said that if in a dying hour, or a dying moment, that word should be brought, by the Spirit, into a sinners heart, "Ye are complete in Him", you could then say farewell to all below.

"And ye are complete in Him", which is the Head. And if He is the Head there must be a body; and it is a wonderful, sacred consideration and a mystery, that in salvation the Lord Jesus would have assumed no office except it were for sinners. He would have assumed none of His characters except it was for the condition that His people are in. He would never have been a Refuge had it not been that His people were exposed to the whole law of God, and pursued by conscience, wrath and law. He would never have been the great Shepherd unless He had a flock of sheep. Never had been a Saviour if it had not been for sinners. He is the Head, and the church is His body, and the church is His fulness; the fulness in the 1st chapter, "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell". It is a fulness that He empties out unto the church, He empties the whole of that fulness that it pleased the Father should dwell in Him in the salvation of the church. In His sacrifice, saving grace, in His sweet mercy. In the unsearchable riches of His redeeming blood, in His free and sovereign grace, "And ye are complete in Him".

O and His church will be complete in heaven. Indeed, the Lord Jesus as the Mediator, as the Head of the church, will not be complete until the last member of His mystical body is with Him; and for this He prayed, "Father, I will, that all those whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am that they may behold My glory".

Amen.

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