

58
719

13649
Lapser

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday morning 22 April 1923

1 CORINTHIANS 1 v 30/31

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God
is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and
sanctification, and redemption: That, according as
it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the
Lord."

Two things make up that vital religion which the Holy Ghost gives to the church of God. First, knowledge - painful, experimental, ever growing, deepening, and spreading out over the whole of life - of sin. The corrupting, deadening, terrible influence of sin, the people of God do feel, and that, not in the beginning only, but increasingly. O, it is a grievous thing to be a sinner, a painful thing to be a sensible sinner. He who lives in ignorance of his sinfulness, and his sins, lives also in ignorance of the second thing for me to mention here, namely a knowledge of Jesus Christ. The one makes way for the other, digs a place for the other, prepares the heart to receive the other, closes for ever the mouth of boasting in self; opens it to the praise, and glory of God; brings a creature into the dust of self-abasement; lifts up in his heart the cross of Christ; makes the cross of Christ the life, the ground of hope, the door of access to God; the righteousness, the holiness, of the soul, whereby it is fitted for heaven; power to sing, while here, the high praises of the Most High. The cross, O, it is everything in the church of the living God. False teachers desired to have the Galatians circumcised, and conformed externally to the law that they might glory in having converts of that kind. The Apostle, writing to them, and speaking thus to them, says - "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." I die by the death of Christ. I live by the death of Christ. I am saved from sin by the death of Christ. I am delivered from the world by the death of Christ. The world is a dead thing to me by the death of Christ. Therefore I will glory in nothing else, look to nothing else, hope in nothing

else, have strength from nothing else, but the cross. Nor was the Apostle Paul, when he thus wrote, a convert of a few days. He was approaching that time when he could say, Paul the aged; yet says he, I will glory in nothing else. Not in the visions which I had, nor the revelations, nor of the hearing of things which it is not lawful for me to utter, nor seeing things that I cannot describe, or ought not to describe; not in all those things, or any of them, but only in this, the cross of Christ. If our religion is like his, the cross will be our ground, and our hope. Around it we shall be finding ourselves; centred in it will our hope be, and our affections. It will be everything to us. One may say here, in passing, this is a standard by which we would do well to measure ourselves; whether the cross is life to us; whether our legal death is found in the cross; whether our eternal life is derived from the cross; whether we know God on the cross; whether we have ever seen Christ and Him crucified; for, be assured of this, that if we have anything else in us with respect to our hope for eternity, we are, in that particular, wrong.

The context of this text shows that when the Apostle says - "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus" - there is something particular to notice. The Spirit, by Paul, has, in the preceding verses, cried nothingness upon all flesh, and says - "No flesh shall glory in God's presence". But, since some are to glory in the Lord, it is to be found in Christ. That in which they are to glory, of which they may boast, and do boast, that is to be found where these people are found. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." It is therefore important for us, as enabled, to look at this great matter - "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus" There is union taught in the Scripture - two heads, two representatives - union which affects the whole body united to a head. There was union to Adam, and it abides. We derive from Adam, we have our nature from Adam. We have our constitution, our standing, the state of our minds, of our affections, of our conscience, of our whole being under the law, from that head. Mind that; no man is singular in this particular and alone. Every creature is united to a head, first to the first Adam. You will bear your own burden as a sinner, but you derive, as a sinner, from him who made himself a sinner by rebellion against God, and no person can dissolve that union that God made with our first head, Adam. All its consequences attaching to us, will ever attach to us, if the union, and

consequences of that union, are not effected and dissolved by God Himself. O, it is solemn to have your being this way, and no other way, since this way is the way by which sin and condemnation come. But there is another union in the Scripture taught, namely union with Christ. I am the true Vine, ye are the branches. He is the Head, His church is the body, and every one a member of His body in particular. And in this light, we view this word - "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus". Take it two ways, two ways which are set out in this chapter and in the whole of the gospel. First, take it negatively. Says Paul - "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." These things, these words, these conditions, do not belong to the people of God as they are in Christ. They are not foolish in Christ, for Christ is in them the wisdom of God. They are not weak in Christ really, though Paul speaks of weakness where others are strong, but, standing in Christ, they are not weak, for all His life, all His righteousness, all His holiness, all His goodness, they possess. They do not experience all as they want to do, but they really possess all, though they often think, feel, and fear that they have nothing of His in them. They are not base in Christ. They are loved in Him, beautiful in Him, holy in Him, acceptable to the Father in Him; every one of them. And united, as His Own, His church, His people, His wife, this is what He says to her - "Thou art all fair". There is nothing base in a child of God as he is a child of God; noble is he. Why, of the national people God said - "I planted thee wholly a right seed, a noble vine". If that were so respecting a nation that should become wholly base, what of that people that shall never be debased as they are united to the Lord Jesus. They are not base in Christ. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus" holy, and beautiful, and glorious, for Christ will present His church a glorious church unto Himself, having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. And "things which are not". Comparatively, compared with other things, the people of God "are not", but this does not belong to them as they are in Christ. O, how great they are to Him, and in Him. They are His treasure, above all other treasures. Of Israel He said that they were a peculiar treasure unto Himself. How much more that people whom He will never

cast off, against whom He will never turn. O, what a blessed, beautiful people, are the people of the Most High, as they stand in Christ. "But of Him". By His Own gift of them to Christ, by the redemption of them by Christ, by the regeneration of them by the Holy Spirit, by their union with Christ through the Spirit, they are a beautiful, holy, and highly praised people, according to the Scripture. My friends, you who are in the Lord Jesus, though you may doubt it very often, yea even be doubting it at this moment, you who are in Christ are not base, are not weak, are not as nothing. He says - "Thou art all fair". His kindest words are addressed to such. He comes down to us when we think on His Name and can get no higher in our own judgement and feeling. He says He looks upon them and writes a book of remembrance of them who fear Him and think upon His Name. His kindest words are addressed to them as they hunger and thirst after righteousness. He says to them - "Come unto Me". Dissatisfied with yourselves - Come to Me. All unrest in yourselves - Come to Me. Hungry and thirsty for that which you cannot find in yourselves, and which the whole world cannot afford you - Come to Me. Disturbed by sin, at unrest in respect of sin, as well as of your interest in Me - Come to Me. I, your Lord, and Head, your Representative, your Redeemer - Come to Me. Troubled in providence, troubled by various things coming to you, into your house, to your person, to your business, to your matters; at unrest everywhere - Come to Me; I will give you rest. Yea, and when these people are in the wilderness that affords them no nourishment, then most mercifully He sends to them waters from the stricken Rock, Christ Jesus, and those living waters follow them; and he rains bread down from heaven for them to eat that the world knows not of. And also, His best - if I may use the word - His best intentions, the highest end that He could give to them He reveals in the Scriptures, and at times reveals in their hearts so as that they know they are destined to a kingdom that shall never come to an end, for of His kingdom and peace there shall be no end. To them He is the child born, the Son given. For them He wears those wondrous Names - "Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." And all this, as they stand in Him. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus" They are not what the world is. They are not what the world esteems them to be. They are what God has made them. They are what He says they are. You may judge yourself hardly, and will, as you are taught to know yourself. You may judge yourself destitute of

this, and that. You may not have attained to what you desire to attain, and never will while you are in this world, but He sees you as having attained to everything as being in union with His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the day comes when each child of God shall say to himself, and to others it may be, - "Have not I seen the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Take this word positively also. Look at what Paul says in his salutation to this church - "Called to be saints". Here is a sinner; he looks on himself with abhorrence of himself. He says of himself - "In me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing". He says that he is disposed to all evil; inert, and dead often to the best things, and to his best interests, but this remains true of him - "Called to be saints". "Ye see your calling brethren". You see it is different from the world, different from your own former condition, and state. You see it was not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, that you were called. It came to you unsought, undesired. It came to you as a mighty thing, the end of which, at the beginning, you did not understand. You see it. O, what a change a call makes in a person's state, and feeling, and what different views it gives him of God, and of himself. You may not know when you were called, but you can say this, whereas you were blind as to your state before God, blind to your wicked nature, blind to the nature of what you were doing, now you see. See God, see yourself, see sin in another light, feel it with another life, realise it with another realisation totally different from the former. "Ye see your calling brethren". You see that you are separated from what formerly you were united to; that you are called away from the things which you followed after. And now, though you may not often realise it to your comfort, that is true that is in the Romans - "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". Called to walk after the Spirit, to realise something of the Being and end of God, and something of the being and end of condemnation, and blackness, and filthiness, and sin. Called to believe in Eternity, and to believe in your own immortality. Called to this. You see your calling, and see it in the effect of it, that you walk not after the flesh as formerly, but after the Spirit. The opposition of the flesh to your own trouble, and distress is, if you could only perceive it to be such, evidence of

being called, for the flesh did not once oppose you; there was nothing in you for it to oppose; the whole was dead, and blind. Now it is different; there is opposition. Why? Because there is another nature, another principle within. Now it is sin. Then, before the calling, it was just one piece of sin with no opposition, no swimming hard against the current, no crying hard against some persistent sin, no resistance - though feeble now perhaps to your own sense - against any evil that was suggested to you, or that rose up from you as from a living spring. But it is different now. "Called to be saints". And in connection with this there is a word in Hebrews that may be trying to us at times, but which is really true of us if we are called, namely - "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling". You may say, I am not a holy person. I have most unholy thoughts, and feelings very often. I am not a holy person. I am after the world in some form. I am not holy. If you can, and the Lord help you, just come for a few moments with me into some particular things. Come first to your knees when you go into your closet and shut your door about you, and kneel down, and go before Almighty God, and confess to Him your sinfulness, and drop a tear that no creature shall see, and heave the sigh that no human ear shall hear, and confess to the Lord that you want to be what you feel you are not, and want to have what you are afraid you can never attain to, and want to stand in a standing that you are afraid you will never know. What is that? Is that nature? Does that spring from a corrupt heart? Does that come from the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts? Who makes a person pant after God? Who makes a person see that there is in God a life, a grace, a holiness not known to, not desired by, fallen nature? Come to the Scriptures with me. You look at them sometimes indifferently. At other times you pour over a Scripture and say, O, if it were but mine; over an invitation, and say, O, if God would put it into my heart, and make it a living word there. You pour over a word about a revelation of Christ, and say to yourself, I wish I knew what that word means. I wish the Lord would reveal Christ in me and form Him in my heart the hope of glory. What makes you do that? What causes such a Scripture to shine with a lustre that you have never known before? What makes you pant for that word more than for riches, and for long life? Is it nature? that nature that despises Christ? can that nature desire Him? that nature that says to Him, in all its wishes, and aspirations - Depart from me for I desire not the knowledge of Thy

ways - can that nature say to Him, Come to me? Look at the word in the Romans - minding the things of the Spirit. When that comes to pass in you, when you look at the things of the Spirit, the operations of the Spirit, as the Scriptures set them forth, His teachings, His leadings, that statement that - "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"; at the Lord's word concerning the Spirit - "He shall be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life"; as you look at these things, and mind them, and feel after them, and pant for them, and inly say, O, Lord if such mercies were mine, if such blessings were in my soul I can want nothing better, nothing else; what is it that makes a person say that? I venture to say this, it is in this Scripture - "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus". United by a life that has flowed from Him to you. United by His cross, that cross that effects such a revolution, that is to say, brings to pass such a mighty change, such a radical change, in a sinner. But of Him are ye called to be saints. In Him, saints; nowhere else. O seeking soul, what a mercy is in store for you, what a revelation is yet to come to you, what a manifestation of Jesus Christ is yet to come. Wait on the Lord.

There is yet another word in this chapter to which I would draw your attention, namely that, where Paul says - "Called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ." Fellowship has its foundation in friendship. Then, says one, I can never hope for fellowship, for I can never be a friend, a friend of the Most High God. How came it to pass that Abram was called the friend of God? "I called him alone and blessed him". How came it to pass that the Lord Jesus said to His disciples - "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends". Why did He call them friends? Because He called them to Himself - "He called unto Him whom He would" - and made them His disciples. Fellowship is receiving, a mutual receiving. Sinners receiving grace, and He who gives them grace receives their praises; receives their broken heart, receives their sighs, their groans, their petitions. They are called to His fellowship. But in particular you will find the Apostle in the Philippians speaking of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and being made conformable unto His death. To have fellowship with Christ's sufferings is, in the first place, to receive those sufferings as your healing, as your strength. The sufferings of Christ are the healing of His children.

A sick soul is healed by Christ's sufferings, that is, by His cross, by His death. A weak soul is healed of its weakness by the sufferings of Christ. A distant soul is made nigh by the sufferings of Christ. This is primarily to have fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. Himself says to His disciples - "Except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood ye have no life in you". There is no healing, no comfort, no peace with God, no walking with Him, but by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ received into the soul by faith, as we receive the symbols of that death when we have the Lord's Supper. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus". "Having been called to the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ." This is being in Him, and an important part of vital religion it is. No condemnation to a sinner who is born again, who minds the things of the Spirit - he may not have attained to the things of the Spirit, as he desires to do - no, no, Christ has no condemning word for one of His children born of Him. No law to condemn a sigh that comes from a renewed heart. No law to condemn a prayer, that is full of imperfection to the sense of him who offers it, in the Name of the Lord Jesus. No rejection of him who comes to God in the Name of the Lord Jesus. No rejection of his petitions. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it". "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

And there is another word I would draw your attention to in connection with this important word - "In Christ Jesus". It is in the Epistle to the Ephesians - "In whom ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." In Him. But now ye are in Him, in Jesus Christ. God has put His people there. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus". This being builded together in Christ for a habitation of God through the Spirit, is the blessed union that the people of God have with Jesus Christ in order that God may dwell in them. Ah my friends, vital religion is not a picture; it is life. It is an experience, it is the power of the Eternal Spirit in the heart of a sinner, cutting him out of the dead stock, Adam, and grafting him into the living Vine, Jesus Christ. It is the pouring into his heart of a new life that shall unite him to the source of that life. It is the giving to him of light, whereby he may see where blessedness is, as well as where it is not. It is the infusion into his soul of the graces of the Lord Jesus, whereby, as the branch is in the Vine, so the sinner may be united to Christ, from whom those graces come. O, it

is a real thing. And God comes to these people, who are thus blessed, who are united to the Lord Jesus in this way, He comes to them, and not always, and only, to tarry for a night. Sometimes, and perhaps very often, it is that in experience, so that they say to Him - "Why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" Do you complain that His visits are transient? Do you complain that it is almost as if He passes by you and lets you see Him and then goes away? Ah, but there is more than that really. He abides in His Spirit, He abides in His life, He abides in the influences of His grace; He abides with His people and never departs. But they want, and can sometimes say they fervently desire, to have that word in them which is in John's gospel - "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love Him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." It is a shining word, a word of divine grace and glory; a word full of tenderness, and mercy; a word containing all entertainment that a spiritual man can wish; a word that looks toward a fellowship coming from union that we can have no full conception of while we are here. "My Father will love him" - not begin to love him, but show that He loves him. "My Father will love him, and we" - My Father, and Myself - "will come unto him" - visit him, and more than that, abide with him. We visit friends, and we depart. He comes to friends, and takes up His abode with them, and when He does it there is some entertainment, there is some peace. Do you say, you have no furniture fit for Him, no entertainment to give Him? Why He will bring His Own furniture. That word in Isaiah warrants me to say this - "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple". Yes, He will come and bring His Own furniture. He will furnish you with all that is needful, fill you with Himself, with His mercy. "And make our abode with him." What a mercy it is if we are not strangers to the Lord, and if the Lord is not a stranger to us. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

In Him. This appears to me to be the trend and meaning of the Spirit in this very important word, and I have felt I could not pass it by as of little or no moment. There is a possession that God has given to His people in Jesus Christ which overcomes and casts out, and makes nothing of, all that they are naturally, and says, now you are something; you are something in Him. You have something in Him, a

standing in Him, a life, and a blessedness, and a beauty, and a glory in Him. And there is an end to come to this as far as this life is concerned, and the Apostle John speaks of it. He says - "Beloved, now are we the sons of God". "Now are we the sons of God" - by a new birth - "and it doth not yet appear what we shall be" - there is something beyond our reach, beyond our conception, beyond all that has appeared to us, in Jesus Christ; something higher than the highest thought, wider than the widest stretch of our faith, and yet faith embraces all. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is," and that will be the climax, the summit of everything that faith looks for, that hope expects to come. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus." Whoever can bless God enough for undoing his first union with his first Adam? Whoever can bless God enough for the sovereign grace of God cutting him out of the old stock, and uniting him to the Lord Jesus Christ? We have reason, some of us at least may say, we have reason to bless God for this great gospel; wide in its stretch, great in its power, wonderful in its effect upon us, making us the children of the Most High, members of Christ's body in particular. In Him. One body and many members; in Him; so that we may say we have reason to thank and bless the Eternal Trinity if this word has any place in us. And however some of you, who fear God, may cut yourselves off because you have not yet attained to the experience that is here expressed, you may yet come, and will come, to say, now we know a little of what union with the Son of God is. What it is to be in Him as a branch is in the stock; as a stone is in the building; as a member is in the body. We know a little of what it is to be in the Lord Jesus. And meanwhile, what is the course you will take? I will tell you; it is this; you will be after Him. As the Spirit is in you, you will mind His things, you will walk after the Spirit, you will attend to the things of the Spirit. The gospel will draw you, the cross will draw you, attract you invincibly. It will say, this is more than your death, more than your guilt, more than all the turpitude of your life, more than all the wanderings of your thoughts. This will overcome everything, wash away every sin, take out every stain, and remove all your death. Our death is taken away by the death of Christ. Our guilt is removed by the cross of Christ. Our weakness is turned into strength by the cross of Christ. And so it comes to pass that when the cross is revealed to us, we can say with Paul - "I can do all things

through Christ who strengtheneth me", and also "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now I have brought this point before you with the hope, and prayer, that it may please God to manifest in you, and in myself, this wondrous matter, this being in Christ. And look, in conclusion, at the Author of this union. "But of Him", that is of God. Of Him by His Own eternal purpose. Of Him in His eternal love. Of Him in His sovereign grace. Of Him in the wide stretch and effect of His divine wisdom, and counsel. Of Him against whom we have sinned. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus" which tells us that no man puts himself here; which tells us that this is contrary to nature, above nature. O, our religion is supernatural. Yes, it is supernatural. A man may take up religion and become unnatural, but this is super, above nature. "But of Him", God the Father "are ye in Christ Jesus" in these blessed ways, and this union shall abide for ever and ever. May the Lord make it out to us. O seeker, O doubter of your interest, here is a fountain of life, and of goodness, and may the Holy Ghost pour out of it into your heart. I hope, if the Lord will, that we may this evening look at the remainder of the text. I felt that the first words were too important to pass over slightly because they show us the centre and root of our holy religion.

AMEN.