

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 1 October 1922

1 JOHN 1 v 7

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light
we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of
Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from
all sin".

This important chapter has in it some testimonies which it will be well for us to know in the power of them. The first is the declaration of the Apostle concerning Christ, the Word made flesh, according to the gospel of John in the first chapter "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". The Apostle himself, with all his fellow Apostles, had seen Jesus Christ with their eyes, had looked upon Him, and handled Him. There was no doubt in their minds as to who that Person was who walked in Jewry, who did miracles, who raised the dead, who went about doing good because God was with Him; He against whom the Jews were continually striving and blaspheming, denying His fairest claims, and so this Apostle says, that which we the Apostles of Christ have seen, which we have heard. Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life, for the life was manifested and we have seen it and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. They were credible witnesses; there is no flaw in their testimony, a twelve-fold testimony that the Man Christ Jesus did live and walk Jerusalem's streets, was crucified, buried and rose again, was seen by His Apostles after His resurrection, when He showed Himself to them, showed Himself, by many infallible proofs, to be that very Person whom they saw crucified, with whom they had, previous to His crucifixion, walked, conversed, with whom they sat at table, whose teachings they received, whose Person they believed in, and the testimony is here in this Book. Christ was promised, Christ was spoken of. He was promised in Eden. He was prophesied of all through

God's dispensation with men. Beginning with Abraham and coming in the line of the Jews until the last of the prophets, Christ was prophesied of. Then He came in the fulness of time, made of a woman, made under the law. God's only begotten Son was made; that holy human nature which was born of the virgin Mary, and then came to Him that predestinated Name: Immanuel, God with us. And better never to be born than to derogate from that Man Christ Jesus, the honour which God His Father has put upon Him. Better never have a hand to pen one word than to write that He was not the eternal Son of God manifested in our own nature; infinitely better. May we believe on Jesus Christ. How shall we? Two ways there are of believing on Him. One is to receive the naked, but infallible, testimony of the Scripture, and the other is, believing that, to have added to it the inward teaching of the eternal Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. O, happy the sinner, who in a spiritual sense can say with the Apostle Paul, "Have not I seen Jesus Christ our Lord"; of whom that is true that was written to the Galatians: "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you". As many as can say it has been so with them, even as many can this be said of, they are partakers of the true grace of God, and Christ is in them the hope of glory. This testimony is fruitful and if we receive it we shall know something of what follows. "But these things write we unto you that your joy may be full". And well may it be full, and truly is it full, when a sinner, convinced of his sins and realising his alienation from God, finds himself reconciled to God in the body of the flesh of Jesus through death; realises that his sins are forgiven him; that he, publican-like, has received what the publican got - justification. What is there to prevent a fulness of joy where that is true? And this is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. What a great thing it is really to walk in the light of life. If you walk in this light you will see what sin is, against whom it is committed; what His nature is against whom sin is committed; what is necessary from Him against whom sin is committed, even this, that He must punish it. And, walking in the light of Christ, you will see that that necessary punishment of sin did, in the infinite goodness of God and in His wisdom and power, pass from the principal in the offence to the Surety in the case of the church of God. And when that comes to you in the power of the Spirit you will see that you, a

principal in the offence, have been set free from the offence through the imputation to you of the vicarious work and justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ. And if you walk in this light you wont stumble. If you walk in the light you have no occasion of stumbling. You see stumblingblocks, and have grace to avoid them; pits, and seek through grace, and really do, walk wide of them. O, it is a mercy to walk in the light, even the light of God. It brings a likeness to Him, a conformity to His revealed will. It brings a sinner into a good state. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth". What is the darkness here intended? It cannot be the darkness of mind that often God's people find themselves in; that perplexity as to what they are and where and what way they should walk in. It cannot mean that gracious exercise because the Lord speaks of that kindly and says: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that walketh in darkness and hath no light: Let him trust in the Lord and stay upon His God." It is another darkness; it is the darkness of wicked works, the darkness of alienation from God, the darkness of unbroken infidelity, unbelief, the darkness of guilty practices, the unfruitful works of darkness, ignorance of God, ignorance of self. Are some of you walking in that darkness? If you are, never profess to be in the light. God keep us from saying we are what we are not. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." If we walk in the light of the gospel, the light of Christ's Person here declared, the light of His having given Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time, the light of His atonement, of His righteousness, of His sanctification, of His redemption; if we walk in that light, then we have fellowship with Him who is that light, for the fellowship here is fellowship with God, God in human nature. But a good deal is connected with this which I would like, as helped, briefly to name to you. The Apostle Paul speaks in Philippians of fellowship of the Spirit. "If there be any fellowship of the Spirit". And by that one would understand the teaching and the communication from the Spirit of life and light and power, and by this fellowship of the Spirit there is much godliness in walk, an inward walk. An inward walk such as you find all through the Bible, saints were favoured with an inward walk. What would you say the 51 Psalm expresses? Would you call it walking in darkness or walking in the light? I would say that the

Psalmist, when he penned that Psalm, was walking in the light, that he was under the instruction and unction of the Holy Ghost, that his full and honest and humble confession of sin, his fervent supplication for cleansing, for forgiveness and for restoration all make it manifest that he was walking in the light. He had fellowship of the Spirit. Never despise that. If you have it in your hearts be thankful. If you can go with the Psalmist, run along with him through that Psalm and say, the sin was mine, the confession is mine, the prayers are mine, the longings for God's coming to me, the entreating that He would not take from me His Holy Spirit, these are mine, you are not in a bad, unhealthy state. Sleeping, in the Psalmist's case, sleeping month on month in the sin that brought broken bones, that was a bad state, but his wakefulness, his conviction, his sorrow, his penitence, his confession, his prayer, all these came from the unction. These came from his seeing sin as seen in God's sight. He walked in the light. Was Ezra walking in the light when, as you have it in his book, he confessed his sin and the sins of the people and when, concluding that chapter, he said "Thou art righteous and we are escaped, for we are before Thee in our trespasses and we cannot stand before Thee because of this". Was he in darkness or in light? I believe he was in the light and was walking in it. He saw sin in its deformity, sin as a provocation of God, sin as a damage to the soul, sin as bringing separation from God, as hardening the heart. He saw sin in the true light and confessed it. Can you follow him? Can you travel with Nehemiah in his book when he did the same thing, and in a longer chapter related in confession the enormities of the people as done against the goodness of God bestowed upon them. Can you go with Daniel in his chapter where he confesses the sin of the king and the princes and the nobles and the people. O, it is good to be enabled to unite with such Scriptures. They are not condemned by the Lord, but they are given to us for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. Let me name to you a person as spoken of in the Scripture, a publican, and beside him was a Pharisee. And the Pharisee had plenty of light, as he thought, and of goodness and so he strutted into the temple as if he were somebody and boasted before the Almighty God and thanked Him that he, the Pharisee, was not as other men and he related certain characters, and even as this publican. Do you want to be with him? If any of you are with the Pharisee, God, at the present, has nothing to do with you; He lets you

alone, and woe be to you if He never speaks to you. But come to the publican, that depressed, dejected man who, though he wanted to pray, had not the courage to lift up his eyes to heaven; that poor sinner, whose sins pressed upon him and pressed him into that condition of helplessness and woe. He groaned in his heart: "God be merciful to me a sinner". Would you think it a disgrace to stand by his side and to confess with him sin, and ask with him for forgiveness? Would you think it a disgrace to come to the cross on which was hung a thief and listen to him with a despising feeling as he said "Lord remember me", or would you say in your heart, O Lord grant me that privilege, grant me that mercy, give me that prayer: "God be merciful to me"; "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom". Now I think it is clear from the Scripture that such cases were in the light, that the men named really walked in the light. They saw sin in God's light; they saw themselves in God's light. They saw their need and they saw an abiding supply in Christ and waited on God and got relief, got mercy. "The Lord hath respect unto the lowly". A lowly Hannah gets God's ear and triumphs. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light". If we walk in the light of Christ's blessed Person we shall have fellowship with Him but mind, this goes before. You will never have comfort in your souls if you do not have misery.

What comfort can a Saviour bring
To those who never felt their woe

How can you ask for pardon if you do not feel to need it? Would you go to a physician if you had no pain and no suspicion even of a disease eating away your life? Would you beg for bread if you were full and had no sense of hunger? Men must be in a needy condition in order to pray and that need, as they feel it, comes from the teaching of the Spirit. He gives them to feel their need. He sheds His light upon their condition; He lets them perceive where they are, and what, if they continue in that condition, must become of them. He shows them the way of escape. Ah, if there be a sinner here who feels his bad condition and is shut up and cannot come forth yet has a cry in his heart: "God be merciful to me a sinner" I would not say that he is in darkness but rather would say that man is in the light; he receives the light. As, for instance, though he feels so dark and miserable, when any word concerning Christ drops upon his spirit, what does he

feel? Why, he says, I would embrace this; I do embrace it. It expresses to me exactly what I need. It tells me of a Saviour without whom I must perish. Well, nobody rightly understanding the Spirit's work and grace would say that that person was walking in darkness. He is not living in sin; his trouble is that he is a sinner; his grief is that he does not know whether the Lord will save him; he is not walking in the unfruitful works of darkness. If you cannot sin, O poor sinner, wilfully, if sin is your burden, if you can say, I would be free of this, I would that God if possible would pardon my sin, I would say to you, go on in that course, pray, press your case, urge your claim through Jesus Christ, through all your sense of unfitness, and the day will come when you will say, why, the Lord whom I sought has found me. If we walk in the light then of divine truth respecting sin it is a good thing.

If we walk in the light respecting the Saviour, respecting His Person, His Person so glorious, His Person the Person of God, the Man Christ Jesus; if we walk in the light of His great work, the work His Father sent Him to do, the work of removing sin, sin imputed to Him; we walk in a beautiful light. A light that declares God's nature, "God is love"; that declares His purpose to save sinners; that declares His mind is toward sinners; that declares how He can justify the ungodly and be a just God; how He can admit into His presence people who, in their nature, are defiled; that declares that such people come into fellowship, intimacy with Him, in Jesus Christ. Have you received the testimony of Christ the Friend of sinners? Have you ever rejoiced in what Hart writes:

Christ is the Friend of sinners

O what pleasure it has given me to say that in this pulpit over and over again, and I would again say it

Christ is the Friend of sinners
Be that forgotten never

And if you receive this testimony it is a great mercy. If you receive into your heart the truth that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself not imputing their trespasses unto them, what a favour

it is for you. You have certainly a great deal given you and the efficacy of it, if you could speak, would show that it was given you by the Lord, for does not the testimony draw you? Does not it make you say, sometimes, O if that Person of Jesus Christ is between God and my soul, if His blood was shed for me, if He wrought His righteousness for me and if the Spirit would bring that to me, I should then have all I want. We walk in the light if we walk in the testimony concerning the Person of Christ; if we walk in the light respecting the atonement, the atonement of Christ, the atonement that harmonised every perfection of Deity with the happiness of men chosen of God in eternity. What a light it is. The light of justice, the light of holiness, the light of truth, the light of life, the light of mercy. It is one of the most marvellous things that you can ever behold - Christ crucified. One of the most heart-affecting sights that you can ever get, the sight of Christ willingly dying.

How willing was Jesus to die
That we guilty sinners might live
The life they could not take away
How willing was Jesus to give

My beloved friends, this light was Paul's glory. "God forbid", said he, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". To know Him and preach Him, this was all to him. "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified". So that, should it please God to give us to walk in the light of the cross we shall walk in God's own light. See sin, as He sees it; see salvation as He sees it; and that is not a little. If we walk in the light of a full and a free justification of him that believeth on Jesus, we walk in God's light. Ah, and what a light it is that tells you, writes on your heart, as it were, in letters of light and life, how God can pronounce a man, who is before Him in filthy garments, to be just; that is to be justified. How God pronounces a sinner, whose nature is steeped in sin, whose life has been sin - justified freely. Freely justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. If we walk in the light of Christ's ever-prevailing intercession as the Priest, the High Priest of our profession, presenting to His Father His infinite merit, then we walk in a wondrous light. O the beams of that intercession when they fall

on the heart of a sinner who, conscious of what he is, is dumb. O the greatness of this, that Christ opens His mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. He opens His mouth and He pleads the cause of the poor and needy. If you walk in that light it will make you very bold in prayer. Well, you will be very humble in yourself, very persistent in your petitions, though very fearful of offending God. Very insistent too, you will be, if you walk in the light of Christ's intercession. If you walk in the light of the covenant of grace, it is a beautiful light you walk in. The covenant of grace is not made between God and a sinner; it is made in the Trinity, each divine Person in the Godhead having His own part, and it is made on behalf of the Church of the living God. Happy people who are in this covenant. "Who is like unto thee O people saved by the Lord" in this covenant, every condition of it fulfilled by the Surety of it, and all sealed by His own blood. O blessed covenant. If we walk in the light of this, we walk in God's light. If we walk in the light of gospel promises and gospel invitations and exhortations and precepts, we walk in a divine light. Take one or two promises that God speaks to sinners. One is this: "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out". Regard it as a kind promise, encouraging to all who are feeling their way to God if haply they might find Him, but who are often stumbled by a sense of what they are in themselves and who say - with an inward objection to their coming - if I venture what reception shall I receive? If I ask Him to bless me, will He? Can He bless one so exceedingly wicked? O, says the Lord Jesus, "I will in no wise", for no imaginable reason will I cast him out. He is Mine. Well, if you walk in the light of that it will enable you to go to Him. Perhaps you will appreciate Newton's crutches. He said he had two crutches; one was - "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me", and the other was "And Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out". Well, go on with this, and you will reach heaven one day. Yes, you may not make, to your own apprehension, much speed, but you will reach heaven if you have those two crutches. Take this word: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". O, if you walk in the light of that it will show you a full God, a full Christ, a full Spirit, a glorious Trinity, and that will teach you how to open your mouth. It is not difficult for us to promise more than we can perform, but with God that is impossible. What He says He has sufficiency to fulfil. Sufficiency of grace and of wisdom and of power and of goodness and of

mercy.

Now the effect is this, we have fellowship one with another, that is, with God. He has poured out of His fulness into your hearts. Think of it, the intimacy of this, the wonder of this, the kindness of this, that God should be pouring out of His own fulness into your heart, His love, His goodness, His holy gospel, and the effect, on the other side, is this, that the people who receive this from God have something to give to Him. Now that is not frightful; it is not alarming. But what have I to give? one says. You have got a broken heart sometimes, a contrite spirit, and as long as this Scripture is true I will maintain that you have something to give Him that He will receive. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart O God. Thou wilt not despise." You have prayer which ascends to Him, but so sin stained, you may object, that you are afraid He will not regard it. Ah, but there is in heaven a golden censer and in that censer much incense and with that the prayers of the saints are mingled. Happy man who can pray. Then when answers come there is something more, something better and that is that you say: "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live". What case had the man? "The sorrows of death compassed him; the pains of hell gat hold upon him". Then he cried unto the Lord and the Lord heard him, and brought him up out of the depths. He had fellowship with God.

And then "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin". Have people, who have all this mercy, sin with them still? Yes, it will be with us as long as we live. In what way? First as it is in our nature. A depravity, dreadful depravity, universal depravity, it is with us. It is in us, in the warp and woof of us. Secondly, it will be with us in practice sometimes. You have to say, "the evil that I would not that do I". The temper that I would not have overcomes me; the covetousness I would abandon overtakes me sometimes; the worldliness that is in my nature rises and prevails. The anger, the malice, the guile, the envy, evil speaking, the hypocrisies that are in my nature, these prevail. What then: There is a separation between you and God. He does not let you get near to Him for the moment, but lets you know that these things are offensive

to Him. Then what? "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son,cleanseth us from all sin". All washed away, washed out. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions and as a cloud thy sins. Return unto Me for I have redeemed thee". This is the mercy that comes to the Lord's people from time to time, the blood of sprinkling that purges dead works from the conscience, that brings the distant near, that comforts the troubled heart, that confirms the feeble knees, that lifts up the hands that hang down and says to a fearful sinner: "Fear not". "Fear not little flock". Fear not the lions and the wolves, fear not your own depraved nature, fear none of these things. Lift your head up for now your salvation is nearer than when you first believed.

God grant us to know what this is, to walk in the light as He is in the light, to have fellowship with Him, and realise that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

AMEN.