

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday evening 21 August 1932

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"

If it were proper to thank God that heresies ever came into the church of God, we should be very thankful that heresies came in the time of John which appear to have been the cause of this Epistle. There were heretics who denied that Jesus Christ had really come in the flesh. They denied His real incarnation and so denied His Father that sent Him. A solemn, and terrible heresy, but the Holy Ghost took advantage of it, so to express the matter, and inspired John to say - "That which was from the beginning, 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, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." This wonderful, glorious testimony to the actual incarnation of the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, we should be very thankful for. They heard Him, their hands handled Him, a very Man, a real Man, and that same Man is now in heaven. This chapter therefore is a chapter of Christ, the Man Christ Jesus. The child born, the Son given. But to show that He is to be known still to the children of God by faith, even to the end of time John adds, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full," that you too, though not literally handling Him, may nevertheless have fellowship with us for, he says "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." If we be lost in self, if we be in a condition that we must naturally and legally despair, and sink into eternal woe, and punishment, then if it be declared in our hearts that Christ did come, did make an end of sin, did, after His resurrection

show Himself alive by many infallible proofs, and did ascend into heaven, these things being declared, and written, and applied, will fill us with joy. It is a beautiful hymn that Hart wrote and we sometimes sing

A Man there is, a real Man,  
With wounds still gaping wide,  
From which rich streams of blood once ran,  
In hands, and feet, and side. (23)

and if we can say

'Tis no wild fancy of our brains,  
No mataphor we speak;  
The same dear Man in heaven now reigns  
That suffered for our sake.

happy are we. "This then 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." This word: "God is light" does not here respect and mean His eternal Being - He dwelleth, as Jehovah, "in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Timothy 6 v 16); we may not, we cannot, approach unto Him as He is Jehovah - but this is the light of God in Christ finding a door in the gospel. This is the light of the Saviour fulfilling the law. It is the light of the law of Jesus made like unto His brethren in all things, without sin. It is the light of Christ crucified making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. "This is the light", the light of life "that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "And in Him is no darkness", no darkness of sin, no darkness of error, no darkness of inherent sin, no darkness of unfaithfulness to His Word, no darkness of mistakes in His dealings with men. Perfect God and perfect Man in one Person. But we are not to understand by this that there is no darkness in His dealings with His people, for He makes darkness His pavilion. The clouds are the dust of His feet. His way is in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters, and He is not known often for a long time in some of His providential dealings. But all the while there is darkness to us in His dealings, there is no darkness in Him. He knoweth the end from the beginning. "Known unto God are all His works

from the beginning of the world." We are very apt to judge of God's dealings by a part of them; very apt to judge of His heart by providence. It is foolishness. It always brings trouble. Wrong judgement of God made by His poor, tried people, brings trouble to them. Jacob made a mistake when he said - "All these things are against me" Job, in petulance of spirit, said that he chose strangling and death rather than life because the dealings of God with him were solemn and severe. You may have made similar mistakes. What child of God, troubled in providence, has not made mistakes? But this is a true message - "God is light". The light of His love, of His Covenant, of His precious death, of His blessed resurrection, of His ascension into heaven, of His intercession there. "God is light". He is naturally good, and His goodness disposes Him to show Himself in various ways to the people He has chosen, and this goodness of His has formed a wonderful way of communication, even in the Person of Christ, of whom this word is said - "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all". Forbear - O child of God - forbear judging God by your present trial. Seek grace to wait on Him till He shall explain matters that now you do not understand. Remember, if you can, the word of Joseph to the butler, and the baker, in their perplexities. "Do not interpretations belong unto God?"

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace.  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face. (320)

And if we say we walk in the light, and yet walk in darkness, we lie. If you profess to have fellowship with Christ, and walk in the darkness of sin, in the darkness of evil practices - at any rate in your hearts, if not among men - you lie and do not the truth. "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" If we walk in the light as Christ is in the light, it is not an imitation of God, but an identity, for that light that He is imprints its own image on your soul. A natural imitation of God there may be, without this light, but an identity, a real likeness of Him, cannot be without this light. And if we walk in the light we see things even as He, who is the light, sees them. That is a great thing; that is a wonderful thing. Two or three words only to state it, but

inward teaching, much travail, sorrow, grief, perplexity, will be the result for a time, of walking in the light of Christ. First, you will see sin as He sees it. O may God keep you young people, yea and those of us who are old, from following new men who tell us that we make too much of sin. If we see sin in the light of Christ, we shall see a deep hell of sin in our nature, unutterable corruptions in our hearts, infidelity in our minds, and judgement; rebellion in our souls, wishes to be different, wishes to be other than we are; wishes that God would do otherwise than He does. Yea, I believe this - you may not believe with me, though I think you will, those of you who are in the light - if we see things in Christ's light we shall see that there is the sin of Deicide in our nature. I do not say it lightly, I say it because I know it painfully for myself. How could we value Jesus Christ without knowing something of sin? If you are in no danger, how can you cry for a refuge? If there be no leprosy, how can you want a priest to expose that leprosy to you, and wait for His judgement? If you are not fraudulent bankrupts toward God, how can you want One to pay your debts? O, but it is a truth, that if we are in the light, and walk in it, in the teaching of God, in the teaching of the Spirit, who is sent by Christ, then we shall see things as He sees them. Not in the fullness; O, no, but we shall see them in His light. "In Thy light shall we see light". Now you can, those of you who are taught of God, fill up this part for yourselves. Probably you will say what is quite true, that I have not half uttered this matter. Who can say what sin is in him? Who can measure, fathom, weigh, and understand what sin is? We are born in it. It is born with our birth. It grows with our growth. It strengthens with our strength, and it does not become weak with old age; it is just a monster. But we shall see more than this if we walk in the light. We shall see the Man, the God-Man the disciples saw. We shall not see Him literally as they did; we shall not handle Him as they did; but we shall see Him as real as they saw Him. In another manner, and another measure, but we shall see Him as truly as they saw Him. If God reveals this revelation to us, we shall see Jesus. Mind that, it is the revelation of God's revelation that you get. No fancy. He has revealed Himself here in this divine Book. Seek the revelation of this revelation in your hearts. We shall see Jesus - Paul says so - see Him "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death". This opens a wide field. See the child born. Go worship at the manger. Bring out, if

you have any, the treasures, as the wise men did, and pour them all as a libation at the feet of this Infant who, at the moment when held up by Mary, His virgin mother, was holding up the world. The mystery of godliness. The mystery is not an unknowable thing; it is a knowable matter, but it must be opened. Who is to open it? I, John, saw a pure river of water of life. How it was shown to him, so must this mystery be shown to us. You cannot acquire the knowledge of it. To be conceived, it must be given to you. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me" said the Lord Jesus to His Father, concerning His disciples, "and they have believed that Thou didst send Me". Mind how you get the knowledge of Christ. It is not unimportant to consider how you get it. If you have it, or profess to have it, how did you become possessed of it? If you walk in the light you will see Him. His Own light discovers Himself. As the great light which God made to rule the day is seen, and known, and felt - if I may use that word - in its own brightness, and warmth, so in the light of the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus is seen. "Made a little lower than the angels" whom He created, whom He commands. The angels, His ministers, a flame of fire. The angels, sent to encamp around the saints; these heavenly messengers, high intelligences, and willing servants of the Most High. Jesus, their Creator, was made lower; lower than the angels. Did you ever see Him in that lowly condition? "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their children, or of strangers?" Lest we offend them, go and take up the first fish that cometh, and in his mouth you will find a piece of silver. That take and give unto them for me and thee. Let us give no offence. But look at His condition, a lowly condition. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head". You who know God, want a place in His Sanctuary. You, David like, may envy the sparrow, and swallow. They found places for their nests. "Oh", says Calvin in his translation of that "On Thine altars". Who made a way to the altar? Who opened the way for you, a guilty, filthy, miserable, ruined wretch, to the altars of the Most High? Jesus, made a little lower than the angels. What for? The suffering of death. Not an ordinary death, not a private death. A voluntary death, a vicarious death, a death of obedience. He had a commandment given Him by His Father to lay down His life. O, who can express the glory of the death of Christ? covered from all human gaze as it is by the badger's skin of His external humiliation, and

hidden from the eyes of man, except the eye of faith. Did you ever see that? Not only humiliation, but deeper, more exquisitely painful, than all the external humiliation; the pain of His mind, the anguish of His mind; the death that He was voluntarily suffering when He was offering up Himself unto God. I think a world would be nothing to give for a sight of Christ here on the cross. It is a sight of the way to God's heaven, a sight of the way of justification, of sanctification, of wisdom, and of redemption. It is a sight of the removal of all obstacles - all difficulties, all sins, and all evils of nature, and all devilism in us - to a way to God for a person who says - "Behold I am vile". Nobody knows the difficulty of believing this, but the men who know what sin is. I would not, if the Lord would keep me from it, I would not have the easy faith of the general professor for all the world. O, better be struggling, and painfully labouring, and groaning your way to God through Jesus Christ, feeling the difficulty, the natural impossibility, and apparently the injustice of a sinner coming to a holy God. Yet the way is a just way, a holy way, a beautiful way; a way that pleases God. And all the professed obedience, and natural holiness of professors could not please God; never can be accepted by Him, yet He looks with a pitying, loving eye, with a heart of mercy, on one who groans, and sighs - "God be merciful to me a sinner" Who says with the Jailer - "What must I do to be saved?", and who feels with Lydia, whose heart is opened, a desire to attend unto the things spoken by the Apostle. Says Paul "We see Jesus". A wondrous sight. What a view William Gadsby must have had occasionally to enable him to write those hymns of his concerning Christ and the blaze - O, I like his word - the blaze of glory on the cross; the blaze of glory. What is that blaze, but the goodness, and the love, and the justice, and the hatred of God to sin, and the suffering, the vicarious suffering and death of the Lord Jesus? Why, when you get it, it will make you want to go and be with Him. It will make you say, O hasten the day when sin-bought mortality will be dropped. "Dost mind the place, the spot of land" where you got this sight, where you got the sight that fixed you, though it might have been, to your own feeling, a most transient view, passing away almost like a flash of lightning passes. Still the impression left is not forgotten, and never shall be obliterated. O, it makes a mark on the heart. He was raised from the dead. Said Thomas, I wont believe that He is a living Christ. You, my fellow

disciples believe it, but unless I see the wounds, and put my hand in the side that was opened by the spear, I will never believe it. You may have a reason something like that. You may have a reasoning power that very much hurts you, hurts your spirit, and cramps your mind, and cripples faith in its exercise. O, but Thomas was a loved one, and Jesus knew how to convince him, and He knows how to convince you, if you are in that condition. All the disciples were ignorantly incredulous. They had not understood the teaching of their Lord while He was with them, and so they were astonished at the testimony of the women, and then the testimony of the two disciples who quickly returned to Jerusalem after having seen the Lord in the breaking of bread, but when Christ came they believed, and Thomas was there on the second occasion and he said, when it was offered to him to thrust his hand into the hole made by the cruel spear, and to put his fingers into the print of the nails - "My Lord and my God". He saw Him, a Man - "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have". He saw Him; so we see Him. Not in the manner, the literal way of the disciples, but by faith. He is seen in heaven, and if you walk in this beautiful light in which there is no speck of darkness, though there is plenty of darkness in us, you will see Him at the right-hand of God. An expectant Person, expecting until all His enemies be made His footstool, Blessed be God, He has brought us to His footstool without trampling on us, many of us can say. O what a willingness He gave our hearts, what a willingness He gave our hearts to come to Him now. Well, He is expecting till the atheist, and the modernist, and the sensualist, shall be made His footstool. And He says to poor, guilty, polluted, trembling sinners, Come to Me. And they are dumb, and so it is said to Him "Open thy mouth . . . . . and plead the cause of the poor and needy." "Give strong drink" - the gospel drink - "unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts". Did you ever see Him opening His mouth, pleading the cause of the poor, and needy? O, says one, I am not fit to go to Him. If you feel that in the light of the Holy Ghost in your soul, you are just the person to go. O, but I am a leper. You are just the person for the Priest. O, but I am an unbeliever. So was Thomas. So is every child of God, more or less, from time to time. But He says, Come to Me. Labourer come to Me. You want to be holy; you never can be unless I make you so. You want to be a Christian; you cannot be unless I make you one. You want to be righteous; you cannot be unless I make you

righteous. You labour; O come to Me, and I will give you rest. You are thirsty, thirsty for God. What a mercy. There are some in this congregation who do not thirst for Him. Are there not some of you who could not honestly say - "My soul thirsteth for God". I wish the day may come when you may say it out of your hearts, and if I knew it, O it would make me glad. But some can say that as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so pant our souls after God. And what does He say - "Ho everyone that thirsteth, Come ye to the waters." Christ is in heaven and Christ leads to fountains of living waters. Moreover He is the ruler, He is the mighty ruler in heaven, and in earth. And you have sins you cannot manage; go to Him about them. You have devils to tempt you; go to Him about them. You have difficulties you cannot understand, or deal with; the Lord help you to take them to Him. You have sorrows, great, and penetrating sorrows, and you have much affliction. Think of Him of whom is it said by Paul in the Hebrews - He is able to succour them that are tempted, in that He Himself suffered being tempted. I have liked to think of His acquired ability. He can sympathise, my friends, because He has suffered, and that ability to succour He gained by suffering. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

And if we see light in His light, we shall see the promises full of light, full of goodness inexhaustible. You can never empty a promise that God has given to you. You may forget it, but you cannot empty it. That is to say, the promises of God are capable of multiple fulfilments, many fulfilments, and if you have had one, two, or more fulfilments, do not think you have finished with the promise. I got a promise from Him in my beginning, and He fulfilled it, and I was foolish enough to think I had done with it, and I forgot it for some long time. Then fresh need made the promise needed, and it was opened again. Do not think you have finished with any promise God has ever spoken to you. Wait on Him. You will see it in His light just as He sees it, a faithful word, a great word, a glorious word. High above your imagination, but not higher than your faith sometimes. Deeper than all your needs, wider, and broader than all things that may come to you, you will find the promise. And the promise is "Yea and Amen"; faithful. O, no child of God knows how rich he is in the possession of a promise. There is great pleasure to faith to meditate on promises. God is in promises. He not only speaks them, but He is the fullness of

them. He is the greatness of them, He is the reality of them, He is the sweetness of them, He is the stability of them, He is the fulfiller of them.

Then this leads to something. "We have fellowship one with another" This means, in the fountain of it. Union, union with Christ, His Own light imprinting itself in its purity upon your hearts; that gives identity, and gives union to the saints of the Most High. I expect some of you have loved Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Job, and David, and the Prophets, and have walked with them in your spirits in their afflictions, and troubles, and necessities; and also you have walked with them in their deliverances, and their comforts; and you felt with Abraham, persuaded, in trouble, that "God will provide Himself a Lamb". Fellowship one with another. We should prize Christian fellowship, thus founded, and thus enjoyed. Mind, not the ordinary gossip of professors; the inward spiritual, and then the external union, and communion about the things of God. Why are some of you so able to enter into any sort of conversation when you meet some of the Lord's people? You know. Why are you sometimes, on the contrary, when you meet a saint, ready to begin about the things of God? what you have felt, what is recently done in you, or for you, or said to you? You know. He has been with you and you have walked in His light.

And lastly, and very briefly - "And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin". "All sin" leaves no sin. If all is washed away, there is none left. You feel plenty left, and you will do from time to time, and that will make the need in your soul for fresh applications, but the whole is washed away, was washed away when Jesus said, on the cross - "It is finished". None left. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified". "The blood of Jesus Christ". O happy conscience, peaceful conscience, where the blood of Christ is. The best friend you have, next to God Himself, is a purged conscience. May the Lord give it to you, maintain it in you, and in myself. All is well if we know this experimentally.

AMEN.