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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS.

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Wednesday evening 19 September 1919

1 John 4 v 9

"And in this was manifested the love of God  
toward us because that God sent His only begotten  
Son into the world that we might live  
through Him"

The death of human nature, through sin, is deeply impressed upon every living child of God's heart, and very solemn it is to feel that death, to feel it working out, so to speak, in a variety of ways; enmity, rebellion, lust, pride, vanity, ingratitude, and a perpetual backsliding. "My people is bent to backsliding as a backsliding heifer". The fall is no fancy; it is no figment. The fall is a dreadful reality, known painfully by everyone convinced by the Holy Ghost of sin. But painful as is the experience of this, the issue is good. Experience of the fall prepares the way for an experience of redemption, and a feeling of sin prepares a sinner to feel that he is saved. A feeling of guilt fits him to receive the sweet persuasion that he is justified, and if men talk about redemption with no knowledge of captivity preceding then they only talk vanity. Things are proportionate in experience, even as they are in the Scriptures. It is a very striking thing that in the Scriptures there is a perpetual mention of sin; everywhere, at every turn, in every page so to speak, and in all but every verse, one might say, there is the mention of that awful thing that has ruined man, peopled hell, estranged every one from God, filled the world with wars, and misery, and poverty, and affliction, and everybody with some disease. My dear friends, it is a terrible thing to be a sinner because, as the Psalmist expresses it, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight". What a wonder it is to a sinner, who knows himself to be a sinner, that God should love him. It is said that a Scotch minister called on one of his congregation once. The man said to the minister, you find me reading a very interesting part of the Scripture; I cannot understand it he said. What is it said the minister. It is this, was the reply. "Jacob have I loved but Esau

have I hated". Said the man, I cannot understand. I can understand that God should love Jacob, but I cannot understand why He hated Esau. O, said the minister, I can tell you. The wonder is not that He hated Esau but that He loved Jacob, and surely that is what every child of God can enter into, not that God hates anybody but that He should love anyone. And when it comes to himself, particularly, then he wonders that God should love him. It is the greatest stoop, it is the most wondrous stretch, if I may use such a word respecting God, that He could ever make, to love an enemy, a polluted, dead creature, and if you and I are brought to know that, and we are brought to believe that God did eternally fix on us His unchanging love, well, we shall want eternity to admire Him and love Him and praise Him, and crown Him for such infinite goodness. God has a way of manifesting His love toward His people, a wonderful way. Not by, first of all, coming to them, but first of all going to His Son, His eternal Son, equal with Himself in the Trinity, and choosing Him and giving Him to be the Redeemer of the election of grace, giving Him to be the Head of His Body, the Church, decreeing that this, His only begotten Son, should, in the fulness of time, be made of a woman. O, I think sometimes to me the incarnation of the Son of God shines with a singular lustre, and I would like to be ever dwelling upon it in my own soul, and insisting upon it in my ministry. The manifestation of the love of God to the Church is, first of all, in the gift of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. This was a manifestation of God in His love; His nature is love, and, so to speak, He cut out a channel in which this love should flow, even in the Man, Christ Jesus. O, what a wonder of eternal love is the willingness of Christ to come, to empty Himself, and make Himself of no reputation. He took on Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

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

He gave Himself, He offered Himself, without spot to God, and this, when it shines in its own glorious brightness, into the heart of an elect sinner, born again, makes that sinner unspeakably happy, because it makes him unspeakably perfect. It brings a perfection

into the soul that can never be increased and never be diminished. As to feeling it is sometimes more and sometimes less, but in itself always the same, spotless and without blame before God in love. And what love was in the Holy Ghost in that He covenanted with the Father and the Son to save, and quicken and sanctify dead, polluted creatures, but yet, first of all, that He did covenant to beget miraculously the sacred humanity that the Son of God should take into union with Himself, and did covenant to dwell immeasurably in His gifts and graces in the Man Christ Jesus, to be with Him through His troubles, to help Him when He was weak, and to be with Him all through. The Spirit of God was put upon Christ and a covenant was made with Christ and the Word of God was given to Christ, never to depart out of His mouth nor out of the mouth of His seed nor out of the mouth of His seed's seed from henceforth and for ever. And these covenant truths, when made known by the Spirit, become the stay, the support, the peace, and the comfort of the Lord's people. And in this great gift of Christ there is a very great end, a purpose to be answered, an amazing result, namely that we, who were dead, might live through Him. This is the end, the divine purpose, that dead people might live in the only possible way of their living, and if the Lord will help us, let us try this evening a little to look at this great end that God, in manifesting His love in the gift of His Son, had in view; the purpose He had purposed in Himself, for He hath purposed all things after the good pleasure of His will; purposed in Himself this great matter, "that we might live through Him". O, but it is very solemn to be dead. Our death is our alienation from God; it is our pollution, it is our helplessness; it is our ignorance; it is the vile moving of sin in us; it is the mighty working of all manner of sin and blasphemy; this is our death, and it is felt by everyone who has a time of love, to whom God has come in a time of love and said, Live. O, it is a great thing to live. The man of God who lives, lives on, lives in, lives by Christ, is a good man. He is called a child of God, and an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, and this shows us one thing, first of all, that the divine light is entirely independent of human nature. It dwells in the human soul, but it is the gift of God, and is in no way dependent upon human nature for either its beginning or its sustenance, its growth, its victories and its blessed destination; it is entirely independent, yet it affects human nature. It affects it, it pulls it out of the

world, saves it from the vile practices of the world, sets it apart for God, and makes the man, in whom it is, a devoted person. Yet it is distinct from human nature; it is opposed by human nature, but it can never be crushed neither by human nature nor the devil. What a mercy it is to have some understanding in the mystery of godliness and the mystery of iniquity as dwelling in the same person; to have an understanding in the Scripture that says, "What will ye see in the Shulamite?, as it were the company of two armies". And in gospel language these are called "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts", and "the hidden man of the heart which is created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that created him," and every child of God comes in time to understand these two creatures, so to speak, in himself, to find what Paul found, that he could not do the good that he would, was driven at times to do the evil he would not, and yet, that that creature that seemed overcome in him by sin, got the victory thus: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin", and this new life is so pure that it groans under the pressure, and is afflicted by the presence of sin in the members. And the Apostle Paul felt what this divine life was, knew its source, and its effect. He says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me". The life he, the Apostle, lived in the flesh, the flesh which opposed him - for by the flesh there we are not merely to understand his body, but the old man - and the life he lived in this world as a man, a fallen creature; yet the life that he lived in the flesh was another life, higher, looking above and beyond it: "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me". And you find again the Apostle Paul in the Galatians, this same Apostle, expresses this new life as in opposition to the old: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit" and some of us know it painfully. Yet, says he "and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would", and it goes both ways my friends. If any man excuses his sins by saying that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and never knows anything of the other side, he is a hypocrite, a deceived, a deceiving man. The passage there shows both things. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and opposes every motion in the Spirit, but the Spirit opposes the flesh

and goes struggling against every downward effort of the flesh and wants to rise and live in God. And this new life is by Christ - "That we might live through Him". This new life is a gift given by the Prince which shall never return to Him as do the gifts which He gives to His servants. If the Prince shall give a gift to any of His servants, it shall be theirs to the year of Jubilee; then it shall return to the Prince, but if a Prince shall give a gift to any of His sons it shall be theirs by inheritance for ever, and not go back to Him as a stream back to the fountain. What a mercy to live, to live under God. Peter expresses the same truth when He says of Christ, "Who His Own self bare our sins in His Own body on the tree that we might live unto God", not live after the flesh. Arm yourselves, he says, with the same mind, you who know a living, suffering, Christ; arm yourselves with the same mind and do not mix with mud; foul backsliding shun. It is because of the possession of this heavenly life that such an exhortation may be made to any Christian and this blessed life comes through the death of Christ. "Sent His only begotten Son into the world"; what for? To fulfill the law, to obey His Father, to do the commandment that His Father gave Him which was to lay down His life. "My Father loveth Me because I lay down My life; this commandment have I received of My Father" - even to lay down His life. The fulness of death was in Christ, the curse of the law took effect on Christ; the wrath of God came into the soul of Christ, and when He had exhausted all, then He went to heaven. And the fulness of life is in Him and out of that fulness of life He gives life to all His children, and they live through Him. And this being the source of their life it must also be the end of their life. They must reach Him before they are completely happy, and when they reach Him they reach the end of their faith and the end of their hopes and the end of their highest expectations and wishes, and when they reach Him then they will not go out for ever and ever. This life is a pure life, and this life brings those who possess it into that blessed conformity to the image of God's Son, which is decreed, predestinated. "Whom He did predestinate" unto the conformity to His dear Son that they are to have, "them He also called and whom He called them also He justified and whom He justified them He also glorified". Ah that is an amazing thing to have any conformity of life to Him who is the living Head of His body, the Church. No man will ever be like Christ unless he has the life of Christ. No man can ever bear the image of God unless he

has the life of Christ in His soul, and this life of Christ puts its own image on the person who has it in God's sight, though not often perhaps in his own sight. O, it is a great thing then to be a living soul, and if we live this life we have the appetite of this life, and the appetite of this life is for God. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so panteth my soul after Thee O God". Spiritual appetite is not a part of human nature as fallen, cannot be. It comes from that divine life, what is called the divine nature, which God imparts at regeneration, and this is a truth that every one possessing this life has an understanding of more or less distinctly. You who have this life can really say it at times

I seek and hope to find  
A portion for my soul  
To heal a feverish mind  
And make a bankrupt whole  
A cup of blessing for the poor  
Thats full and free and flowing o'er

And moreover the same person can say,

The portion of a beast  
Will not content my heart  
The God of spirits only can  
Fill up the vast desires of man

What a wonder it is to want God, to see the want of Christ in your own soul and to perceive the worth of Him as in the light of the Spirit He is seen, will make you bend your knee to God and cry

Jesus reveal Thyself to me

That is the one great aim, and wish and prayer of a living person, a manifestation of the Lord Jesus to his soul. You must, some of you, have perceived the infinite importance of Christ's word as in John's gospel: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you". O, what a sweeping word is that; what a two edged sword it may have been to some of you; what, my religion nothing; my hopes nothing; I myself, a dead person because I have

not been, as yet, blessed to eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood. Now a living man may be tried by this, but the trial will do him good. It will make him enquire what is to be understood by the flesh of Christ; what is it to eat it? What is it to drink His blood? What are we to understand by His blood there? And when the Spirit opens it to him, and shows him that the flesh of Christ is Christ's sacrifice for us, that there is that word : "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle"; that a poor child of God has a right to that altar; he goes begging, praying, waiting, looking, longing, hungering for that bread, and when the day comes for him to have a manifestation of Christ in his soul, then he says, now I know; now I have received Christ by faith and I perceive that to eat His flesh is to receive Him as He is manifested; to drink His blood is to live on His merit, and the man thus blessed lives, through Christ. He lives as a justified person; that is a great matter. A justified person has no condemnation: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." When faith lays holds of His righteousness, then the sinner sings: "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". To live through Christ is to live as a sin pardoned person; that becomes the experience sooner or later of all poor sinners. To live through Christ then is what is written: "Accepted in the beloved"; really accepted. And I will tell you one wonderful thing that you will get when you feel you are accepted in the beloved. You will get that intimate access to God, that sense of His favour, that feeling that He does not, that He will not, reject you, but that you are well pleasing in His sight through and in the Lord Jesus, as shall make you supremely happy, and truly and deeply humble. That we might live in these respects through Him. And beloved friends there are other ways in which the Lord's people know the love of Christ and live through Christ, because the Father in His love sent Christ to die for them, and one is this; they live in the path of tribulation through Christ. He went through a path of tribulation Himself; His heart was broken with sorrow; He was weary; He had fears; He offered strong cries and tears unto Him that was able to save Him and was heard in that he feared. Not with slavish fear, which we often feel; not with the feeling of fear lest He should have terrible judgment if He did not obey, as we may sometimes feel; but a solemn feeling in His soul that He had to obey and bear infinite pain,

an infinite load, an infinite curse, and He cried unto God who was able to save Him in the hour of trouble - in an acceptable time - and was heard in that he feared.

A faithful friend of grief partakes  
But union can be none  
Betwixt a heart like melting wax  
And hearts as hard as stone  
Betwixt a Head diffusing blood  
And members sound and whole  
Betwixt an agonising God  
And an unfeeling soul

And if you live through Christ you live in a path of tribulation, against which the flesh will fret and rebel, and here will come out the strength of grace in faith for you will dread rebellion; you will feel grieved at being rebellious when you are so; you will want earnestly at times to be delivered from rebellion. The life of grace comes out in such things. Rutherford said: "The Christian is a Christian in the fire" and that is true. You will be manifested as a Christian when you are in trouble. "Hide not Thy face from Me in the day when I am in trouble". This is the cry of a man who would rather live in trouble and be right with God than have unsanctified prosperity and a curse upon it. "Choose Thou the way" is the man's cry, "but still lead on". Many a temptation to go into an easier bypath where the grass is green and the path smooth. O, you feel that you can hardly tread the hard cobbles of tribulation, and grief, and affliction, but faith is drawn out into exercise, and it approves the way that God has chosen. "Choose Thou the way but still lead on". That we might live through Christ. A troubled Christ and a troubled soul will get on well together. That is, as you look to Him who was troubled, but now is in heaven and who, because He was troubled, is able to have compassion on you, being a merciful and faithful High Priest that will help you. Able to succour them that are tempted in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted. He was with wild beasts; are we always to lie down on the bed of ease? He was burdened; are we always to be light and flying? He endured desertion; shall we know nothing but presence? We are to live in God's way, and this is the way: "In the world ye shall have tribulation". Tribulation tests

people; tribulation proves the need of people, and tribulation therefore makes room for the fulness of Christ's life and He pours out of that fulness into their souls. Sometimes the waters of life are to be to the ankles, and greatly strengthened are the ankles. Sometimes the waters reach to the knees, and then sweet communication of strength is realised. Sometimes they are to the loins, and O, that is good. And sometimes they become a river to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over. Who can understand the illimitable love of God in Christ? You may swim in it, but you will never get to the other side of it. It will be a swimming in it through eternity but never get to the end of it. And we live in hope; Christ was cast upon His Father from His infancy, and every living soul is brought to cast Himself on the Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and upon His own Father though he does not know Him to be his Father. O, every new born sinner has a Father in heaven. He may be unable to say "Our Father", "My Father", but he has a Father in heaven. The little child in grace has a Father in heaven and the life that the child of God lives is a life of hope. "We are saved by hope". Hope is as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast and it enters into that which is within the veil, wither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus. O what a great thing it is to have a living hope in the goodness and mercy and love of God. And so I may say, that we may live through Christ a life of faith. "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me". Think of it; here is a poor destitute sinner and he cries to God: "Leave not my soul destitute". Tempted, and he cries to be saved from yielding to temptation. With the wild beasts of his own heart and he prays that he may not be devoured. The prayer of faith saves the soul in its sickness and trouble. A life of faith is a blessed life; it is not according to sense; it is not according to our comfortable wishes, our wishes for comfort, but it is a life that honours God, a life that honours Christ, that honours His power and His blood, His righteousness and His mercy; that says, when confessing sin, "With the Lord there is mercy that He may be feared and with Him is plenteous redemption". And then you will find that strong trouble will be the means of your getting strong faith. Strong sins will be the means of your getting strong faith, for God will give you what is needed for the conflict. That we might live a life of love through Christ. If any man love the Lord Jesus, O what a blessed man he is.

Peace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. Sometimes you may feel all but sure you love Christ, but the question may be uncertain in your conscience - does He love me? You will want to know that, and you look at yourself; you never saw another man as bad as yourself, did you? Did you ever see one half as wicked as you feel yourself to be? Do you think sometimes it is impossible for you to imagine another person as wicked as you are? And then, with such a feeling of yourself, how difficult, impossible to you at times, it is to even think that God can love you, but you would not love Him if He did not first love you. "We love Him because He first loved us"; that is the Scripture testimony; even in this very chapter John says "We love Him because He first loved us". And then lastly there is to be a consummation of all the hope that the people of God feel - for ever with the Lord. The Apostle says: "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." That is to come. The best is to come. Not anything better in its own end, for he who has life and the love and the righteousness of Christ can have nothing better, nothing better, when he gets to heaven, but a better, a fuller understanding and enjoyment of them. The manner is different and the measure is greater, that is all. It is a great "all", but it really is "all". "That we might live through Him". The life we now live is the life of Christ and we have to go to heaven to know its fulness. "In this was manifested", made known, made to shine, "the love of God toward us in that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him".

AMEN.