

2B
714
1365 m
LaP812

LIBRARY OF THE
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTIST

28/1/1922

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday ~~evening~~ 14 April 1918

2 CORINTHIANS 4 v 6

"For God, who commanded the light to shine
out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to
give the light of the knowledge of the glory of
God in the face of Jesus Christ"

It seems well nigh impossible for anyone to gather his thoughts away from the present troubles; they are so persistent in fixing themselves on tangible things, on felt sorrows, on dark forebodings, on most gloomy prospects, that if divine help is not given, if the attractions of God are not made prominent by the Spirit of God, it is impossible to think of anything else. The Apostle in the Hebrews admonishes the Lord's people to let their conversation be without covetousness, and to be content with such things as they have, and because the Lord hath said - "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" - and therefore they should boldly say - "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me". But it is not easy. Parents whose sons are abroad find their hearts abroad. Men who have lost all nearly must find their hearts so much on their losses, and so dark must be their foreboding as to the future, that they may be wondering what they shall do, what will become of them, and the whole nation, notwithstanding an exterior lightness, must have its thoughts more or less constantly on those bloody battlefields, these blood-soaked lands. And what is to befall us, what more mischief and desolation, and horror, the Lord may permit the barbarians to inflict, He alone knows fully. So, if we look to the earth it will be just what Isaiah speaks, we shall see nothing but darkness, and dimness of anguish. If we look beyond the means used to punish the world we shall see, as taught of God, that we have richly deserved, and are richly deserving every minute the hand of God lifted up against us. I scarcely need call your attention to national sins; there are so many one can barely name them, but they are before us; they are not to be found by diligent search; as the Lord speaks in another case, "They are upon the skirts of our garments." Our superstition, our having become

part of Rome Papal, our blatant infidelity sweeping through the land under the guise of that respectable name, higher criticism, our dreadful condition in respect of morals, the false balances, the bags of deceitful weights, the disobedience of children to parents, the national unthankfulness, and unholiness, the deathly state of the churches, the carnality of the ministry, the abounding errors today, and with all, no repentance, but hardness of heart, haughtiness, so-called determination of men to do this, and not to permit that. Who that has eyes open to these things can wonder that the hand of God is upon us? Who can wonder that the manhood of this nation, and of the world, is being, in such large, and sad measure, poured out upon the battlefield? And what is the prospect before us? One dares scarcely to think about it, can hardly mention it, it is so dark. The present portents are terrible even to think of for a moment. What then? Well may men's hearts fail them for fear. Well may there be perplexity of nations. Have the Lord's people anything better than others to look on? Is there a prospect for them different from that that is before the world? Have they any ground to stand on, and say we hope for better days? O yes, better days indeed are coming, and the Lord's people shall live in them, and without at all entering upon natural things, temporal prospects, I would speak, as helped this evening to this great word that has in it the better days that I have in my mind. Go back to the beginning. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". In the beginning He said "Let there be light: and there was light." That was when darkness covered the face of the earth, when chaos and death reigned, and God's divine word made order, created life, and brought beauty into existence. It was all done by His word. He commanded the light to shine out of darkness. He made two great lights, one to rule the day, and the other, the lesser, to rule the night. He planted a garden, He made man, and put him in that garden. All this out of darkness, and disorder, and chaos, and confusion, and all, not by industry of any man, not by the help of any creature, but wholly, absolutely, by His Own commandment. He commanded the light to shine out of darkness. And the Apostle says that that God, who did this, all this mighty work, hath shined in our hearts, and in order that He might give to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, and that, not absolutely - who could bear the naked light of infinitude? who could look on unveiled Deity? - but in the face of Jesus Christ, or the Person of Jesus Christ. This

gives us, in a word, the very quintessence of vital religion. It gives us the Person in whom that religion is, and is seen. It gives us to see the glory of God in this religion, this blessed religion. It takes therefore all boasting away from man. It brings to light that word, that no flesh shall glory in God's presence. If Abraham had his religion of himself, by his works, says Paul, then he had whereof he might glory, but if God gave it to him, then this is true, he must glory in the Lord. Says Paul to the Ephesians - "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". "By grace are ye saved; through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The whole of it is made clear in the Scriptures - may it be clear in our hearts - that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.

There is in the first place a communication from God. This is intimated distinctly in the text - "Hath shined in our hearts". There is a communication. If there be no communication from God to you, to me, we shall always, and for ever and ever, be dead, and dark, with respect to God. Oh sinner, you will prove it true, unless God make a communication to you, you will just live, and die in sin. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" - conveyed to the world, His light - "hath shined" - says Paul - "in our hearts". This is the source of all experimental knowledge, and religion. Look at it dear friends. All right knowledge comes from God. All reliable knowledge must be had and held on adequate evidence. If one should talk to you about God, and you should acquiesce in what one said, and yet there should be made to you no communication by God Himself, your knowledge would not have for its foundation adequate evidence, because a naked word of man cannot be adequate evidence of the infinite God in your understanding. You must have some testimony from Himself who bears witness to Himself in the Scriptures, and by means of them, and the Holy Spirit in your heart. What a mercy it is that God comes down to men; men cannot rise to Him. There was a natural knowledge given to us in our creation, and in that knowledge we could rise to that Being who, in the law in our nature, made Himself known in the first instance, but the lamp of understanding was put out into darkness by our sin. Our ignorance of God is sinful ignorance. Our inability to rise to the knowledge of Himself is sinful inability. Our weakness in respect of laying hold of divine things, is sinful weakness. And now

the world of men is just at the mercy of God, and if He will leave them in their native ignorance and darkness, He does no injustice to a man. But He will have some come to the knowledge of Himself, and the way by which they shall come to the knowledge of Himself is set forth here. "Hath shined in our hearts." O, see professor, if you have adequate evidence that God is. You say, I have plenty in the Bible. True, and you have plenty in creation also, but have you it in your heart? O, is it in your heart, professor? Did ever God shine there? A rational knowledge may be picked up, but a saving acquaintance must be imparted. God commanded the light to shine, and all the determination of men to have their own way, and to walk in the way of their own hearts must give place to this - "Hath shined in our hearts"

There is a receptive capability in man but not a creative capability. A receptive capability. As these windows can receive and convey into this building the light when the sun rises, so, when God raises and commands the light of truth to shine into a sinner, then that sinner receives, and all the shutters of willfulness, and enmity, must give place, fall down, to let in the blessed light of divine truth, and God is made known. Ah, and He makes known to the man by that very light that shines, God; himself, as a sinful man. There is always that two-fold effect of a divine inshining, that the subject of it sees the source of the light, and knows there is a God, and he sees, in the light that comes, himself to be a sinner. Professors seem to grow up naturally into some ideas of sin, and of being sinners, but O, how different that is from that inshining that comes when the appointed hour has arrived for God,

Not to propose, but call by grace
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill

Then it is, "Lazarus come forth". Then it was "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? Who art Thou Lord? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Down fell his enmity, and wrath, and anger, and clamour against this Person, and all his greatness of persecution, and he said - "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Prayer was born of that word. I would

entreat you professors to look at this. How did your religion commence? Not how big are you now. How did your religion commence? And this light does draw the eye that sees it to its heavenly source. In the case I have just mentioned it was strongly so - "Who art Thou Lord? I am Jesus." "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" And see how singular this was, and personal, for Paul declares that the men who were with him saw indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake. That was "Saul, Saul" and that was the name of one man in the company, and the leader of them, and if the Lord shines into our hearts we shall hear a voice in that very light and it will attract our hearts to Him who speaks and shines to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And what is that glory? If you have ever seen the light of God in the law, you have seen His glory there and you have said to yourself, His glory must be in my condemnation, for I am a sinner, and the law says "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" O that glory is so great that the person who sees it can scarcely bear the light. It is a great glory. The glorious ministration of condemnation is a great glory, a great glory, but here the Apostle has another glory. Not Moses, but Christ. Not the law, but the gospel. Not the sinner here is the receiver, but God in Christ "in the face, or Person, of Jesus Christ" Therefore that glory must be the glory of forgiveness. It is to God a name of honour and praise in the earth to forgive the sins of people whereby they have sinned against Him. How great is this glory of Christ crucified, the glory of that Man on the cross who was crucified through weakness. Who bore our sins in His Own body on the tree. Who bore the hiding of God, the Father's face, and the curse of a broken law, and who was the end of the law, and is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. And this is called by Paul, the glory that excelleth, and the glory that remaineth. The glory of the ministration of death is done away, and just as a candle is put out by the light of the sun that excels the light of the candle, so is the light, and the glory also of the law done away by the excelling glory of the gospel. It is glory in God to punish sin. It is more glory in God to forgive a sinner. It is glory in God, O unutterable glory in God to put away sin, and to render a sinner spotless, innocent, and pure; without blame, or blemish, or

wrinkle, or any such thing, and this is the glory of God that some are permitted to see, taught to look upon in the face of Jesus Christ. O, how wonderful that God should ever do this, reveal in a sinner's heart His glory in forgiving him, His glory in justifying, and sanctifying him, in translating him from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. It was said to John - "Come and I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." She is to prepare herself for the marriage, and how shall she do it? Raiment is provided, clean, white linen, the righteousness of saints. And here is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. "For this is the name wherewith He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS". And to meet the objection that one might instantly feel in that particular, saying, O, but that is the Lord, and I am away from Him, distant from Him, unlike Him, and have been living in enmity against Him, God makes the exchange complete, taking the sin of the sinner and giving it to Christ, and taking the righteousness of Christ and giving it to the sinner, and this exchange brings these two together. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". So this name "Righteousness" is given to the church. "This is the name wherewith she shall be called the LORD our Righteousness". So intimate is the union, so one are these two, that what the husband is, the bride is, and she has her husband's Name, and if He is righteousness, so is she. That is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and that shines into a man's heart; he sees it. It becomes then to him a matter of sweet experience; not proud ideas; it becomes his life; it is made his deliverance. "Righteousness delivereth from death". And where you are, O God knows, but if you are here, if you are in the Lord, in His righteousness, then this glory shines to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, in the Person of Jesus Christ, and this gives liberty. We talk of liberty, a good deal is said about liberty. Be careful of this, that your liberty is given to you. That churlish person Nabal said, a good many servants break away from their masters, and one may say, a good many professors break away from their Lord, their Master, and have not had liberty to go away given to them. Mind if you profess liberty, that it is a God-given liberty. What do I mean? one may say. I mean this - "Know ye not (I speak to them that know the law)" says Paul "that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth, for the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he

liveth". She is not free; she may wish herself free, but she is not so. Then "if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress" Her husband must be dead before she is free. Says Paul - "I, through the law, am dead to the law", and again he teaches this "Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ." There must be this two-fold death; then you are free. And then when this truth shines into your heart in the face, in the Person, in the work of Jesus Christ, you are honourably free. Made free by the gospel, made free by the truth, made free by the Son. O, honourable freedom is beautiful, blessed. And this is by the glory of God shining into a sinner's heart. God shines, God gives this. There comes a day to God's children individually when they get a revelation of Jesus Christ in some measure in their own hearts; when they get the forgiveness of their sins; when they get the sweet manifestation of mercy; when they get the sweet and intimate access to God in Christ that is provided for them in the Person of Christ, and the work of Christ, so as that they go free from all their bondage and they are Christ's freed men. O, blessed freedom. The glory of God is in it, and the sinner sees the glory of God in magnifying the law and making it honourable, and opening the way, and opening the door, Christ being that door, and that way, and now there is a new way, and Paul in the Hebrews speaks of it when he says - "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near" Boldness is liberty. Liberty is an open way; not a way you force open, but a way opened by the Lord Jesus. And there is the mystery, there is the miracle, there is the omnipotence of grace, and all shining in the Person of Christ, and now shining in the heart of the happy sinner. O, how sweet is this, as Solomon says - "Surely the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eye to behold the sun" And this is most pleasant. And here I see a mystery and a mercy and will just name the matter, namely how that sin-procured trouble can be mentioned before the Lord, and grace to bear it, grace to sanctify it can be imparted. God does impart them, in the Person of Jesus Christ, and so a saint stands on wonderful ground. "Our feet" says the Psalmist "shall stand in thy gates O Jerusalem". And here is wonderful ground for one who says, O my sins have brought all this; my sins have procured all this trouble to myself, and to my

family, and to all belonging to me. Now says the Lord, come to Me. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Sin connected with your trouble is put away, and your trouble is sanctified and turned to a good account, and God shines into your heart even by means of that sin-procured trouble, and lets you see that, instead of its being a sword to cut you off, it is the rod of your Heavenly Father to correct you for your folly. It is turned into an evidence of sonship, into a sign of love, for "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" "If therefore ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons". Ah you may be months and months under the sword, feeling that your trouble is sent to make an end of you. Then God may shine so sweetly into your heart and show you that He means good to you by it, that He deals with you, He really deals with you, as a father deals with a son in whom he delights, but some of whose ways have not been good, and therefore He has been obliged to correct him, but He corrects him because He loves him, because he is His son. Correction does not make a son; the correction comes to a person because he is a son. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent", says God to His loved ones, to His Own children.

H
And the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines into the heart of a sinner in his adoption. The adoption of a sinner to be a child of God in Christ is one of the mysteries of God's grace, great grace. We are sinners, we are alienated from the life of God through ignorance and wicked works. But O, the change is wrought. "Predestinated unto the adoption of children unto Himself by Christ", and now comes the day when a poor sinner finds himself in this new, and happy, and ineffable relationship to God in Jesus Christ. He is a son. How does he know it? He was so from eternity by predestination, Paul teaches us, but how comes the man to know it? "Likewise the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God". O, the brightness of that shining glory. O, the greatness of it; that one who feels himself, as it were, a piece of hell, a child of wrath even as others, should now come to know that he really is, and eternally was by predestination, a child of God; in a relationship that God will not allow to be undone, and destroyed. O, bless the Lord for this. But the wisdom, the love, the greatness, the power of God in this act of making an alien a child, a foe a favourite,

none can fully explore, but they all shine in the face of Jesus Christ; they are all there.

And another part of this glory is that this sinner, this child, is an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ. An heir is one who is to inherit an estate. And what do the saints inherit in Christ? They inherit eternal life, eternal justification, eternal sanctification. They inherit the riches of divine love. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty might be rich". They inherit His mercy, His favour, which is better than life. All these things they inherit because they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Because the Father in the Covenant was pleased that all the fullness of goodness, and grace, and love, and mercy should dwell in Christ, and Christ is the Elder Brother. They are co-heirs with Him; they are to inherit and enjoy the things which God gave to Him, and they are poured into their hearts in some little measure here, and they see this glory in the face of Jesus Christ. And therefore the glory of God shines in them in this particular also, that their perseverance in the path of life is by divine grace and power. "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". Did you ever fear apostasy? Looking into your own heart, and seeing, and feeling the awful capability of sin that you possessed, and the subtlety of sin, the hardening nature of sin, did you ever fear that you might have come into it by your own deceivings, and the deceivings of the devil, and proved to be a Judas? How often, if you have feared that, you have cried out "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not". Leave me not to be a prey to sin, to Satan, to the world. O give me faith that will hold me fast and keep me near Thee; that will stand in the power of God. And what has the Lord done? You may say I know a man who has feared for forty years that awful thing, apostasy, and as yet has not come into it; has not been left to make, as concerning faith and a good conscience, shipwreck. What does that man say? To whom does he willingly ascribe all the glory? O, he says "all the glory, all the glory Lord is Thine". He says what shall I fear now? Still himself, yet says he what shall I fear? what flesh can do unto me? "How say ye to my soul flee as a bird to your mountain?" God is my refuge and strength. And the glory of God is seen in this when He comes down to a sinner's

weakness, He condescends to a sinner's frailty, He says "Fear not for I am thy God". And He shines in such a word as "Fear not" into the heart of the sinner and gives him to see his safety is in Christ; all his safety is there. God commands the light of a "Fear not" to shine into a fearing heart. A fearing heart is often a confused heart, a dark heart, a heart liable to much sinking, and distraction. Now God shines in and says, O fear not. You fear lack; I have everything you need. Do you fear temptation? I will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Do you fear yourself? "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace". Do you fear the effect of your troubles? I will sanctify to you your deepest distress, And says the sinner, O, the greatness of that grace that has undertaken to manage all by the way and to the end. God commands this. May He command it in our cases.

And the good time to come, at which I hinted, is in this word. "For if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable." But there is a prospect, yes there is a prospect, a prospect which, as one is led to look at, dwell upon, is delightful. It is expressed thus:

Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in

That is before every saint because Christ said to His disciples - "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also". The Lord set this before us. The Lord give us to see the beauty and attraction of Himself, so that the dimness, and darkness, and anguish, and fear, and trouble, and sorrow of present things may not, as it were, quench the light, and damp hope, but rather be the means in God's hand of gathering our souls up to Him who is the light, and life, and the truth, and the way, and the end, and the glory of all.

AMEN.