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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTIST

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday morning 14 December 1924

2 JOHN v 9

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the  
doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that  
abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both  
the Father and the Son"

When the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost and began to shake, and throw down Baal, and all false gods out of the hearts of the elected people, and to gather a church for the praise, and glory of God, then the devil began to work. Whenever God works, the devil opposes Him. We need not wonder that there are heresies today, seeing that in Apostolic days heresies arose, and all the heresies were, more or less, directly aimed at the Person, and work of Christ. He is, has ever been, the object of the enemy's bitterness, and warfare. It was not long after the resurrection of Christ, and the erection of gospel churches, before the enemy began to whisper into the minds of professors of Christ, people called Christians, things against Christ. Some, that He was but a Man, the son of Joseph and Mary. Some, that He suffered only in appearance. Some, that Jesus was one thing, and Christ another, and a variety of heresies directed against the Person of Christ rose up in the church of Christ. Against these heresies, and heretics, the Holy Ghost wrought by the pens of the Apostles, who were inspired to write, and complete the canon of holy Scripture. John, in his gospel, sets forth that blessed Person in His incarnation and His work. In these, his epistles, the Apostle sets forth the same Person, the same work, and also testifies against the heresies, the heretics, who rose up against his dear Lord, and Master. And it is very solemn for us, upon whom the ends of the world are come, to see about us, as the Apostle Paul speaks, the carcasses of men who have fallen in the wilderness, and, says the Spirit by Paul, they are for our admonition. They are to warn us, to warn us, who may be beguiled into thinking that in this day of the Bible, and of correct profession by many, we are not in any particular danger of being carried away. We may think we are safe because we do believe

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this morning, as far as we know ourselves, that Christ is God; that the very Son of God did, in the fullness of time, become Man; was made of a woman, made under the law. But the Apostle says, Now beware, look to yourselves - "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" And ordinarily professors who depart from the living God go to some other gods. You will find, I think, as a rule, that heretics have not gone into open atheism. Rather the enemy has dealt so with them, that they have gone to some other gods. "Take heed". May we, as a congregation, take heed. We think we are right; it may be - I believe in respect of the form of sound words, we are right, but what about our spirits, and hearts, consciences, and understandings. The Apostle John in his first epistle declares the coming of the Son of God, just as in his gospel, in the first chapter. There he says - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". This is the gospel in the beginning of it, the coming into this world of Him who, in His complex Person and work of salvation, is the sum, and substance of eternal life. He tells us that he and his brother Apostles had seen, and tasted, and handled the Word of life; that they had looked on the very Man Christ Jesus. And Peter had received a revelation of Him as the Son of God. Peter, and James, and John had had the high privilege of being taken by Christ to the Mount of Transfiguration, and there they had looked on His glory, had seen Moses, and Elias coming and hearing them talk with Christ. They had felt it to be so good to be there, that Peter said, Let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. And when you get His presence, you want to be with Him always, want to gaze on Him. Well, the testimony of these Apostles was this, We have seen Him, we have heard Him, we have handled Him. What a mercy that the testimony is left us in holy Scripture of what those blessed, inspired men, saw, and tasted, and handled, and felt of the good Word of life.

Now the Apostles were jealous. "I am jealous over you", says Paul to the Corinthians, lest you should be beguiled. I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to one husband, but I am jealous over you lest you should be beguiled. Satan beguiled Eve; he may beguile you; and so he wrote. And dear friends, may we be jealous of ourselves, and of each other. Who knows how far human nature - the natural light that we

have on holy Scripture, the acquisition of knowledge of the letter of the Scripture - who knows, I say, how far human nature, thus influenced, and shaped, may go in the way of religion? I ask myself this question at times, about myself. I know I have a little knowledge of the Bible; I know I believe it; I know I have been influenced by it. Is my knowledge right? Is my belief by the Holy Ghost? Has the influence of the Bible on my mind been from the Spirit of the Word, the Holy Ghost? There is coming a searching day. May it come to us now, and be with us again, and again, in the teaching of the Spirit. "I will search Jerusalem with candles". He goes into particular corners, and things, and brings them out to the view of Jerusalem. A necessary thing. God never does anything that is not necessary for some person's good, or the judgement of that person. All that He says, and all that He does, He does of a gracious purpose, a great purpose, and for good to some. And the churches are to know that God, even Christ, searches the reigns, and hearts of the children of men. They are to know it. I do not think a much worse evil can come to a professing people than a spirit of slumber, and of sleep. The errors that may creep in at such a time, God only knows. O beware of sleeping, and slumbering in a profession. I would be thankful that I am kept awake in some little measure. My case keeps me awake.

Now the Apostle in this short, but very important epistle, writes to the elect lady, and her children. Some think that the elect lady is not an individual person, but a church, but that does not matter. Here is the inspired Word of God to some people, and John rejoices in that the elect lady, and her children walk in the truth, and he says in the next epistle, the third, that he has no greater joy than that his children should walk in truth. And, having thus written, and wished these people joy, that their joy might be full, he exhorts them to look to themselves - "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward". See this; look to your own consciences, exercised people, look to your cases, your consciences, your belief, your walk, your feelings about God; your understanding of things, lest the things you profess should depart from you, and you should

join that dreadful heap of corpses, the apostates whose carcasses are in the wilderness.

In the text he gives us very solemn things. "Whosoever transgresseth" - passes over the boundary. A transgressor is one who passes over, steps over, a boundary. The boundary here is the doctrine of Christ. "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not" - that is his awful poverty; no poverty like that; that is death, that is ruin, that is separation from God - "hath not God". Some of us have trembled at the thought of being destitute of God. I have, many a time. What can be a substitute? Nothing. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" If he hug the world as his possession, and has not God, what will it profit him? In this solemn subject I would notice what I believe is implicitly in the text, and indeed declared throughout the whole of the Scripture.

I would notice, first, whose doctrine it is that may be transgressed; who it is that may be sinned against, with respect to whom you may pass over boundaries. Well, first of all, as in this epistle, and as in John's gospel, and as in the 8 Proverbs, particularly, the Lord of life and glory, the Son of the Father in truth and love. It is the very Person of God, the second Person in the Trinity, the Son of the Father, the Son of the Father's Own self, of the substance of the Father, one in nature with Him, equal in majesty, and glory. This is the Person, that, that the Apostle speaks of - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God". O, beloved friends, it is very solemn not to know that Christ is the only begotten Son of God. Here shines the love of the Father in giving out of His bosom His only begotten Son, one with the Father in nature. "I and My Father are One". And men transgressed this doctrine in the days of the Apostles. Men called Christians transgressed it, and it is being transgressed still. Well, are we inside this wondrous truth? - "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son". Nothing is between a deserved hell and a sinner, but the Person of the Son of God incarnate. Cleave to this, that He who came and was made of a woman, was no other, no less than, the very Son of God. Not as we are, sons by adoption, but a Son by nature, the natural, proper, the essential Son of God. If the Scriptures state it as a truth, it

cannot be indifferent whether we believe it or not. Whosoever transgresseth this doctrine hath not God. That is the first truth.

The second is this, that this Person became incarnate; that that body that was prepared for the Son of God by the Spirit, the Son of God came and took, and assumed; took it into union with Himself. He was the immediate and only begotten Son of God, and the very Son of Man, born of the virgin Mary. No access to God, but by Him in His complex Person. No ground for hope of heaven, but in Christ. No righteousness, but by Him. No justification, no sanctification, no love, no grace, no help, no shining of the sun but in and by this Person, Jesus Christ. Can you transgress this? O yes, the Pharisee transgressed this when he thanked God that he was not as other men. Yes, and many transgress it still. Everyone going about to establish his own righteousness transgresses this doctrine of Christ, and living and dying in that transgression, there is no hope for him. Then is it not very solemn? And where it is believed, and held, and where a man walks within it, as within a blessed boundary that God Himself has set, and never is allowed to transgress, that means that that person is a Christian indeed, a true Christian. He who can say, concerning this Person, in answer to the question - "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" - I believe with all my heart - that person has in him the Spirit of Christ, and it is true of him - "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God". Think of it, O my beloved friends, this, and this only, is the way to God, the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Here is life for, and it flows into, the dead. Here is light for the blind, and it enlightens the blind. Here is liberty for the captive, and the captive is told to go free. Here is heaven for hell; goodness for badness; righteousness for filthy rags; power for weakness, and everything that a lost soul can need. If we abide in this it is a great favour.

"He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son". "Abide in Me", says the Lord Jesus. "Abide in Me". Can you say, do you sometimes sing

I love the incarnate mystery  
And there I fix my trust

O blessed sinner who does not transgress this doctrine of Christ.

But this is not alone. Christ is Christ for a purpose. He is the Eternal God, the Son of His Father, one in the Trinity, infinitely happy with His Father, and the Spirit, needing nothing outside Himself. But when He became Man He became Man for a purpose, and we would look at this, for it is important. What did the Lord Jesus Christ come to do? I came, He said, not to do My Own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will that hath sent Me, that I should lay down My life. Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life. "No man taketh it from Me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father". This is the purpose of Christ. He came to be the Substitute. He came to bear the sins of His elect people, to make an end of them. Once, in the end of the world, to put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. He came to be the righteousness of everyone that believeth. He came to open a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, and to give life to His children, and to unite them with Himself, and eventually to say to His Father, presenting all of them to His Father - "Behold I and the children whom God hath given Me."

Let us look at this doctrine of Christ. It is this, the doctrine of substitution; of one person standing in the place of another person; that is substitution. One holy, sinless, glorious, sufficient Person, standing in the place of a sinner insufficient for any good thing. Insufficient to fit himself, even if he had the will, to stand in the presence of a holy God. Substitution. Do you need a Substitute? You need one, whether you know it or not. O, if God should come out and deal with you, and deal with me, in our own persons immediately; think of it. No-one between an angry God and our sinful souls. No Saviour between us and hell. He that abideth in the doctrine of substitution - the substitution of a holy Christ for an unholy sinner - is a blessed person. Let us look at this. When Christ said - "It is finished" - He put away sin by the sacrifice of

Himself. But we are born in sin, even if we are the people of God; we are born in it. We live in it, we love it, we are its subjects, and its servants; we are slaves to sin by nature. Then if that took place in us that took place in those blessed Ephesians, to whom the Apostle writes - "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" - we then feel our sins, we feel them, we believe them, we know them. We can say - As for our transgressions, we know them. Our iniquities are with us. Job knew them when he had them given to him sewn up in a bag, and was made to possess them, the iniquities of his youth. You know your sins when God teaches you what you are; when His light shines on you, and you see your sins, you know that you are a sinner. Now when people feel their sins, the Holy Spirit comes - He has already come as the Spirit of conviction - He comes as the Spirit of Christ, and He opens the mystery of substitution. He opens the mystery of it, so that, sooner or later, this convinced sinner of whom I am speaking, says - and O, it is a great thing when the sweetness of it falls upon the heart - he says

Behold, a scene of matchless grace  
Tis Jesus in the sinner's place

That is substitution in experience, when the Spirit of Christ reveals that blessed Person in the heart, and he says, Here is a scene of matchless grace. This takes hell out of his conscience, and puts heaven in it. This takes condemnation from him and brings justification to him. This takes away the sentence of death from his heart, and mind. This takes out of the way all the distance that was between God and this sinner, for, just what the Substitute did when He was on the cross, that is given to the sinner, made over to him; that is imputed righteousness. Death, the death of Christ, thus becomes the life of the sinner.

Now what is it to abide in this doctrine? It is to cleave to it by that blessed faith that God gives to a soul. It is to feel, and to say sometimes, in your heart,

I love the incarnate mystery  
And there I fix my trust

Jesus in the sinner's place. His life for me. His robe of righteousness for me. His fountain of infinite merit for me. His goodness for my badness. His power for my weakness. His holiness for my sinfulness. And to abide in this as long as you live, as long as you are in the wilderness, as long as you have sin to trouble you, and trip you, and wound you, and defile you, so long to abide in this substitutionary work of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to be kept from transgressing the doctrine of Christ. "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God". O, poverty, awful poverty, never to be described. Awful poverty, not to have God. Without God in the world, without God in your conscience, without God in your soul, without Him in your heart, and before you in your eye. O what poverty this is. We all deprecate poverty in this world, but this is poverty, and very few deprecate it. Very few think of it. "Hath not God". He who turns from Jesus Christ as the Substitute of His people turns away from that blessedness that God gives to the church.

Now in the doctrine of Christ there is this also. When the Apostle had said - "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin" - this follows; we have fellowship with Him. And he who abides in this doctrine of Christ has this fellowship. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches". O, what a wonder this is. A wonder of grace, and of mercy, and of wisdom, and of power, that the sinner should be united to the holy Lord Jesus Christ, as intimately as a branch is united to the stock, so as that there is no difference between them. They become one, and what the root is, that is the branch in fruit bearing. O, to be in this doctrine then is marvellous. It is one of the most wonderful effects of the grace of God in a sinner, that he should have union with the living vine, the Lord Jesus, and from this union there should arise this wonder, that the love of Christ should flow into the sinner, and the fruit he bears should be the fruit that Christ bears, and this is how the sinner is pleasing to God. This is how his faith pleases God, and prevails with God, and why his love is sweet to God. And this is the secret of all his fellowship with God, and of God's having communications with him, making them to him. This is the secret. My beloved friends, to enter into this is to enter into the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him. What a dreadful thing, not to

be in this doctrine. What a dreadful thing, not to be in the doctrine of Christ, of His Person, and of His work. All religion that does not flow from this root, from union with this root, can be but of the flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". You can make nothing better of it. You cannot change your own nature. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" You cannot change your heart, and whatever comes from your natural mind, or heart, and soul, is but nature, but when union with the living vine takes place, and a sinner abides in Christ by faith, then the fruit that sinner bears is from Christ Himself. So his faith pleases God, and God will never forget it in its labour. His love is from Christ, and God will never forget his love. A cup of cold water given to a thirsty disciple in the Name of Christ is from the root of life, and from Christ. Therefore Christ never forgets it. All goodness is this way; comes from the root; all real religion. How separating this word is, how solemn. And if we are aware of it, that is, if we are truly exercised by this, will it not bring us into a conformity to the verse preceding the text - "Look to yourselves". As the Apostle Paul says - "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; ..... Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" I say this is very solemn to every person who is brought to feel it. I cannot help thinking of the carcasses in the wilderness, and O how I fear lest mine own should be united to that dreadful company, that heap of carcasses. Take heed, saith the Lord. Whosoever transgresseth and turneth aside from this Person and from this work, this Person of the Son of God and the Son of Man; from this work accomplished by this complex Person Jesus Christ. It will be very solemn to be found wrong, very solemn to be on the left hand, and if a man is not in this doctrine he will never be on the right hand, and a terrible thing it is to transgress, and turn aside from it. O, the numbers who have named the Name of Christ, and have not departed from iniquity, but transgressed the doctrine.

"He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son". If having not God is poverty, if having not God is poverty, who can express the wealth of having the Father and the Son? How great is that state, how happy is that state; that leads a sinner to say - "The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him," for that person is God's portion. Jacob is the lot of God's

inheritance. There is a mutual property here. "He hath both the Father" - the eternal God, the eternal Father of Jesus Christ. He possesses Him in His love, and in His grace. He possesses Him in that doctrine of eternal choice, and election that united the soul to Him in Christ. He possesses the wisdom of God, and the goodness of God. And he possesses God as being the fountain of life. He possesses the river of pleasures, which river is at the right-hand of God. And he possesses the Son. The very Son of God incarnate comes into this sinner's soul. Union with God is a very intimate, a very wonderful, blessed thing. We are separated from God by sin. It is a real thing, an awful truth. We are separated, and that is why we are dead. Now union with God is just the blessed opposite. Union with Him is having God for your portion, Christ for the root of life in you, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in you as in a temple, in His Own temple. "He hath both the Father and the Son". And if we were led into it we should find the blessedness of having the Trinity with us. Though the Father and the Son only are here spoken of, they are never to be separated from the Spirit, nor the Spirit from them, for He is One with them. And therefore, when you read in the Revelation of the Father being on His throne, and the Son, and the seven Spirits of God before the throne which Christ has, then you find the Trinity there. Wealth, O what is it? What is the world, to the possession of God? What is it? You see the world will soon pass away. "The world passeth away" and the fashion of it too. "All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass". And so it is said, this passeth away, and the world passes away, but God does not pass away. "Thou remainest". The Father remains, the Son remains, the Spirit remains, and these Three are One, and he who possesses them has for his possession eternal wealth. "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgement: That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." This substance is that wealth which God gives to them when His people have Himself. Happy sinner, O blessed sinner, who has this great God for his portion. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul" says one "therefore will I hope in Him." All other wealth, even as all other poverty, must soon cease, very soon, but this, this is eternal life; this is the river of pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. This is the soul's righteousness, and holiness, and happiness. This is the soul's bliss for ever and ever. The everlasting God. Well, dear

friends, and fellow sinners, we are liable to err, we are exposed to heresies. There is not a heresy in the world that I have not in my heart in the substance of it. And that is true of all of us. Have we received the doctrine of Christ? Yes, say some - and perhaps they say it lightly, flippantly - we possess it, and do not mean to give it up. Ah, it is not that way at all. This is the way, when God comes and lays claim to the sinner, and puts truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part makes him to know wisdom, and claims him, and gives faith to that sinner to lay claim to the Almighty God. May the Lord give us to enter into this, and make us afraid of apostasy, afraid of transgression. If you look at the law of God, we are all transgressors of that - we have been transgressors from our birth - but that is not intended here. The thing intended here is departing from, passing over from, the doctrine of Christ, His Eternal Sonship, His incarnation, His sufficient, efficacious redemption, union with Him, life from Him, righteousness in Him, justification, and sanctification. This is the blessed doctrine of Christ. And if you turn to the passages of Scripture where this doctrine is specially set forth, you will find it is the Word made flesh and dwelt among us, because "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." May the Lord bless us with steadfastness of faith to eye the Saviour alone, and bless us with some entrance into the union that is between Him and His people, set forth by the union between the Vine and its branches. Union that is beautiful, making them one, so that the root, in all its virtue, is seen in every fruit that the branch bears. And may we be kept from transgressing this, the allurements of our hearts, the allurements of the devil, the delusions of all things about us; may we be kept from them, and be held fast, looking to, and living on, and in, and by, and unto this Person.

AMEN.