

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 10 April 1929

TEXT: Colossians I verse 19

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness
dwell"

It pleased God to give the Apostle Paul a very large understanding and deep and powerful experience in and of the person of Jesus Christ. Hence, by inspiration of the Spirit, the warm expressions he uses concerning Christ, heaping word on word to express the excellencies and the beauties and the sufficiency of the Son of God, the Saviour of the church. He gives thanks here unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For, by Him, were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist, and He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence, for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. Adam had the fulness of all human excellency and perfection and he lost it and there is nothing of the kind left. Man that is abominable is God's word concerning us. Feet swift to shed blood, throat an open sepulchre, eyes full of adulteries and heart only enmity against God, and if we quarrel with this

description of man, it is because we are dead and ignorant, but if we believe it, and feel it, if it is a cross, a daily trouble, if we are again and again led by the Spirit of Christ to Him, then our emptiness of God and fulness of ill will not press us into despair, because there will be opened to the view of a God given faith the fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He meets every case; He visits sinners; He speaks comfortably to their hearts; He lures them into the wilderness. He is a wonderful Saviour, and by moments the saints of the most high God get glimpses of Him and these glimpses make them feel that they want to know Him more, to live in the sun, the Sun of Righteousness; to walk in the light, to breathe His life, to be animated by His Spirit, and to walk in the clean, holy fear of God, all the day long. Every new-born sinner sings sincerely and sometimes very heartily, "None but Jesus, can do helpless sinners good". Christ has said "In the world ye shall have tribulation" and if we escape that then we shall miss His peace. You wont escape trouble but you may escape tribulation. The two things are distinct in the scriptures. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble". That is universally true; nobody escapes it entirely. There is no man in this world who absolutely escapes trouble, but only comparatively few have tribulation. Oh if your trouble never separates one bit of chaff from you, then you have no grace but if your trouble, common to many people about you, is sanctified then it is to you tribulation to be followed by peace. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peacable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." And these exercises, this tribulation, emptying, weakening, trying, testing people, will bring them sooner or later in the light and the teaching of the Spirit to value this great word concerning the Lord Jesus. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell"

Two heads in the scripture; two heads of two families. Adam and Christ. The first man of the earth, earthy; the

second Man, the Lord from heaven, and the second Man is the Man, the God Man of the text. We need this fulness; we need it. All do not feel their need of it, but it is a needful fulness and I would, if helped, just try to set a little of this before you. It will surely edify you if the Spirit is with it whatever I may be able to say. There is first of all. It is the first; first in the effect and first in importance. The first of all is that the God Man Jesus Christ has all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. If the Holy Ghost gives to us an apprehension of the eternal deity of the Son of God Incarnate, we shall find there the Rock of Ages. None can save a lost soul but the God Man Jesus Christ. None could bear all that sin of the whole church, but the Man who has in Himself the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Hold fast this. If you have got what the Apostle John says in his first epistle, may the Lord help you to highly prize it, and hold it fast. "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children keep yourselves from idols". Keep yourselves from the many Christs that are preached and will be preached; Lo here and Lo there; and keep close, as God may help you to that one Person the Son of God - not a phantom, not an appearance, but a real person. Oh what a mercy it is that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God, very Man, one person and this pleased the Father. "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". But you will find that there is a fight in this matter as it were. You have to fight your way to Him through the unbelief and the enmity and ignorance and the pride and the legality of nature. Oh it is not an easy thing to reach this nor to stand by this. As the devil sought to destroy the young child's life, when He was an infant, so now and ever since the Lord Jesus came, and before He came in the flesh, the devil has sought to destroy Him in the hearts of all believers. We shall not escape these efforts of the devil, if Christ be born in us, and if we believe Him to be the God of all grace; if we

believe Him to be the only begotten Son of God Incarnate, I say we shall not go free from these powerful enemies and temptations. That will make it a hard thing to get to Him, and hard to abide in Him. It pleased the Father that all the fulness of human perfection should be in the Man Christ Jesus. I ventured to say last Lord's Day that God would never accept anything but perfection and the Man Christ Jesus must have all that human perfection that God requires in men who shall be in heaven. The Lord Jesus is the representative of His people, and if they are to be perfect it must be in Him. Hence, the greatness of Paul's word to the Ephesians, "Accepted in the Beloved" O my friends we are a mass of imperfection, and the eye of faith must be directed by the Spirit to that perfection that is in the Man Christ Jesus. He stands before God for His people. He stands as their perfection. In Him they are accepted. By Him they are redeemed from their abominable wickedness, and eventually He will change their vile body, the body of their humiliation, and fashion it like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Now if we are favoured to get a view of this, by faith, it will keep us from despairing of heaven; it will keep us from despairing of getting honourably to the grave; it will keep us from legality, striving to mend a bad case, and to empty a wicked heart of its wickedness. Oh it will keep a man on His knees, with his eyes set on God and enable him, constrain him, at times to say My heart is fixed on God. My heart is fixed, fixed here. One says and we sing sometimes

Fix there my heart
And for the rest
Under Thy forming hand my God
Give me that frame that Thou lik'st best

"For it pleased the Father" Now what pleases God the Father respecting Christ must be pleasing to all Christ's

people. If you are not pleased with this you are dead. If you are alive you are pleased with this; God's arrangement; God putting everything that you need in His Son, giving Him life that He may give it to you, giving Him grace that He may impart it to you; giving Him a commandment to die, that He, dying your death, you may live in Him and by Him. You will be pleased with it. Oh sometimes it will warm your heart. It won't leave a bit of ice or coldness for the time being when you see what Christ is made by His Father to be. Do you feel pleased with Him by the moment? Now and again a sinner says I am pleased with Him. I am pleased with the Father's arrangement, with the Father's gift with the Father's setting up this Lord Jesus to be a glorious high throne from the beginning, the place of our sanctuary.

Now I believe that as we get older and get nearer to eternity, this will be increasingly made known so that a sinner when finding heart and flesh to fail will be enabled again and again to say "God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." God, the God Man, the blessed Lord Jesus, and we shall not wonder at the ascriptions of praise and honour and glory and blessing and power and dominion that the scriptures give. Oh from Genesis to Revelation all the praises of God and the praises of the church are brought to the Lord Jesus. "This is My Beloved Son". "I have set My King on My holy hill" I have given Him for a covenant of the people. I have laid a commandment on Him to die the death of the guilty that they may live that blessed life of His which He freely imparts to them. Honours rest on Him. Why it has occasionally been a very sweet employment to some of us to sing that hymn of Gadsby "Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head." It is not an evil thing to find your own imagined honour laid in the dust. Your honour, as you imagine it, and Christ's honour will never live together. They wont both occupy the same throne. Down and lower and deeper you have to go, then higher and higher does he in your heart's esteem as He is made known by the Holy Ghost. None but Jesus. Well this excellency of His Person is a

fitness for His work. But for what He is as a person, He could not have done what He did. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness, all merit dwell. No merit in us, but all in Him, and this part of the gospel is very wonderful to a sinner who has evidence of his sin, and of the demerit of his nature. It is a good thing when we really are convinced of the depravity of our nature. You cannot exaggerate the sinfulness of your life, but you may be so occupied with that as to forget for the time that the sinfulness of your life arises from the depravity of your nature. This depravity must be met as well as all the sins that you commit. This depravity must be washed away as any evil thought that you think, or any wrong thing that you do or any lie that you speak. We are depraved; we are born in sin. It is an evil fountain, a corrupt spring in our nature. It is said that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. I wonder how many of you really believe by the teaching of the Spirit in the utter depravity of your nature. A good deal of natural conviction may be, and many a person under natural conviction may wish he had not done this and that. Oh if I had not told that lie, and yet that person may never get a sight of the depravity of his nature. Then if that is so, the confession of sin is short, repentance is short, - legal, and then the fulness of infinite merit in Jesus Christ is not appreciated. But if we come to know that we are depraved, that we could as soon create a world as make our nature pure; if we are brought to that then we shall come to this to see with unspeakable delight the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus and that word in Zechariah will thus get much importance in our heart "In that day there shall be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a fountain, a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" Opened for all cases of separation between God and the soul. It is no easy thing to be a christian, but he is a good christian man who, convinced of the depravity of his nature as well as the wickedness of his life, is brought to this wondrous fountain of goodness, the Lord Jesus Christ. I

cannot preach an easy religion, but I can preach a good one. I must preach about man's badness but I can preach sometimes just a little about the infinite fulness of the Saviour's merit. Would you get to heaven? This is the way. Would you be clean? This is how you must be. Would you be holy? None but Christ can make you holy. Would you be near to God? Only in Him can you be so. Christ has all merit, infinite merit. Look to Him. Plead it when you go before God. If you are ashamed of yourself, that is a good thing. Then being ashamed of yourself, you are in a capacity to enter into that word in the Psalms, "They looked unto Him and were lightened and their faces were not ashamed." Did you ever realise it for a minute? Their faces were not ashamed. When you cannot look at yourself, you cannot look at any single day of your life nor any hour of your life without perceiving something wrong, something which, if a fellow creature knew, you would find yourself shunned, yet with all that to be not ashamed before God, very wonderful. You will need strong faith to bring you to that. "They looked unto Him and were lightened and their faces were not ashamed."

Well, all forgiveness of sin in the fulness of it is in Him. It pleased the Father that the fulness of forgiveness is and should ever dwell in Him. It was an offence when He said to a man in the days of His flesh "Thy sins be forgiven" He said you shall know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin. Oh what a wonder. Forgiveness is the act of God passed on a sinner. The sinner cannot forgive himself. Many a legalist, many a hypocrite will wipe his mouth and say "it is nought, it is nought" but a saint says "Pardon mine iniquity O Lord for it is great". His sentence must come from God's presence and that is it that so endears the Saviour and makes a sinner so happy in his soul occasionally that he finds the sin of his nature and the sins of his life blotted out. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity,

and in whose spirit there is no guile." That will make death a gain. That will and does cheer the heart sometimes. That makes a sinner secure and holy and happy for the forgiveness of sins not only secures the sinner from punishment, but it makes him a holy person, and a wonderful thing it is to be holy and yet to carry about in your pained sense of it, a body of sin and death all your life. It pleased the Father that all the fulness of forgiveness should dwell in Jesus Christ. Look to Him my friends. If you have got sin that you cannot excuse, and you will never excuse sin if you have got grace, you may one day (oh that it may even be now) find that what you could not excuse, Christ has forgiven. Self excuses never go well; confession of sin goes well with God. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy. Whoso hideth his sin shall not prosper." Go on confessing; it will answer the purpose that God has ordained it for; go on confessing. Well it is a wonderful thing. Nay there is singular liberty sometimes in this and a peculiar sweetness in it, when instead of trying to put your hand over your sin, to hide it like the fool, you are enabled by grace just to express it in groans and sighs, and spread it out before the Lord in the malignity of it. Oh the turpitude of that act; oh the wickedness of that thought, and these things you do not hide but express in confession and the Lord says "Thou shalt not die, the Lord hath put away thy sin". But David said he should die and God just put that away. Conviction of sin, when working alone, will always have that effect. It will work wrong conclusions, but mercifully God disallows the conclusions though He never contradicts the confession. You will never find, nor hear God saying to you, you are exaggerating the case when confessing your sins, but when you say I shall die, He may say I have put away all your sin, you shall not die. Then you will praise Him.

It hath pleased the Father that all the fulness of the necessary help and wisdom and guidance and protection should

dwell in Christ. "I have given Him for a leader and commander of the people" He is annointed to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted. He is annointed to be a covenant to the people, a light to the Gentiles. He comes in an acceptable year of the Lord to poor sinners and He says to them "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved, for I am God and beside Me there is no Saviour". I will save you from your difficulties and from your despairing thoughts, and from your pursuing and relentless enemy and I will save you from the consequences of your ignorance even if you take wrong steps, and I will save you when you drink down some poison, for I am God and beside Me there is no Saviour. He not only saves from hell, but He saves from the paw of the lion. The good and great Shepherd comes and says "Now the lion has taken a piece of an ear and a leg, and I will just take that piece of an ear and that leg out of his mouth" Is not it wonderful how God puts broken people right, and mends them again and again. If He would not let the high priest's servant suffer when Peter cut off his right ear, He wont let a poor child of His suffer when tempted and wounded and maimed by the devil and by sin. You say I have lost something. He will make it up. If you have lost an ear, He will take it out of the mouth of the lion. If you have lost the leg of godly walking, He will take that leg out of the mouth of the lion. Such a Saviour He is. Oh the fulness of the Lord Jesus. I have had a little experience of this over many years. What a Saviour He is. "Thou shall call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins". A beautiful type of Him is Joshua. He led the people into Canaan. Moses, no. Said God you shall not lead the people into the land of promise. You are the law. Now the gospel must lead them into the land of Canaan so Joshua, a saviour is raised up. He leads them; they enter into rest when he leads them. "He putteth forth His own sheep and He goeth before them" Such a Saviour it pleased God to constitute Him. Thus I have given Him for a leader; I have given Him for a covenant and He put in Him with infinite pleasure all

that was necessary for this mighty business, for it is a business to take a sinner out of the belly of hell, the hell of his own sin and the burning of the law and land him in heaven. It is a business. Who is sufficient for it but Christ. Who has grace enough but Christ. The Apostle Paul says to Timothy that Christ hath saved, God hath saved. "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" Well this is wonderful. If I do, and I do believe I shall, get to heaven, I shall see Him there upon whom occasionally the eye of faith in my heart has been cast and fixed and then all of you who get there will see Him without what Erskine calls the weary veil of the flesh between, with no cloud of sin, no dismal fear, no depressing trial, but just always and only and eternally in His blessed bliss giving presence. It pleased the Father with an infinite pleasure. Having chosen the church in Christ He gave to His beloved Son everything that was necessary in this respect. The equal of the Father is the Father's servant. In this respect God as it were says to Him - "now all these poor people you are to save, all these poor sheep you are to look after, will need much. I put it all in you to supply them." He trusted Adam with a stock of goodness, and Adam soon spent it up and He has never trusted a poor fallen corrupt sinner since, but He put everything in His beloved Son. Well we must be dependants on the bounty of Christ. Happy man who is willing to be a dependant on the bounty of Christ. Then there are some happy men here, are there not? Blessed be God, we have been made willing in the day of Christ's power. He has enough for us. Faith must be strong to believe this. Oh said Moses to God if all the cattle and all the fowl, and all the fishes of the whole world were brought here would they suffice this nation for a month? Moses' faith was not strong enough to go beyond a month but the faith which God gives to sinners in the Person of the Lord Jesus will now and again see enough in Christ for eternity, enough righteousness to justify, enough merit to

sanctify, enough power to save, enough wisdom to guide, enough patience to bear all the waywardness of wayward people. He well is called the God of patience. Who but a God of patience could have borne with an old sinner for more than 60 years. Who but a God of patience could undertake to bear with the wanderings, the inconsistencies of sinners to whom so much mercy and love has been shown?

Well I am pleased with this Christ and so are some of you. What a mercy. Think of the goodness of God in putting our hearts straight with His pleasure, that what pleases Him also pleases us. It is wonderful. Would you have it otherwise. No says an affectionate, believing heart; no, I have plenty of evil, but that is not part of it. I am pleased with this, and thus we begin the lasting song, thus we begin to love the Lord and to do what Hart says. I do like that word of Hart

Close in with Christ by saving faith
And God's your Friend for ever

One says I wish I could close in with Him. When He comes near enough to you, you will. When He comes and says "Behold Me, behold Me" and the Holy Spirit bears witness that that is the very Christ of God. Then, to use Flavel's word, then the little arms of your faith will open and embrace this Lord Jesus and then you will say there is none like Him, none like Him in heaven. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee". None like Him on earth. "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". I must leave it. "Living tongues are dumb at best" and my tongue never speaks well enough of Him and I expect never will. May the Lord speak to our hearts by His Spirit of this divine Person, God Man, Jesus Christ that we may receive Him and love Him and walk with Him in white.