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Morning Sermon 45 1927 p 349

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS
Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 7 August 1927

EPHESIANS 3 verses 20 and 21

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

This is the third time I have read this text to you and if I had grace and wisdom I could read it hundreds of times and speak about it and then it would be as full as ever and I should be unable to exhaust the blessed meaning of it. "All that we ask"; "above all that we ask". All the petitions for forgiveness, all the prayers for justification, all the sighs and sobs over indwelling sin and for sanctification. All the groans, fears that we may be overcome, and the petitions for conquering grace. All that we need in affliction, that we shall need on a dying bed. All that we can need to walk in the Church of God as we ought to walk, according to the Scriptural rule. Above all our askings in these particulars, says the Spirit, by Paul, God is able to do exceeding abundantly; to rise above your prayers and above your thoughts. What little faith we have; how straitened we are in ourselves. How little we think of, or believe in, a full Christ. How little we know of the fulness of the Spirit, the seven Spirits which are before the throne. The Holy Ghost in His infinite fulness of love and goodness and care for the election of grace as purchased by Christ's blood, and as quickened into eternal life by Himself. What poor, limited things we are. Look at your prayers, look at your horizon. How far do your prayers go? How distant, rather how near to yourself, is your horizon. Perhaps we say, bring us through today Lord, and it is good, but when faith stretches herself forward by the grace of the Spirit she looks to eternity; a safe passage, an honourable course, a good finish, an entrance into heaven. All need - and glory in the supplying of all need - throughout all ages, world without end. Ah a very limited man has to speak of an illimitable gospel, an illimitable fulness of grace in the Person of

the Lord Jesus and in the Person of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps I have to speak to people who realise how limited they are. May the Holy Ghost take hold of us and carry us up in the Spirit to the great and high mountain where we may see the Church of Christ coming down from God out of heaven, having the glory of God, and see and hear the mystery of God tabernacling with men to supply every need of every living man in the Church of Christ. Then we shall not live on the earth, and O, to live an hour above the earth by the Spirit is a great thing, a very great thing.

I will, as enabled, continue to speak a little - it can only be little, comparatively little - of that on which I commenced on Wednesday evening and dwelt upon exclusively this morning, namely the work of the Spirit, and in two particulars I would mention that blessed invisible work of the Spirit, and then, if I may touch so wonderful a chord in the doxology, I would touch this - "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." We need to be spiritually minded to look at such a word as this. We need faith to believe it and to plead it and ask that we may be interested in it. The work of the Spirit first is in carrying on that great work, that new creation of which He is the divine and glorious Author, for Christ sends Him as the unction. The Apostle John says "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." The Holy One is Christ; the unction is the Holy Ghost. That unction every new born person receives in some measure whereby he knows all things essential to his salvation and the glory of God in him. He knows all things, as to substance, respecting the Lord Jesus, respecting His eternal Father as dwelling in Him. All things respecting his sinfulness and respecting his utter ruin. All things respecting his salvation. All things respecting heaven, to which place he is going. "Ye", O, if we be in that word, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One". Think of it. And that unction which we have is expressed in the Scripture by Paul "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which ye have of God, and ye are not your own". How much our present, painful state as to our experience may seem to contradict such a word as that. Some may be saying, indeed that is so. Unbelief, the law of sin in my members, painful, shameful workings of the body of sin and death; lusts - pride of life, pride of the eye, lust of the flesh, these, these are very

prominent. These, these, we understand. They are with us, ever with us and always at work. But that there should be, in such hearts as these of ours the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Trinity, that He should be sent to us to dwell in us by the Lord Jesus, that He should be working and teaching and taking the things of Christ and showing them to us when we know so little of that Redeemer, does not it seem really a very painful contradiction? I confess it is so in my own case. Is there any evidence of this gracious Spirit carrying on the good work? Do you possess an evidence that He has not left you, that He does dwell in you? What shall we call an evidence, or rather evidences of the indwelling and gracious work of the Spirit? I would not say that it is an elevation of mind above all sense of sin. It is not a sentiment of religion. It is not a religiosity that men may easily have and cultivate and strengthen. It is not saying we have not sinned, that we do not sin, that we have no sin. Christ condescended to tell us part of the work of the Spirit when he says "He shall reprove of sin". He shall reprove sinners of sin, shall open to them its nature, shall make them feel its power, shall write in their hearts such a sense of their need as shall cause them to cry mightily to God against this indwelling, this insistent, this persistent, this inveterate enemy, indwelling sin. That is a great thing. O it is terrible to be ignorant of sin. A religion that is ignorant of sin is not from heaven. You may not think it to be true, but I assert it, a religion that is ignorant of sin is not from heaven. If you read the Scriptures with a spiritual eye and spiritual attention you cannot fail to observe that from the moment of the fall to the end of the Bible sin has a prominence given to it by God, and what the Scripture gives prominence to we may depend upon that we shall find a likeness to that, a similarity in our soul's experience. Beside, what did Christ come for? For what were His matchless sufferings? What brought Him to the lowest parts of the earth? What made Him groan and sweat blood in Gethsemane's garden? What took Him to the cross? Why was the curse of the law poured like fire into His bones, and why did His Father forsake Him?

And why, dear Saviour, tell me why
Thou thus wouldst suffer, bleed, and die;
What mighty motive could Thee move?
The motive's plain; 'twas all for love

For love of whom? Of sinners base,
A hardened herd, a rebel race;
That mocked and trampled on Thy blood,
And wantoned with the wounds of God.

And did sin thus afflict Christ? Had it thus a terrible prominence in His experience and shall we, born of the Spirit, and taught of Him, be led on without any knowledge, or very little feeling about this enemy of God and of man? But that alone is not a conclusive evidence of the Spirit's indwelling. Connected with that is this, faith in the bleeding Lamb, faith in the atonement of Christ, in the righteousness of Christ, in the intercession of Christ. Without that faith you will never pray. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him". Faith, O, what a gift is this. What a mighty work it is. Now the continuance of this blessed work of grace is what every elected, redeemed, and regenerated person has some experience of. What are those views you get of the Saviour? What is that warming of your heart to Him? What is that feeling that increasingly you have to look to Him for life and righteousness and all? What is that feeling of reliance on Him and desire to know Him, to be conformed to His image, to walk before Him in the land of the living, to be separated from the world and thus separate in your spirit? What are those intimations you get of the love of God to you? of the gracious presence of the Lord Jesus with you at times? What are these, but evidences, sweet and grateful evidences of the Spirit's work being carried on unto the day of redemption. "Being", says the Apostle Paul, "confident of this very thing that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ". This is the work of the Spirit to carry on this great work of creation, new creation. And this is also in it, namely a sense of union with the Lord Jesus brought into the soul at times. One with Him, as the branch is in the Vine; as, in the building, each stone has its place and each stone is united, but rooted and grounded in the foundation and bonded to the other stone next to him. Each child of God is brought, sooner or later, to some appreciation of this vital union with the Lord Jesus. Even as there was a vital union with Adam in his innocence and with Adam in his

fall, so there is union with the Lord Jesus and His chosen people. And what He is, that great Redeemer, they are as redeemed. And with what love the Father loves Him they are loved also. One, in the love of God, with Christ. One, in the approbation of the Father of His Son and of His people. And this is made out to the heart and understanding and conscience by the Holy Ghost.

And further, victories, these are the work of the Spirit. Jesus obtained the victory for His people on the cross, and they get victories in experience when, after perhaps a painful, disgraceful time of fretting and rebelling against God in some providence, faith rises in the power of the Spirit and says "Thy will be done". That is the work of the Spirit; that is the work being carried on. After perhaps a time of sad declension there comes a reviving, and though the enemy mocks, Sanballat-like, and says, what does this feeble Jew? will he revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? What, he says, will he do, if he does build? If a fox go up on the wall it will throw him down. But notwithstanding the wall goes on in building, the work is carried on by the Holy Spirit, victories are given. Perhaps sometimes some of you may have painful experience or such a worldly spirit - the house, the garden, the business, the family, other things, rise. Of what else can you think? The Bible you read, but it is very perfunctory reading. You attend to prayer, perhaps, but O your heart is elsewhere. Yes, you may even feel it is hypocrisy to continue on your knees, so wicked is the wandering of a carnal, worldly mind. Is it always so? No. There comes a time when this poor wanderer is brought back and he has such a view of the Lord, the riches of grace, the glory of grace, the power of grace, the atonement of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, that he says

Let worldly minds the world pursue
It hath no charms for me
Once I admired its trifles too
But grace has set me free

This is the work of God. Sometimes you may get terribly mixed in your spirit with the world and mix yourself with the world in some form; choose something in the world, or somebody in the world and where is your heart? You know where it is. Conscience tells you where it is,

and the Spirit makes you know where it is. But O, but it is not always so. When the Spirit comes and puts you on the side of the Lord Jesus, enables you to say, Thine am I Lord Jesus and on Thy side Thou Son of God, then you are with Him as one wondered at. Behold I and the children whom God has given Me. We are set for signs and wonders to be spoken against. And thus the work is carried on. Scriptures are made life and power and spirit. The Ordinances do not tease and tire but are attractive and useful in some degree. The ministry is useful in some way. The Lord is more and more attractive to the soul. O, to know Him, to be with Him, to be like Him, to walk with Him in peace and equity. Thus the work, I say, is carried on. I have only spoken about it very poorly and feebly. You who are the subjects of this divine continuance of favour can fill up for yourselves what I have left unspoken.

And in the next place, this work of the Spirit is to be completed. "Not by might, nor by power". Who can even naturally add one cubit to his stature or make one hair white or black? "Not by might". The golden candlestick, representing the church; the bowl on the top of it, representing perhaps in the intention of the Spirit, a full Christ; the two olive trees by the side of it from which the golden oil comes, plenty of it. Plenty of berries, plenty of oil, and these two keep burning with blessed life that was imparted. Then what does this mean, says the angel to the prophet. I do not know he said. It would be as well if a good many of those, so called, teachers, acknowledged their ignorance as the prophet acknowledged his. I know not, he said. Then the Lord taught him. O, He said, it is not by might. This candlestick, these lamps on the candlestick with the wick in them, these are not kept burning by themselves. It is evident that the wick must be supplied; it cannot supply itself; that is self-evident. Therefore a bowl and trees, olive trees, and these filling the bowl and the bowl emptying itself into the wick so as that the light burns. And what is that? There is a completeness to come. And, using then another figure, the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it. A begun work is never left undone, unfinished. A begun work in your souls will not be left unfinished by Him who commenced that gracious thing. O, no. The day is coming when the headstone shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it. The oil has been sufficient;

salvation is sufficient, righteousness is sufficient, grace is sufficient, love is sufficient, and all, all shall be crowned one day with that great cry. Grace has triumphed; love has finished the work and this, by the Spirit. Do you think of your dying day sometimes, and have you wishes which you present to the Lord. Do you think about coming to that time when though you may have godly friends about you and love to have them about you, you will say - not another step can you take with them. I must go alone now, and yet not alone. I am with thee, saith the Lord. I am with thee through the fire, through the flood, through the river. I am with thee. What a change it will be; what a change it will be, when you exchange time for eternity and are for ever freed from sin and go in, as we have often gone in spirit, but then go no more out, as we often have gone out. Go no more out.

Now, says Paul, God, the Author of all this, is worthy of praise, and the Spirit inspired him to say - "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly" - not tautology - "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us", that is the work of the Holy Spirit; according to His work. Walk by that work. Walk by a rule. If it be not a large experience, walk by the rule of a smaller experience. Walk by the Spirit's gracious teaching, and you will not go astray. Do not try to add things to yourself, to improve your religion and to strengthen your faith, but wait in your weakness, wait in your poverty, wait in your helplessness, wait in all things on the rule.

Now says Paul, "Unto Him". His heart was up to God. He saw the glory of God in Christ and sings - may we sing with him - "Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus" - the foundation of the Church, the Zerubbabel who laid the foundation and whose hands shall finish the building - "throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." We read in this epistle of the praise of His glory; that we should be to the praise of His glory. Not only be to His glory - that is great - but to the praise of it, the expression of it, the manifestation of it. The praise of His glorious love in eternity choosing such worthless creatures as we are, the praise of that glorious love must redound to Himself throughout all ages, world without end. To the praise of His eternal redemption. "In whom" says Paul in this epistle "we have eternal redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins". This

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must be praised. This shall shine illustriously through all ages in the redeemed Church. To the praise of this glorious redemption of the Lord Jesus. To the praise of His justifying righteousness. O, how He will shine in all in, and to whom, He is "the Lord our righteousness". Yes, the act of justification shall lift Him up above all praise and glory here and He will be praised and glorified throughout eternity. "It is God that justifieth. It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again". Who shall condemn? It is God that justifieth; who shall condemn the Lord's elect? O, my friends, if we but get a little inkling of justification by the Spirit it warms us, does it not? To be a condemned sinner is to be fitted to be justified; not to merit justification, but to be fitted to receive justification. And unto Him who justifies be glory in the Church, for the Church is made up of justified persons. We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, and God justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. To the praise of the glory of holiness imputed and imparted; when Christ is made sanctification. Ah, you will sing with the Church, when you get home, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God"; unto Him be glory. Yea, we begin the song here. And glory to the Holy Spirit, that Holy Spirit who anointed Christ to preach and who works faith in that preaching so that it becomes profitable to the soul. That Holy Spirit who shows the beauty of Christ and the need of Him, the imperative need of Him; to Him be glory for ever and ever by Christ Jesus whose Spirit He is, whose minister He is. Unto Him - God the Father and with Him, God the Son and with Him and with them both, God the Holy Ghost.

Now I believe that every true child of God is a Trinitarian and that the work of salvation is the work of the Three Persons in the Godhead, and that each has His own particular work and the whole glory of salvation redounds to this Three One God. Where? In the Church. In the visible Church in measure. Every visible Church that is kept right, kept in the truth, kept by the truth, indwelt by the Spirit, walking in faith and walking worthy of the vocation wherewith God has called it, every such Church has the Spirit of God and of glory resting upon it. One might perhaps turn aside here for a moment and say this. What a searching consideration this truth is - when you come to consider, I mean, the truth that God does dwell in and walk

among the candlesticks - I say, what a searching consideration it is. It may stir up in you and in myself, and I believe it does in myself, and would believe also it does in you, this question. Is He among us here? And I think a humble, grateful answer would be this - yes, in some measure, He is. And if it be asked what are the evidences of that, then one would say, the coming to Him of our souls for supplies. The moving of the Spirit on our hearts; the purifying of our hearts by faith by occasions; the manifestation of His love to one and another here and there, whereby there is a real constraint on them to follow the Lord Jesus in the Ordinances of His house, Ordinances which He has left. And in this also, that He has given two Ordinances to be observed. He said to His disciples - Go and preach the gospel to all the world and baptise them. Disciple them and baptise them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. As long as there are godly people in the world, quickened by the Spirit, and gathered unto a place in the providence of God and uniting themselves together as a Church in Jesus Christ and favoured with that promised blessing, a Pastor after God's own heart, there is a measure of this glory. And then the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper. We do not know much about this glory, but a little. It is a very high privilege to be permitted to sit at table and obey Him in that word. "This do in remembrance of Me". Take this bread, which is My body; drink this cup, which is My blood. May the Lord help us and grant that we may, in these things, and in seeing one and another brought to the obedience of faith, have evidences of His presence. But O, visible Churches decay. There were seven Churches in Asia. They have all gone. How many Churches there have been in England, gone. Luther said the Lord gave His gospel to a place for a generation and, speaking generally, that is the truth. Anyone taking the trouble to read Church history will find that more or less that has been the case, the gospel given for a generation. Then the candlestick is lighted somewhere else, taken away. God said He would provoke His ancient people by giving Himself and His truth to another nation. But when all this visibility of Christianity, all these evidences of Christ's gracious presence and the glory of God in visible churches shall have come to an end, what then? "Throughout all ages world without end." The tabernacle of God will then be with men in heaven. Then they will all be walking the streets which are as transparent glass. Then they will all be with the Lamb who is in the

midst of the throne and who will lead His saints to living fountains of waters and all their tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and then unto Him will be the great song. Then they will all say - and the angels unite with them in the chorus - glory be to God; unto Him who is worthy to receive honour and power and glory and might and blessing and dominion for ever and ever. That will be the song. O, I think sometimes I shall join that song, and the thought is a very sweet thought. And the hope - O, a hope so much divine - may trials well endure, and move the heart to say

His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way, till Him I view

I hope the Lord will not be offended with the poverty of my speaking about these mysteries to you but that He may cause at least that your hearts will be moved to seek an interest and a feeling of an interest in them, so as that you may earnestly call upon His great Name.

AMEN.