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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton

on Sunday morning 13 January 1924

Hebrews 10v14

“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

This is a mighty and most blessed passage of inspired scripture. It is in the midst of a wonderful chapter, part of a wonderful epistle. The passage sets before us wonderful things – the perfect and perfecting atonement of Christ and people blessed with that perfection being spoken of as being perfected, as being sanctified; and we poor sinful creatures are hastening to eternity and must soon stand before God, how? He knows. Some of us are concerned more or less constantly about that. We put the question to ourselves at times

“How stands the case my soul with thee,
For heaven are thy credentials clear.”

If they are not clear to our perception and experience then we are concerned and anxious. If they are clear to sense and perception then we want to bow in deepest reverence and worship before Him, who has made us ready to die, and to ascribe all the honour and praise and glory and might and majesty for ever and ever unto Him who has wrought so mighty a wonder. Think of it; we are sinners, no-one here will deny that. What is it to be sinners? To be against God, against His nature contrary to it; against His law in rebellion to it. What is it to be righteous? To be straight with God's requirements. To be holy is to be in perfect agreement with His will. To be righteous, ready to stand, and fit to stand before Him, is to be pardoned, justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. If this is true, then the question may well be put, each one to himself would do well to put it, namely – Am I righteous? Am I holy? Am I straight with God's righteous requirements? Have I a religion that will do for me when I come to my death bed? That will stand me in good stead when I enter eternity? I apprehend that this text furnishes us with matter respecting eternity and a standing of some people before God without spot or blemish or any such thing and so I would draw your attention to it this morning.

We have perfection in the text. We have a Person who has brought perfection into being, perfection of a particular kind. Perfection is natural, natural to God. He is holy, holy, holy. It was natural to man as created by God, their being in His nature as created nothing contrary to the nature and the revealed will of the Creator; but now perfection is not natural to us nor can it be. It must be a right perfection and an imputed perfection, something first of all outside ourselves, something done for us and then communicated to us. We have in this text therefore and in this chapter, as in the whole Word of God, very mighty and fundamental principles and I would submit to you this, that if we are righteous, if we are under the teaching of the

Spirit we are very greatly and at times very seriously concerned about principles, principles that will never die, which, if in us, will make us acceptable to God, fit to stand before Him.

Let us then look at this. When God called Israel into being as a nation He did so in performance of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He gave them inestimable blessings, also He made the nation a typical nation and its religion typical - its laboured ritual was typical, its services, its worship, everything connected with it typical; setting it out as a shadow sets out some sort of degree of correction of which it is a shadow. The shadow is always imperfect. Whenever you project a shadow you see that which is not exactly proportionate and so the Apostle says in this chapter "The law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the thing" - not perfect, setting forth that which was typed out. What was set forth in type, both by the nation and all its religion, was perfection, but the law made nothing perfect, therefore it could not answer the needs and the claims of God and the needs and claims of the conscience. The claims of God are expressed, may be expressed in the one word - perfection. The claims of conscience, quickened and taught by the Spirit are the same - perfection.

How is perfection to be found? Where is it to be found? The answer is first all in a person, in the Lord Jesus, the very Son of God, the very Son of man. The scriptures set Him forth by type, by shadow, by name they set Him forth as answering all the claims of God, all the needs of God's law. They set Him forth as being the express image, or character of God's person and the brightness of His glory. O my friends, I do not think that I am wrong when I say - the very centre and sum and substance of all that God requires is to be found in the Person of Emmanuel; and therefore I may say in the next place the very sum and substance of that religion which the Spirit gives to the church is derived from the Lord Jesus in whom it is found in all its infinite fullness, brightness, blessedness and glory. Then if this is so, we are narrowed up to this, brought to this one point, to know and to be found in the Lord Jesus. This was Paul's religion. He was a man of warm desires and as it were, full of desire at the moment when he wrote to the Philippians - "That I may be found in Him." O my brethren it all centres there - to be found in Him.

If you say to me 'well I want a broken heart, a contrite spirit, I desire humility, I want love, I want to feel my heart melted, I want to know that I am the Lord's' I say this in reply - 'I believe what you want is right, I would have the same wants myself, but I say that will find all these sensible needs of your soul to be in Him who is the delight of the Father, the delight of the church, her centre, her life, her righteousness, her hope her all. God will accept nothing but perfection. This should not and will not cut off a poor guilty sinner in his approaches to God, because as led by the Spirit of God, he goes to God in the name of the Lord Jesus who said to His disciples - to Peter, dear friends, to Peter one of His disciples - "If ye ask anything in My name I will do it." He had just previously told of the defection and forsaking of Him by all His disciples yet said He "Ask in My name what you want and I will do it for you."

I have felt to love the Person of Christ. I hope we all may be brought, if it please God, to love this Person. Remember this, that everything of love and delight that the Father has He has put into His Son – “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” It is all through Him. We never get any goodness, any repentance, any peace, any pardon, any comfort, and any strength out of Him, apart from Him. It must all flow to you through Him. The Spirit’s work in the scripture first of all has been to exalt Him and then that same Spirit’s work in the heart of a sinner is to exalt Him. “The written and the Incarnate Word in all things are the same” and you will find it is so as you are under the teaching of the Spirit that this Perfect Man, this true Almighty God, one Person whose name is Emmanuel, came to do the will of God, “Lo I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me to do Thy will O God.” Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering and offering for sin are set before us in this chapter and the priests of the Levitical dispensation were daily standing ministering oftentimes the same sacrifices, none of which, nor all of them together, could take away sins. It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins. An inferior creature could never atone, nor be an atonement for a superior creature. Man is above the beast and the beast’s blood could never atone for the sins of man but this perfect One, Jesus Christ said – “I come to do Thy will.”

Now as it was the will of God, under the Levitical dispensation, that the blood of bulls and goats should be shed and that they should be continually offered as sacrifices to God by the priests; so the will of God is not to abolish sacrifice but to abolish the many sacrifices and give in place of them which could not take away sin, one High Priest who should make one offering, and have, one sacrifice of Himself in the end of the world thereby putting away sin. This is what this blessed Lord Jesus Christ came to do. This will of God set forth in this chapter is the same will that Christ expresses in the gospel of John when He speaks of the commandment which His Father gave Him to do, namely, to lay down His life. That was the will. The commandment of God expressed there in John and the will of God expressed here respecting the Lord Jesus is a sacrifice in both places that we have given to us. “By one offering” - Himself the offerer; Himself the offering; – one offering. “He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” This gives us the nature of the offering of Christ. It was to make people perfect. Think of it! This is the great end of the sacrifice of Christ, to make all, for whom He offered Himself to God without spot – perfect.

Perfection here then must be that the perfected ones should be in absolute conformity with the law of God with all its brightness. What a perfection! When we look within and when, still more we feel within to be a mass of corruption and imperfection, moved by vile affections, what can we say? Is not what we say mentally expressed in the hymn “Shocked at the sight, we straight cry out, can ever God dwell here?” If you ask the question you will see an importance inexpressibly great in the question that may follow – If God cannot dwell in my heart, I cannot dwell in His presence and if I cannot dwell in His presence where

am I to be? And the answer in the Scripture is this – He will turn all them that forget Him into hell.

How then could the Lord Jesus make sinners perfect? By doing the will of God in the place of all whom He represented by fulfilling the law, magnifying it and making it honourable, by meeting its every request and doing its every commandment and being absolutely in accordance with what the law demands – perfection. This was possible in two ways only, first by His perfect life – I cannot here express all that the life of Christ means – there are in print the life of Christ by different men but there is no life of Christ like that found in the Gospels. “I come to do Thy will O God, Thy law is within my heart.” This is His life and had we grace to follow Him from the cradle to the tomb we should see perfection in every act, in every word in His whole life and if the Spirit were with us we should see that perfection put down to our account that we, in respect of all that the law demands of us and commands us to be, are in the sight of God by virtue of that wonderful life of the Lord Jesus. O it is beautiful. Think of what Christ heard from heaven when His Father said “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Think of what the Lord said to His Father “I know that Thou hearest Me always. I do always the things that please Thee.” And think of the Spirit’s blessed presence and fullness without measure in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself making Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, the Spirit of might, of wisdom, of counsel and of power in the Lord Jesus. O what a substitute we have in Him who placed Himself in precisely our condition, in exactly the place that we occupied in the law and as it were put us aside and said to His Father – “I stand for these. I live for these.” As He said in that prayer in John “For their sakes I sanctify Myself.” He separated Himself entirely and stood for His people that He might be for them before the Father just what His Father required of them and so they stand in that life of Christ. If the Spirit of Christ leads you to see this life, this wondrous life and should say in your heart that He obeyed this for you, He did this for you that you, imperfect as you are and must be as a sinner, might stand without blame and be straight with that holy law which is written in your heart, in your nature. He stood for you and did all for you that you could not do.

But then we are guilty and how is our guilt to be removed. Guilt is death. Guilt hands us over to the law. Guilt under the law is hopelessness as well as helplessness. This is our condition. We have broken it. The Lord kept it but there was the sentence of it to be met. The curse of it to be met and endured and as He offered His life and His heart and His love and His obedience and was accepted therein so now at the end He comes to offer Himself as a sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no remission. The lack of pleasure that the Father had always in those sacrifices which He ordained for types and shadows, that satisfaction, that pleasure, God finds in the one offering of His dear Son Jesus Christ, once in the end of the world and this may well claim our prayerful attention. What was it for Christ to offer Himself? It was love that brought Him to do it. It was grace in Him for His people. “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 made rich.” It was for this that He submitted Himself freely, willingly, lovingly to the terrible curse of the law. He gave His heart and bared His breast and bowed His head under that holy law of God which He had obeyed perfectly in all its precepts which now He was to endure perfectly in all its curse; and so they crucified Him by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Wicked men took and crucified and slew Him and so He was transfixed to the cross and there poured out His blood and His soul unto death for us.

Under the sacrifices blood was continually shed to set forth the shedding of the heart’s blood of that sacred Person Jesus Christ and more particularly and deeply and truly the pouring out of His soul unto death; for the soul that sinneth it shall die and therefore the soul of Jesus had to die because He stood in the place of those who had sinned and it was this death that dried the law’s curse. It was this death that removed death from the Church. It was this death that overthrew and destroyed him that had the power of death that is the devil that He might, through that wondrous death deliver them who all their life were subject to bondage in fear of death. This is the perfecting sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. He hath perfected forever – that is to say He took away sin, removed it, put it away by the sacrifice of Himself once in the end of the world and this is God’s testimony concerning Him by the Apostle John “Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins” and again “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” This is His own word too “The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.” This is the commendation of the love of God “God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

My friends may “the fountain of Christ assist us to sing , the blood of our Priest, our crucified King.” This, this it is that takes away all sin and if there be no sin there is no imperfection. If Christ did put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself He left no imperfection, therefore the gospel statement is that ye may be presented spotless and without blame before Him in love. This subject deserves a better tongue than mine to speak it, and yet may the Lord condescend to make even my poor expressions useful to extol this dear Lord Jesus, this great One; perfect in Himself and therefore perfect in His work, perfect in His life, perfect on the cross. Men thought they had their way when they crucified Him and had removed Him out of their way but they were just fulfilling the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God respecting Him who was there on the cross making a full atonement and leaving no sin behind to rest on the Church – nothing by which she could be exposed to the wrath of God.

This brings the church into being , as the Spirit of God comes in pursuance of the purpose of God to work all things after the counsel of His own will, the Spirit comes and conveys this perfection to sinners in His own gracious teaching and if I were asked as to how any sinner can come to have an apprehension of this perfection in his own soul I should say this – In the beginning it is regeneration – “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things become new.” A new creature coming from God, as you have it in the

Revelation where John was given to see the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming from God out of heaven, having the glory of God. That in measure is true of every regenerated person here this morning or existing in this world at this moment. Then in the sinner begins this perfection; then it is being sanctified and the work is begun and carried on. May the Lord help us to speak of this. I am troubled by sin; I am troubled by my sins; I am troubled because my nature is depraved and because my heart is wrong, not right with God. I am blessed with repentance but that does not meet the case but O the perfection is in Christ and is brought from Him by His good Spirit. A new creature is a perfect creature, not perfectly developed, not perfect in knowledge, not perfect in experience but in nature. "Partakers of the divine nature." The energy, the life, the grace of the Lord Jesus communicated to one that was dead in trespasses and sins and this nature shows itself in all that possess it. How? In knowledge, in repentance, in desire, in hunger and thirsting after God. Why, who can express the greatness and blessedness of that word uttered by the Lord Jesus when He began His sermon on the mount "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." A blessing pronounced, a promise given.. O hungerer and thirster after the Lord Jesus and His righteousness, see what the Lord has said about you. See what a big word He has uttered. It will catch you, embrace you and bless you sooner or later – for they shall be filled. What a word it is.

This perfection is apprehended by faith and therefore the people of God are called the children of God by faith in Christ. They are His by regeneration. They are His children as under His gracious tuition; they are His children manifestly and comfortably to their own sense at times by precious faith in Jesus Christ. Then is there anything that will stand the shake of sin's assaults and Satan's temptations and violence? Is there anything that will meet a sinner's need, anything that will stand him in good stead when he comes to the swellings of Jordan, anything that will stand him in good stead when he comes to stand before the great white throne? O yes there is and that is this perfection – "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Forever my friends: forever! No need for a repetition of the sacrifice. The only need is for it to be made more known to us. To have the Spirit's teaching repeated in us from time to time and to have the blessed witness of the Spirit that this perfection is made over to us; that Jesus Christ in His one offering brought into being this perfection and as it is in being so it must become in experience everything that a child of God can stand in need of. Do you fear? Are you distressed by sin? Do temptations overcome you? Does indwelling sin shame you by bringing you under many defeats? Do you feel sometimes your distance from God? Behold the remedy; behold the Remedy - Christ crucified. The remedy felt will remove all surprise from you at the Apostle's saying – "I determine to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Men, not knowing the greatness of Christ, not feeling the greatness of their need of Him, maybe surprised that, a man of Paul's character and attainment should be willing to forgo everything except this one thing. Willing to leave everything of eloquence and all he could have shown and manifest

himself to be amongst men and just give himself entirely to this one subject – “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified” – despised of the Jews and a stumbling block to the Gentiles. I say if you are brought to see this Person and His perfecting work, you won’t be surprised at his determination. Perfected forever. Well then, this goes beyond time, this will bring you through Jordan’s icy flood and you will stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

This is a great gospel. John Owen said he could not preach a good sermon but he could preach a good gospel. This is a good gospel. I know it is. It meets my need: it meets my trouble; it tells of a good God in whom my hope is perfected forever. You do not like your working hand to be knocked down helpless at your side do you? A man is considered as it were dead if his spine is broken but O if your working spine and your working hand be broken and you are brought as a poor distraught and ruined creature before the Lord you will find that this will answer everything. It will give you a new being as it were and you will hold out another hand to the Lord – not a working hand but the receiving hand of faith to receive the divinely wrought redemption and a blessed perfection. Yes you will find that you stand in another’s strength even the strength of this Lord Jesus. The Lord bless this gospel to us. I believe that we shall need it. We do need it and if when we come into trouble we need it, trouble such as is before us in the nation, and we do not know but some of us fear much, we shall need this blessed gospel. May the Lord cause us to know it that we shall not deny the faith and the name and word of Jesus Christ. Do not say that you are determined not to do it. Peter was determined with a determination just as good as yours or mine but O what good was it? How it was paralysed in a moment and he denied his Master: but may we stand in Christ’s strength, live His life, walk in His mercy and be clothed in His righteousness; then it will be well with us, perfected forever. When we cease to breath here and live here, if we be the Lord’s we shall live in this perfection.

Amen