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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening
13th February 1921

Text: John 1 verse 16

And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

It is a great mercy to be seeking after these things which are distasteful to flesh and blood. It is a great mercy to be exercised about the end that is surely coming to us. It is a great mercy to believe in God, to believe in His omniscience, in His omnipotence, and in His justice. To believe that we can only hope to stand before Him with joy, by being united to the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe that all religion that is worth having, must be an absolute gift. These simple statements are really abhorrent to our flesh, and only the Holy Ghost can make them acceptable to us. If we do not receive grace we shall receive condemnation. If we do not receive forgiveness of sins, we shall surely receive everlasting punishment for them.

Therefore to be brought before God in our souls, to be exercised toward Him, to believe that He can make no mistake, to be seeking His favour, to be seeking the grace of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, is indeed a very great favour. And if we are under the teaching of the Spirit, we shall really be concerned about our standing before God, and our prospects for eternity. And so whatever we should like naturally, whatever some of you might wish to do naturally, I would entreat you to lend me your ear, give me your attention, while I try to set before you, the things, which though displeasing to flesh and blood, make for the peace of God's children. Remember this, that every day you live in sin you are treasuring up wrath against yourself, to the day of wrath.

Oh sinner, God open your eyes to see what a hell of sin is in your heart, and what a hell of punishment you are hastening to, and may inevitably fall into, if sovereign grace prevent not. We have in the text, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have of Him a statement, namely that He has a fulness, and further, a statement that some people have received that fulness, and grace for grace. It is a great thing this, a full God, a full Christ, for an empty sinner. Christ who can give heaven for hell, righteousness for filthy rags, life to swallow up death, and pardon of all sin. Oh what a wonder this is, no one will believe it though it be declared to them, without the Holy Spirit's power.

Christ's forerunner, "John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me." (John 1 verse 15). Then he declares the text, concerning His fulness. This morning I said, that Christ possesses a two fold fulness. First the fulness of the Godhead bodily, which is uncommunicative for Christ cannot give us His eternity, His omnipotence, and all that belongs to Him as God. And secondly the fulness of life, of grace and of justification, which he possesses to give to His people, that is to communicate to them.

Christ has blessings to impart,
Grace to save thee from thy fears;
O the love that fills His heart !
Sinner, wipe away thy tears. (Gadsby's 956 vers 1)

And as thou canst not do it thyself, Christ will do it for thee. I mentioned only one little thing his morning, and yet it is not a little thing, it is very great. One particular aspect concerning this fulness, namely life, eternal life.

A good many of our friends are away, and their vacant places are before me, but I will say, if every member of this congregation could say now before God, that he was doing what John Bunyan tells us he did in the Pilgrims Progress. He put his finger into his ears lest he should be distracted, and ran crying, life, life, eternal life Oh it would be wonderful, and it is wonderful in every individual case. Are you a person fleeing, running, putting your fingers in your ears, and your hands over your eyes, crying, life, life. eternal life ? Oh let me possess life, eternal life ? Give me Christ or else I die ? Oh but what an empty thing this world is, yet nobody believes it, until they are taught by God.

If you might have all your hearts desire, you would not be happy, nothing here can give real happiness, only Christ's fulness can do this. A fulness of life for a dead people, there is a great beauty, in my eyes, in that comprehensive word, in the important and great chapter which I just read to you.(Ezekiel 37). The valley of dead bodies, the valley of corruption shall be wholly to the Lord, and what can make it so, what can swallow up death, what can cleanse away corruption, what can remove all defilement but life ? If there is the beginning of a desire, in any of our bodies, and God should say, should so order it, that strong life in us should purge sin away, and overcome it, we should say that was a great blessing. Now if it please God to give eternal life, to cleanse and purge away the awful sin of our nature, what a blessing that would be. Nothing else will do what this will.

Now I want to mention another aspect this evening with respect to this to this fulness, that is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name that He is Wisdom, for He is full of Wisdom. It is said in the Proverbs, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding." (Proverbs 4 verse 7). "The price of wisdom is above rubies." (Job 28 verse 18). "And all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto (wisdom) her. (Proverbs 3 verse 15). And Christ takes on Himself this great name of Wisdom, He says, "I Wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions." (Proverbs 8 verse 12). This He can, and this He does communicate, and if you would search for it, and you found it, you will find it inside of the covenant of grace. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they break, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31 verses 31-34).

Now inside of the covenant is this wisdom, let me show you in two or three particulars what it is. It is a light shining upon the sinners heart, an opening to him of the nature of God. "They shall know from the least of them to the greatest of them," and when a man knows God, he does not wonder at Daniel speaking of Him as, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God." (Daniel 9 verse 4). He does not wonder at the word of God in the law, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." (Exodus 20 verse 7). He begins to see a little into that word, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3 verse 6). And there is a teaching that is carried on in this particular whereby God's people come to discern between flesh and spirit, between legality and gospel liberty, between form and power, between worshipping in truth and worshipping in name, between access to God and a flipant speech called prayer, between faith that holds the soul to God and brings mercy from God to the soul, and a profession that has no intimacy with God. Do you follow this ? I want to speak it simple, so that you may, if the Lord will follow, for it is a great matter, a very great matter. In view of this truth, which Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

"Now this I say, brethren that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Corinthians 15 verse 50). It is a great thing, and what an awful thing it is to be deceived. What a dreadful thing it is to be left to live with only a form of religion. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3 verse 5). To have the kingdom of God in name and word only, to take on yourself something like true religion, and yet have only a name to live, while you are dead.

Now from this fountain of wisdom, this heavenly wisdom comes this teaching. This is the covenant, "I will teach them that they shall not need to say every man to his neighbour, and every man to his brother Know the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord." Oh what a covenant, what a provision, what a wonderful provision, the wisdom of God in Jesus Christ descending into a sinners heart by the Holy Ghost. Opening to him what flesh is, what a sinner man is, what an alienated sinner he is, what a rebel, what a wicked heart he possesses. And then to show him that though he could wash himself with nitre, and take much soap, he could not wash one speck of sin away. That he would be still a sinner."Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." (Jeremiah 13 verse 23). This makes men sober, it makes them cautious, it makes them slow in religion. Yes, that is what you will be under God's teaching, you will not make great haste, and you will come to feel this one day. One step though taken slowly in the way of life is a wonderful thing. One prayer breathed from a living soul, from an honest heart, is a great mercy. One look to Jesus Christ is a great wonder, and yet how little it sounds, and how far from being found these days. How far from being accepted as a professor of religion it is today, but we must leave the professor, and come home. Is it a truth, that we can receive ? are we concerned about this ? what our flesh is ? how far it can go in the way of religion ? How much it can acquire of religious knowledge ? How much it can simulate of faith, hope and love ? How much it can imitate, and what talk it can indulge in about God and His things ? Think of Christ's word, it is a close word, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3 verse 6). You may be told this, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" you can make nothing else of it, and "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and God takes care to teach His children this. Some are taught it more clearly than others, but all come to know that they are lost, and that Christ alone can save them. And then you will see a beauty in the Box Tree that God plants, "I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together." (Isaiah 41 verse 19).

While you will see in the great spreading Cedar, a tree that God will bring down. The Lord brings down the tall and lofty trees, and He exalts the low trees and plants them in the wilderness. "Howl, fir tree: for the Cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled:" (Zechariah 11 verse 2). "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish:" (Ezekiel 17 verse 24). Under the teaching of the Spirit you will one day come to perceive, the infinite mercy of being a plant of God's right hand planting. A child at His heavenly footstool, a beggar at mercies door, a sinner looking for justification in Christ, and for the forgiveness of all his sins.

Well that is one lesson, and God imprints it upon the hearts of His children, and another lesson that the Lord out of His fulness of Wisdom teaches His children is this. That whereas they, under their groaning convictions of their sinfulness, and the deeper views they get of the corruption of their nature, they are apt, very apt to say, can ever God dwell here. He then shows them, that the infinite love, grace, merit, and mercy of Jesus Christ is more, infinitely more than their sinfulness. One might say, that is not much to know, Oh if you knew your own condition, you would think it very much to know, His fulness. If you know what it is to sink under a sight of what you are, you will know it is a great wonder to rise, by a sight of the precious cross of Christ. You will know it is a great thing to believe that all your sin, corruption, hypocrisy, vileness, wandering heart, that all of them are as nothing when compared to the blood of Jesus Christ.

The blood of Christ, a precious blood !
Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not,
And reconciles the soul to God,
From every folly, every fault. (Gadsby' 858 verse 4).

Oh sinner it is great to believe this, I learnt it myself, It is a very great thing to believe this. A valley of dead bodies shall be holiness unto the Lord, a sinner dead and full of sin shall be made holiness unto the Lord. What a pleasing sensation I feel in saying this unto you, it suits me, it tells me that such persons shall get to heaven. It tells you poor sinner, or it will tell you, in the Spirit's power, that your sins, shall not keep you from the throne of grace, and shall not keep you from the fountain of the Saviours merits. It shall not keep you from the smile of God, nor always darken your heavens and make them as brass, and your earth as iron. But that grace, sweet grace, sovereign grace, shall reign over all your sins. Sins past, sins present and sins to come, swallowed up in the merit of Christ. A fulness of wisdom resides in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost will open up this gospel, and reveal this Saviour. By showing a sinner, a little of what He is as a Saviour, and what He has got to give them. What righteousness to justify, what grace to sanctify, what wisdom to guide, and bring a sinner safely and honourably through, and land him at last in heaven. John might well say, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1 verse 12). For it is not every one who can receive Christ in this way. It is not every one who can bear the discriminating truth, that takes the precious from the vile. That says,

The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to a Throne of Grace,
The Saviour's blood to plead. (Gadsby's 527 verse 4)

Oh sinner, if you are a sinner in your own feelings, this will suit you, and God will make it suit you as such a sinner, for Christ came to save the lost. Think of it, He came to save the lost, not the good, not the righteous, not the holy, not those who do their duty and are satisfied. No, but the lost, who cannot do their duty, who cannot pray, and cannot do what they would, but are constantly hindered and turned aside from all that is good as to their own feelings. Such people crying out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18 verse 13). "For the Son of Man is come to save that which is lost." (Matthew 18 verse 11). And if you have been fifty years in the way, if you live as long as that, and you are called by grace at that time, you will say, I am a bigger sinner today than I was when first convinced of my sin. Not in conduct among men, but in the knowledge of myself as before God.

Wisdom in Christ is so full, and of such power that He will guide you through all the mazes and difficulties that lie in your way through life. Corruptions, troubles and temptations that you encounter, difficulties in providence that confront you, and the afflictions that are laid upon you, He will guide you through them all. Yes sinner, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1 verse 3). I wonder how many in this chapel could say before God now, we do lack wisdom. If you had a master teaching you mathematics, or any other science or subject, when with all good will, you should have been well advanced in your studies, you should find that you were ignorant and that all knowledge had eluded you, you would expect to get a rebuff and perhaps be told to leave the class. Well that is the way with some of us Godward, He has taught us, He has borne with us, He has guided us.

He has told us a few things, and yet we have to go to Him and say, Lord instruct us we are fools, we have forgotten the exhortation, we have forgotten the doctrine, we have forgotten the teaching, and now we are poor ignorant creatures, and here is a new trouble we do not seem to know anything. We are faced with fresh perplexities, and we know not how to walk in them, do teach us. Your heavenly teacher will not upbraid you when you go again to Him, He may say, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children," (Hebrews 12 verse 5). But now I will teach you again, bring your perplexities unto Me, that is how to walk in them. Bring your troubles unto Me, that is how to bear them. Bring your dissatisfaction unto Me, I will satisfy you, "For I have satisfied the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." (Jeremiah 31 verse 5). My brethren, what a Christ we have to do with, rather what a Christ deals with us. "He hath not dealt with us after our sin; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." (Psalm 103 verse 10). No He deals graciously, kindly, lovingly, tenderly, and teaches us over and over again. "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." (Isaiah 28 verse 10). He does not overdrive. Well there is a fulness here, a fulness of wisdom to show us the way to go.

Wait on God, wait on God, you will not lose any time. Wait on God, you will not mistake the way. Wait on God, there is no going wrong while you are waiting on Him. He will come to thee, though it be at evening late, it will never be too late. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it," (Isaiah 30 verse 21), walk in humble dependance upon Him,

Depend on Him, thou canst not fail;
Make all thy wants and wishes known;
Fear not, His merits must prevail;
Ask what thou wilt, it shall be done. (Gadsby's 882 verse 4)

What a Christ we have, Oh I wish I could lift Him up to you, that I could recommend Him to you, who is like Him, who teaches like Him, who teaches wisdom as Christ does ? Well go to Him poor ignorant sinner and He will make you know what this blessed wisdom is, He said, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." (Genesis 17 verse 1). There is a fulness in the next place in the power of Christ. "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." (1 Corinthians 4 verse 20). And what does the Lord mean when He says that ? The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3 verse 5). What is power ? It is that which operates on the heart and mind, and affects it. It does something.

Take for instance the way the Apostle puts it, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance." (Thessalonians 1 verse 5). And what then ? "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord." (verse 6). Now look at that, did you ever find a power on your soul enabling you to follow the Lord Jesus Christ ? Some people found this of old and God acknowledged it, He said, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that as not sown." (Jeremiah 2 verse 2). What a wonderful thing it is to have a word on you heart, or a touch of the Holy Ghost on your soul drawing you after Christ. Then you would say to everything standing in your way, "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way." (Genesis 24 verse 56). Hinder not my running after Him, then there is power, that is not taking the name of the Lord in vain. When you say, I cannot do without Thee Lord, I cannot live without Thee, I would not live without Thee. I would not die without Thee. If I might have Thee, I want the Lord. What a mercy it is to want Him, He says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12 verse 32). That means they shall come, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way:" (Jeremiah 31 verse 9). This is God's power, it is Christ's power and He will never leave off this. We get very discouraged, some of us, "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." (Numbers 21 verse 4). You think of those poor pilgrims getting trouble upon trouble and discouragement of the soul, and you may experience just the same thing.

I want to be right, and yet get more into wrong ways, I want to get to heaven, and I seem to have my face, my heart, my will, and my steps all hellward, and I am discouraged. And do you find no change ? Do you not, some times find a quietening influence upon your spirit, moving you Godward ? Enabling you to confess your sins, and entreat Him to bless you, and guide you into the way of peace ? Entreat the Holy Spirit to reveal in you the Lord Jesus Christ and to make you acquainted with Him, and make known your own interest in Him. What is that ? It is power from the fulness of Christ. "And He said, Is it light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isaian 49 verse 6). I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen, (Amos 9 verse 11). "I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 43 verse 6). All this is the work of the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Bringing sinners as such to Christ, bringing them in their emptiness, and bringing perplexed souls with all their perplexities to Christ. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." (Genesis 49 verse 10). "And of His fulness have all we received," when you receive a little of this, mark it. It is much to be observed when a sinner receives a little of the power of Jesus Christ, bringing sinners, as such to Christ. But there is one act of power that He grants His children to know, that I would name particularly to you, this namely. He has power to forgive sins, and that is the thing we want if we are taught of God our sonship and our sins. We want the Lord to confirm our sonship by the forgiveness of our sins. You will never get true happiness until you get this blessing. Happiness comes by forgiveness, the sweet forgiveness, sweetly expressed in the heart by the Eternal Spirit that is the thing. And He has power to do it, blessed be His name. Honours rest on that Prince of ours, now in heaven. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5 verse 31). When we are forgiven we know it and we are happy, not once, not twice, but over and over again, thus we are raised up."In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen." (Amos 9 verse 11). I will raise up in their hearts new experiences of pardon, a new experience of My smile which is pardon to them. I will raise up in their hearts a new exercise of faith in Him, whereby they shall understand that all their sins are forgiven. There is no objections that we can raise, that this does not answer, not one. A foretaste, the softest pillow you ever reclined upon, will be how you view the forgiveness of your sins. "All manner of sin and blasphemy (against the Son of Man) shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matthew 12 verse 31).

Oh sinner think of it, if you are drenched in sin, if you loathe yourself and cannot bear the sight of yourself, and feel too loathsome for the throne of grace, too wicked for the society of God's people, almost too wicked to come and sit here, Christ has power to put all that away. And you will praise Him when you get the blessing. "Bless the Lord O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;" (Psalm 103 verses 1-4). All that is from Christ's fulness, the blessed fulness of forgiveness, He forgives iniquities, transgressions and sins. "And of His fulness have all we received and grace for grace."

And now one word in conclusion, namely He has a fulness of holiness. I am sure some of you with myself can say with Joseph Hart,

Jesus precious blood, once spilt,
I depend on solely,
To release and clear my guilt;
But I would be holy. (Gadsby's 780 verse 8)

This is not something that you can manage to get into your own feelings, but it comes from heaven, through Jesus Christ by the gift of His Spirit. It is the grace of sanctification of your heart whereby the ways of sin are hateful, and the ways of God delightful. That blessed work of grace in the soul that makes the precepts as dear as the promises, and the ways of holiness, the very ways your soul chooses to walk in, and would fain walk in every day. It is above nature, but Christ has this blessing, and holiness is His delight. He possesses holiness as He himself is holy, "harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Hebrews 7 verse 26). So my friends, does this attract you ? There is a name in the Bible given to God's people, which they are often afraid of using, or taking to themselves, I mean the name, saint. It is a great name, very expressive, very true. You say, you are not fit to have it, but if Christ gives it to you, you are fit for it. "And let My name be named on them." (Genesis 48 verse 16). He is the Saviour, and a saved sinner is a saint.

One set apart, and having the grace of the Holy Spirit infused into his soul, whereby he becomes a sinner panting after holiness. Longing for it, and cannot be satisfied without it. And of His fulness of holiness, his people receive, that their standing as holy people. "And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord:" (Isaiah 62 verse 12). They are holy, you may think you can cut off this saint, but depend upon it, the very thought that you can do it, is an evidence that you are under the power of sin. Oh but when Christ gives love and grace, then the sinner says I would be holy. And when His precious word comes, and He says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15 verse 3). The sinner says, I love that, I love holiness, I delight in it, it is the way I would always be walking in.

Now I have expressed very little of this wonderful word, the fulness of Christ. But may the little that I have said, have some effect, through the Lord's mercy, upon your spirits. And remember this, that all your future needs must come out of that fulness, from which you received all past mercies. And remember this, that the glory you are looking for, the communion you are panting after, your seeking after God.

Both here and hereafter, and the likeness to Christ you are longing to have upon you, all must come from Himself. And if we are receivers of such mercies, on whose head must the crown be placed, to whom shall the praise be given, everyone blessed with mercy will say, "Not unto us, Oh Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and Thy truth has been so great. Thy goodness so wonderful, that now I would fain put on Thy blessed head, a crown of praise, honour and glory.

May the Lord look upon us, may He exercise our hearts, may He come to open our hearts, and pour out upon us His blessing, so that we may be, "as a watered garden", (Jeremiah 31 verse 12) satiated with His goodness.

Amen