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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
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John 12 v 46

"I am come a light into the world that whosoever
believeth on Me should not abide in darkness."

One immediate inference must be drawn from this word and that is that gross darkness covers the people, all people who do not believe. Who is the light which has come into the world? It is said by the Apostle to some, "Ye were sometimes darkness". A little change in that passage may be made and then it would read concerning the whole world, "Ye are darkness", for the world lieth in wickedness. The distinction that may be made between the world and the church, the church, low as she is today, is this, Egyptian darkness covers the world and in Goshen there is light, and that is the light of life. But, with the land full of Bibles, and people everywhere talking about the Bible, and religion, in some particulars, seeming to grow, it may be said that we need faith to believe this word. Faith is the gift of God; without it no man can rightly read the Bible. With it, there is seen in the Bible a life, a path of salvation, a glory which shine so brightly and penetrate so deeply in the unction of the Spirit to those who are under that unction, as that they are brought to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Light makes manifest all things it reaches; their nature, their tendency, their end, and if light from heaven by the scriptures shines upon us, it makes manifest many things to us, some of which I would name.

First it makes manifest that there is a God, and this is a terrible truth to fallen nature; that there is a God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. And it would be well for us here to ask ourselves the question whether we believe in God; whether there is something deeper, more penetrating in our hearts than an ordinary talk about God; something that

brings Him near to us, makes Him real in us, makes Him everything, light, life, power, glory. It is a great thing to believe in God. Everyone present believing in God is a miracle of grace for nobody can properly believe in God without this light, which is Christ, shining. My dear friends, look at this point, because the day is coming when we shall stand before this God. Will it then be for the first time with us that we believe in Him? Will it then be that for the first time some blink of His glory has fallen upon us? If so, it will be very dreadful for us.

Light manifests the character of God; Holy, Holy, Holy, sang the seraphims. O what a sight they had of God in that character of holiness; so great was it, so bright was it, and to them so distilling and yet so beautiful, that with twain each one covered his face, and adored; with twain he covered his feet, as if unable to bear the light; with twain of his wings he did fly. He saw God's character, and if you see God's character in the light that Christ brings, you will see that which will wither your nature and make you like a branch cut from the tree, a withered, dead thing. It will manifest God's justice and in the light of that, who can hope to escape the wrath to come. It will manifest omnipotence and, believing in that, who can expect to escape arrest and destruction. Fear Him, who after He hath killed the body, has power to cast into hell. And this light, manifesting God, has a reflex act and influence upon all who see it, namely, this, it shows the sinner himself. He sees himself, and what a sight. He does not wonder then at Isaiah expressing himself thus "Woe is me, woe is me for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." You may talk about God and never know sin; but you cannot see God and be ignorant of sin. You cannot view Him in the light of His own nature, as that nature is revealed in the law, and not see your own sin. It will shine down into the depths of our iniquity and make us believe more than we can understand in that scripture "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it." It manifests the tendency of sin in our nature, the constant, unvarying tendency of sin

that is hellward, to disobey God, to walk contrary to His commandments, to live against Him as He reveals Himself. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The light will show this. Further, it will show two things outside a person, namely, first, heaven and the man will say I shall never get there. Second, hell, and he says I am going there, and woe is me, woe is me for I am undone and I cannot mend this ruin. Woe is me for I am a sinner, and I cannot expect to reach that place where God is. It will show the world also, that it lies in wickedness, and that the whole tendency of the world is to go against God. Now these things all come; I mean, the knowledge of these things; all, we see in light, and are ignorant of them unless the light, the true light shines. But, you say, this light is Christ, and how could He, who is the Saviour, be said to reveal these things? Because there is no light but in the Son. He is that light which lighteth every man which cometh into the world, and you will never see either God or yourself, unless you see in that light which comes from Christ. As the Law was given by the hand of a mediator, so Christ, when He sends His Spirit to walk and shine in a sinner's heart, however that Spirit may work, and whatever means He may use in the quickening and converting of a sinner, Christ is the light, the only light. But then, let me go back to this, Christ reveals the character of God. He is the representative of God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person and therefore when He shines upon a sinner, He does not leave that sinner without some gracious hints about mercy, about salvation, and a believing sinner perceives in the Lord and in His work of redemption, a way of escape from the wrath to come. He perceives a way of justification in the righteousness of Christ; he perceives a way of salvation by Christ; he perceives a way of mercy even in providence, for this light makes many things manifest. And now, says Christ, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me should not abide in darkness." And if the Lord will help me to speak for a short time this morning, I shall show you, in whom this light is, that you are not abiding in darkness, however dark you may feel, however uncertain you may feel, however

troubled you may be about your state, yes even though you were able, most sadly and truly and solemnly to sing the second hymn "Tis a point I long to know".

To abide in darkness is to be darkness itself. "Ye were sometimes darkness but are now light in the Lord." That good man was not abiding in darkness who, standing in the temple full of fear, because full of guilt, cried "God be merciful to me a sinner". You would not say he was in darkness. You would say, judging his case by the Scripture, that he was under divine teaching, that light was shining into his heart, and that that light which was shining in him directed him to the fountain of light and life; directed him to the blessed mercy-seat; directed him to that fulness of mercy, to partake of which, he prayed. "God be merciful to me a sinner". Now if you can go with that publican, if you can say I am full of trouble, full of gloom, full of fear about God and my standing before Him, full of doubt as to my position, but I am also fully convinced that one thing can meet me, one arm can save me, one fountain of life there is and I go to Him, I go to it, I cry with the thief, "Remember me" and I pray constantly with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner", well then you are not abiding in darkness, that the day which you fear will overtake you as a thief. It is a great thing to see danger in the way. "He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth; he does not know at what he is stumbling; he does not see a pit into which he is walking. But he on whom light is, in whom it is working, sees the condition he is in and the dangers of the way he is walking, the danger of this mortal state, and he sees the merciful God and cries to him and begs for the inshining of that light, and the flowing in of that mercy which alone can meet his evil case. O there may be some of you who feel very dark, who, if you were asked the question, - Now do you love the Lord? - would not be able to affirm that you do. If you were asked - Do you know Him? - you would not be able to say "yes". And yet, if you are put to it, you must say that a light shines to show you God, and yourself; God and sin; heaven and hell; ruin and salvation. And by that inshining you are led to cry to God fervently and in a sense, a good sense, to pray

without ceasing, that the Lord would do for you what He has promised to do for His children - hear their cry, when they cry unto Thee; listen to the voice of their prayer, and not turn it away. The man does not abide in darkness who gets a sight of the fountain of life, the fountain of light. He cannot be said to abide in darkness who sees what a good God there is in heaven, sees the throne of God's heavenly grace and that mercy is dispensed there; sees, betimes, the invitation in the light of the Spirit, "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money, come ye buy wine and milk without money and without price." No words can properly express the beauty of such a scripture as that. No words can express what a believing heart sometimes sees in such a scripture. There is, speaking, a great God, full of goodness, determined to communicate of that goodness to worthless sinners. He sees them in their misery; He sees their poverty and He meets them therein, says "Come ye that have no money and buy wine and milk without money and without price." And when that is seen by faith, a peculiar effect is felt of courage rising in the soul, boldness, enabling the sinner to ask that God would show mercy to him and give to him these blessings which are not to be purchased, but which are freely given, most freely given. "Ho everyone that thirsteth". And at such a moment faith goes to God and presents to Him His own most gracious word of invitation. One expressed it in another way. "Thou callest burdened souls to Thee, and such O Lord am I."

Now it is faith here. "He that believeth". This peculiar faith in its singular and powerful motions in the mind, not a general idea of an invitation in the mind or brain, but a peculiar faith that fixes in the blessed word, that gives the word a substance in the heart and is an evidence of those things which are spoken in the invitation. Christ speaks again "Come unto Me". And the light shows Him as full of mercy, as unspeakably suitable to the sinner, suitable in every way, in every sense of that word, suitable; fitting, singularly fitting; want and supply fitting; death and life fitting; misery and mercy fitting, and all spoken of by the Lord Himself. And, says

the sinner with faith in exercise, I believe this, and though he may not be assured of his interest, yet he goes to God; he does not abide in darkness; he sees how fitting the things are, himself and salvation. He does not abide in darkness; he waits on God. Here faith sometimes has a peculiar influence on the heart. "Wait on the Lord" it is written, and further, it is promised "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me". To say prayer and go away and probably forget what you prayed for even, is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass and going away and at once forgetting what manner of man he was. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty"; whoso looks into what Christ is, what He has, what He does and what He has promised; whoso looks into the graciousness and the mercy and the love and the pity and the blood of Christ, who looks into it by faith, he thereby derives courage and strength to wait on God. He believes in Christ; he does not abide in darkness; he is not under the influence or the dominion of unbelief; he is not under the dominion of sin. Ah, he feels the nature of it and the guilt of it and the pollution of it, but he is not under the dominion of it and so he waits on God. And there are many things to wait for. "My soul doth wait", one says. In the Psalms the Psalmist expresses himself thus - "As the eyes of a servant look to the hand of his master and the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon Thee until Thou shalt have mercy upon us." The servant gets an answer, that is, gets direction; the maid gets something said to her as to the thing she waited for, so our eyes wait and wait and wait until the mercy we need comes; until God, without whom we are lost, comes and speaks and blesses according to His word. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." If you waited fifty years with fifty years conflict and fear and sinking, you would not be ashamed at the end of the time, for God would bless you. He waits to answer prayer. There are two waiting ones therefore; the waiting sinner, who thinks it much sometimes and long to wait before the answer comes, and a waiting God. "Therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you and therefore will He be exalted that He may have mercy upon you." When you can go on no longer, when you are so fervent in your spirit, when you are so particularly oppressed, when you feel now you can wait on God

no more, when you are driven and tossed and yet have a peculiar energy in your spirit, then you will find God is exalted in having mercy on you, and you will know what the scripture means "They shall not be ashamed". No you will break out into a triumphant song and say - we have waited for Him; this is the Lord, we have looked and we have not looked in vain; we waited and we are not ashamed of our hope. We thought He would come sometimes and now He is come; we possess Him. They shall not be ashamed. They do not abide in darkness; they abide in conflict, but not in darkness. They may stand in weakness, but they do not move in darkness. They may be dark as to their interest, but they are not dark as to the Saviour. Though they only know in part, that part that they do know is wonderfully attractive to them. They do not abide in darkness always as to God's thoughts respecting them. Jesus does not represent His Father in vain. His Father says "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end," and that comes. They shall not always be dark about God's thoughts to them. One says "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul". God's deep thoughts are expressed in a sinner's soul and become part of his living experience. O when the thoughts of love which God has eternally entertained to a sinner, come into that sinner's heart, that is when he feels the love of God. When God's intention to justify him comes into his experience; when God's thoughts to give him forgiveness become a part of his soul's life, even the forgiveness of his sins, then he is not in darkness as to God's thoughts, and these vital points every child of God is more or less exercised about as long as he is in the world. But there are other things about which we are concerned, other matters which greatly try us it may be, and in these, as we believe, in the light that is in the Lord Jesus, we shall not be in darkness, not abide in it. This, for instance; you believe in the wisdom of God, the light shines upon your soul, and you believe He is too wise to err; then He brings you into trouble. Job was not at rest, nor in quiet, yet trouble came. God afflicted him, but there was faith at the beginning and holding on through all, which brought him beyond all the means that were used to reduce

him to the extremity of trouble and poverty to which he came and brought him to say "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Now that is a great point in affliction. As long as the mind is exercised about and upon second causes, so long is the creature tossed about and has no rest. You will never rest in your spirit as long as a second cause is looked at by you and you try to rest or at least to deal with it. But when your eye is fixed on God, from whom trouble comes as well as mercy, for we are born to it and we deserve it and God has ordained it, and when God is pleased in His infinite goodness to let you know that in some way He intends good to your soul, you do not abide in darkness; you may abide in trouble, you may be long in that, but you wont be in darkness. And sometimes the light will so shine, and the operation of the Spirit be so effectual in you, that you will say "Thy will be done". And, of all the mercies that can come to an afflicted sinner, the people of God, this is one of the sweetest; it puts a sweetness into the bitters, a peace into trouble, a power into the soul, when that is said, "Thy will be done". The will of God is better than my will; the will of God is wise; the will of God is kind; the will of God must be for the best. He wills what is best. "Thy will be done". No darkness here. You may be dark as to how God will deliver you and as to when, but no darkness as to what is best. Job was not in darkness in this matter. He said "When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." He was not in darkness as to God's purpose; he saw it was better for the gold to be purged from the dross than for the dross to remain. Affliction sanctified is better than prosperity unsanctified. Affliction is a mark of sonship, is a token of divine love to the sinner. Affliction cometh not forth from the dust, does not spring out of the ground. But here is a man who sees God has sent it; I see it in His teaching, I see it in His own mercy to my soul, I perceive it in the operations of the Spirit; He has sent it and He is with me in it.

Though afflictions seldom cease
Yet He is with me still

He believes in Christ. The atonement enters into God's providential dealings

The lash is steeped, He on thee lays
And softened in His blood

You look at this point in respect of your affliction my brethren, and I believe, in the light of the Spirit, you will perceive it is better to be chastened than to miss chastening. Look at these solemn words in the Hebrews - "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not; if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers", that is all the children, then are ye bastards and not sons". You lack the character of a son.

He shall not abide in darkness. He shall not abide in darkness about the issue of all things with respect to himself, for, says his Lord and Master, by His servant Paul, "If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him". And if the Lord bring you to be on His side, to cleave close to Him by pure and living faith, making His blood your hope, His righteousness your covering, His life your life, His grace your strength, if He does these things, then you will find again and again brought to you that if we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him. He makes His people kings and priests unto God and Himself, and will bring them to perceive it is better to be on the Lord's side in trouble than to be with wicked men and the devil in ease. Remember this my friends, that the called and chosen and faithful go with the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. And in the day of wickedness and idolatry in Israel, Moses made a very solemn appeal to the people, "Who is on the Lord's side". You may see nothing in such a word, but if you have faith you will see something in it. O to be on the side of Christ, to stand by His cross, to have His name named on you; to see and feel a little of His grace and mercy; to have His power at times with you; to be brought really in your spirit to wait on Him and for Him, and live on Him and to Him. To such a person the issue is not doubtful. God says "If we suffer with Him; if we live by His cross and if His name be named on us, and if we suffer persecution for righteousness sake, then the

issue is this - we shall also be glorified with Him and we shall reign with Him.

"I am come" Christ when He was born then came as a Son, the only Son, into the world and all the world is in darkness without this Son. He came that whosoever believeth in Him should not abide in darkness, and as, in another place it is said - should not walk in darkness but have the light of life, and see light in God's light. "In Thy light shall we see light." Why, because with Thee is the fountain of life. A blessed and wonderful fountain of all goodness.

Well may a good God shine upon us, for, if He should be pleased to lift up the light of His countenance upon us, then He will also give us peace, and His name will be named upon us. May the Lord grant that we may understand experimentally this, so great and gracious word. "I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth in Me" with a vital faith, "should not abide in darkness."

AMEN.