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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 26 March 1933

John 2 v 11

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana
of Galilee and manifested forth His
glory, and His disciples believed on Him

This first miracle of the Lord Jesus was, as you know, the turning into wine of water which filled six water pots of stone, each pot containing two or three firkins apiece.

The miracles of the Lord Jesus were, in the first place, for the manifestation of His personal glory; He would be known. They were also typical; what He was doing to the poor, afflicted bodies of the people diseased and helpless, lame and maimed and blind, and deaf and dumb, typified what He came to do for souls in a spiritual disease of blindness and all manner of trouble. His miracles were for the creation or strengthening of the faith which was in some, which was begotten in some. When they saw His miracles they believed; they said "John did no miracle but all things which John spake of this Man are true". They saw that Christ was fulfilling what had been spoken of concerning Him. And these three great objects of the miracles of Christ were the means, in the first place, of gathering many to Him, more than the Gospels generally spoke, as may be seen, as you will see, if you recollect that the Apostle Paul, speaking of Christ showing Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, said that after the Lord had manifested Himself to His disciples, then He showed Himself to above 500 brethren at once. This was before the day of Pentecost; these were believers in Him by operations in their hearts and doubtless as the effect of His miracles and His teaching. The beginning of miracles was this turning of water into wine and it was the manifestation of His glory and the effect of this was that His disciples believed on Him. Their faith, small and not embracing much knowledge of Him, was confirmed, and His disciples who had followed Him and were

invited with Him to this marriage feast believed on Him.

First of all, let us notice as enabled the manifestation of the glory of Christ in this miracle which manifested forth His glory. It was first, doubtless, the manifestation of His Eternal Deity; a great manifestation that, and it was typical of that manifestation that He would make of Himself, that His Spirit was sent to make of Himself, throughout all generations until He shall have gathered all His children unto Himself and present them to His Father. The Deity of Christ, the possession by Him of all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily, is the foundation of all worship of Him, of all good to the soul by Him, of the faith that saves, that brings in His righteousness and His goodness and His salvation. It is good to be well settled here, that Christ is God. Before the foundation of the world, before the highest part of the dust, before the mountains were settled, Christ was with His Father. John, in the wonderful word, the perfect word, that opens this gospel, tells us - "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God". The Word there is the Son. Later in the chapter he says - "No man hath seen the Father at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" And John, seeing Him, said - "This is the Son of God". Paul said in the Hebrews "God, who in time past hath spoken unto the ~~F~~athers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." His only begotten Son. The Father has an innumerable number of sons, but only one begotten Son, only one - "Having one only Son". And this is the glory that Christ, by this miracle, began to manifest forth, that He was God. That, as He created the world and all things in it as the Apostle tells us - The Father by the Son made the worlds - so here, He made wine out of water and manifested His eternal Deity. Now that is a real, a vital, a foundation truth for all of the children of God to lay hold of by faith. Are we settled in that, that Christ is God, Almighty God, sighing, at that time, human breath, even when He did this miracle. The glory of the Eternal Deity and filial relationship to the Father in the Trinity is that that will prove to be, to everyone who receives it by divine teaching, a foundation for his

faith, a foundation for his hope, a foundation for his worship. Worship Christ, Almighty God in human nature. Men today see Jesus as a great person in history, but see no divinity, and if they profess, notwithstanding, to worship Him, then they are idolators. They profess that He was a teacher, but that He was limited in His knowledge, that He was influenced in His teaching, by His Jewish prejudice. God save us from such a faith and cause us to believe that, when we kneel before Jesus Christ and worship Him, we kneel before the Eternal God.

Secondly He manifested forth His glory as having come into the world to do good to men, and that doing good to men was not limited to healing all that had need of physical healing, but to do good to their immortal souls and this glory is very wonderful. The reason that the Son of God assumed our nature was that He would redeem sinners given to Him to redeem. He knew, being the author of the law, the giver of it, He knew that without shedding of blood is no remission. He knew that the blood of a mere man could not procure remission. He took therefore into union with His divine Person that nature, sin excepted, which is called in the covenant the seed of Abraham. Oh the mystery of a sinless Man, the God Man. He had a great, good work before Him. He was sent to do the will of God; He was sent to obey the commandment of His Father; He was sent to be the covenant of God to Gentiles as well as to Jews. He was sent to obey that wonderful commandment, even the commandment to lay down His life. A wonderful thing. If we have faith given to us to grasp that truth, that He was sent to obey that divine commandment to lay down, voluntarily, lovingly, willingly, His precious life, we shall lay hold of that which will save our souls. "Without shedding of blood is no remission". And this precious shedding of blood by the Lord Jesus procured the precious, blessed reception of the atonement into every believing heart whereby salvation is known and enjoyed. The glory of this is the glory, first of the covenant of grace. The first covenant was broken, and the breaking of that covenant was typified, I judge, by Moses descending the mountain with the two tables in his hand, with the law written thereon by the finger of God. He threw them down in great heat of anger and they were broken. So hopelessly is the

took on Him a body like our own yet without sin

law broken by us, never to be pieced together by us, but the new covenant is of a different nature. That covenant we broke was conditional on the obedience of its subjects. This covenant of grace is conditional on the obedience, absolute obedience, of Christ, who is a party to it. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are parties to this covenant and the part of the Son was to be the obedient servant of the Father. The covenant of grace, ordered in all things, all things. Things of sin, of rebellion, of lust, of pride, and every evil thing to be done by poor men; things of providence, crooked things, provoking to sin on the part of those who are the subjects of it; things of providence, ordered in this covenant. Things of the devil that is to say, his power, his authority in the world as the god of this world, to be broken; the spirit of the devil, the evil spirit to be judged and as it is said by the Lord Himself, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven". The world, made subject to the saints; all things are yours, ministers, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the whole world, all things are yours. The covenant is ordered so that all these things shall turn to a good account. By God Himself they shall be so turned. The glory of Christ in the covenant of grace is that He is the only true and great and wonderful representation of God to man. "Who by searching can find out God". "Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection". It is high as heaven, what canst thou do, deeper than hell, what canst thou know. But the representation of the Being of Jehovah and of His love, His goodness, and His mercy, Christ is made, and Christ came to make that representation. The love of the Father, the grace of the Father, the heaven prepared by the Father, all represented to men, poor, sinful but quickened men, and they gaze on God in Christ. And this is included in that scripture where the Apostle Paul says - "We all with open face" that is those to whom the Spirit has been given and who, by the Spirit, have had the veil taken from their hearts, "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord". They see Jesus as Paul said in the Hebrews - We see Jesus, God in Jesus, Jehovah in Jesus, the Trinity revealed in Jesus, revealed to poor, sinful men and showing them that all that is needed for their salvation, for their holiness, for their happiness, God has

provided for them in the Lord Jesus.

And the glory that is manifested forth by Christ is, in the next place, the representation of sinners to God. May the Lord never look on you, never look on me, outside of Christ. Woe to us, if He does. But if He looks on us in Christ, He sees us without spot or blemish or any such thing; more than faith can receive sometimes when it is beaten down by sin and the devil, but faith, strengthened by the Spirit, does receive it. Spotless, innocent, pure as the Son of God, undefiled; so His people are in Him, unblameable, unreprouvable. You will never leave off blaming yourselves, reproving yourselves, as long as you live, while you know yourselves under the light and teaching of the Spirit, but you will never get into despair by that, because of the Spirit's grace that will be telling you from time to time that you stand, not in yourself, but in another. He manifested forth His glory.

See what He did for poor bodies, diseased with leprosy; He cleansed them. Paralysed; He healed them. Deaf; He made them hear. Dumb; He made them to speak. Blind; He opened their eyes and more He raised the dead. And all this was typical, may I say prophetic, of what He would do in the spirits, the souls, of men given to Him to redeem and save.

He manifested forth His glory in the next place by obeying and fulfilling the law. Not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass unfulfilled. Says Christ - think not that I am come to destroy, I am come to fulfil. O what a mission was the mission of the Lord Jesus. Think of it, what He came to do, and He knew it; He knew what He had to do. His Father gave Him a revelation; He told Him what He was to speak, the very words He had heard in the Trinity in council; what He was to say, and the works which He was to do, all manifested to Him. And shall I use a familiar term, with open eye He came, with a heart full of love and anointed by the Spirit. It is a point worthy of observation and admiration that the Spirit of God was given to the Man Christ Jesus without measure, anointing Him to preach. "The Spirit of

the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach" O what preaching this was. And that anointing of the Spirit qualified His ^{very Person} human nature in all that He had to do, and one observation I may make here, by the way, with regard to the Spirit. If we have received the Holy Ghost, we have received Him, not absolutely as He is a Person in the Trinity, but mediatorially, as He comes from the Lord Jesus. He is that unction of the Holy One who teacheth all things. Jesus manifested forth His glory in coming to be a poor man. He could not, in this instance in the text have shown the glory of His ^{Person} human nature, for He was a lowly and poor man. It was the glory of God in Christ coming to do the will of God, to obey His Father, to fulfil the law. Hence the importance, the infinite fulness of that word when He knew all was finished, "It is finished" The law was finished; transgression was finished; sin was ended. Think of it. This is the glory of Christ which He began to manifest. "I have given them" says Christ to His Father in that prayer which is recorded in this gospel "I have given them", My disciples, "Thy word and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." And He prayed that they might behold His glory. Do you pray sometimes that you may see the glory of Christ? If you do you will be taken occasionally - you will wish it to be often - but you will be taken occasionally to Calvary's cross and the veil of ignominy and shame and reproach of men will be lifted and you will see God; you will see the Man, Christ Jesus, and you will see infinite glory in that sacrifice that made an end of sin, that brought in everlasting righteousness.

But we shall see His glory in His actions in us. He healed all that had need of healing. Now we need healing. Let us look then at this point. We need the healing of grace given out of Christ's fulness for our unbelief. God, complaining, asks of the people of Israel - "How long will it be ere ye believe Me" O what a reproving word that has been to me. How long you have seen My miracles; I have brought you out of Egypt; I have sustained you in the wilderness; I have preserved you by miraculously feeding you; I have brought living water out of the rock for you, yet you murmur and fret and complain. "How long

will it be ere you believe Me to be God, to be sufficient for you? My friends, do any of you need such an expostulation in a question - How long will it be ere you hang on Christ alone, ere you submit to His will, ere you become as little children to receive the kingdom of God, ere you lay down, or rather, to quote Luther, ere that beast reason is slain and you leave off reasoning and follow Hart's advice

Never reason more about it
Only take Him at His word

But we need healing here. Ah, we greatly need to be healed of this inveterate enemy, unbelief, that sin accursed abhorred by God above, because of all opposers worst, it fights against His love. We need to be healed of our proud independence. You can hardly bear to have the slightest possible prop removed from you ere you begin to sink and wonder what will become of you, and fret because you have lost that support. How long will it be ere you depend on Me, and leave all earthly props? We need healing of our independent spirit. We need to be healed of our sloth, and to be enabled to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and to show that diligence to the end. We need to be healed of that; it is a disease. The slothfulness of our spirits, the readiness of our minds to be active in regard to this life and its things. Dear friends, the glory of Christ is in this healing; yes, nothing but grace can heal our spiritual diseases, nothing but grace can bring us, from time to time, to be truly submissive to God and to seek first His kingdom, believing that all other things necessary to us shall be added. He manifested forth His glory to heal them. He healed all that had need of healing. God knows how many in this congregation have need of healing, that is to say, as these poor people, lepers, palsied people, and various people with various diseases came to Him and He healed them. Say, how many of us feel our diseases - sin, lust, pride, vanity, hardness of heart, unbelief, worldliness, self-seeking. If we feel these diseases there is one in heaven who is able to heal them, and to show forth His glory in healing. It is a great thing to be healed in your

spirit, to know that scripture for yourself - I am the Lord that healeth thee". There is no earthly remedy for soul diseases; only Christ the good physician, and the balm in Gilead which He has to supply.

And His disciples believed on Him. How could they do other when that glory touched their hearts, opened their eyes to see Him in His divinity, in His compassion, in His pity, in His power. Whatever faith they had before this miracle, that faith was mightily strengthened by the miracle which they saw. Ah, some of you can well think what it was to them as they looked on those water pots, water only one minute, wine, the best wine, the next. And it would not simply refresh them if they partook of it, but it reached their hearts; it said in their hearts - this is God; our Master is God; we follow God; we believe in God; we believe in Him who has mercy, who is merciful, full of mercy. So every fresh touch of Christ's goodness, every new view we get of Him will be a strengthening and confirming of our faith. Yes, faith will say - let us go with Him; let us follow Him. We are in the wilderness, let us lean on the arm of our Beloved; He will support us. We are hungry; He is the bread of life, let us go to Him. You understand what I mean when I thus speak, you who have life and grace and faith. Yes, none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. And His disciples believed on Him. You will believe on Him as the wisdom of God, and that, more than anything else, will make you willing to walk according to Paul's word - "If any man will be wise in this world let him become a fool that he may be wise." Let him lose his wisdom, yea, if he will save his life, let him lose it; if he will love his soul, let him lose his life and follow the Lord Jesus whithersoever He goeth. No man could find out the way from hell to heaven; it must be revealed to him and that revelation is by Christ. He sends His Spirit to give it and when you see Christ, the light, the way, the truth, and the life, then you will be willing to let go your own wisdom and your own life. When men look at Christ in the light of their own wisdom they see nothing of beauty, of desirableness that they should seek Him. No, they may say, that is a strange religion that preaches the loss of life to save it,

that preaches the loss of wisdom to be wise. Yes, O it is an abhorrence to human nature. Then if we have faith, we believe in Him as the power of God. They saw omnipotence in those water pots. The master of the feast knew it not. The disciples, they saw omnipotence in those water pots containing now wine instead of water. And if you see Jesus in His grace and have felt His grace at all you will believe in Him as able to save you unto the uttermost as you come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by Him. You will believe in the precious virtue of His blood. O what need there is of the blood of Christ on a guilty conscience day by day, hour by hour. The vile things we have, the evils that work in us, the thoughts that distract us from worship, the pride of our minds, our hearts - you can fill up any gap you who are acquainted with yourselves - what need we have of the blood of sprinkling. May the Lord give us to believe in the virtue of His blood by feeling it again and again from time to time.

And His disciples believed on Him, and to these believing disciples a little later He said "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you." And they believed on Him. He said to them - While I live, you shall live. He lives for ever; therefore they shall live for ever. He lives in heaven; therefore they are to go there. And the summer morning, as Rutherford speaks, the summer morning will break upon their vision and they will be taken to the land which is very far off, where glory dwelleth. It is a great thing to be a believer in Jesus Christ; a miracle of grace for a proud, hard, worldly soul to be delivered from these evils and corruptions and made a humble believer, a little child, to receive the kingdom of God; an empty soul to be filled out of Christ's fulness; a poor wanderer to be gathered by grace to the throne of God's heavenly grace; a vagabond, simply a wanderer. a vagrant person, without home, to be gathered home to the Lord Jesus to dwell in the secret place of the Most High to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. They believe on Him. God can make some of you who think you are unbelievers, believers in

respect of yourselves, and you can say - Why He is dear to me; He is all I need, this Jesus; all I can ask for is in Him; all I can seek is to be found in Him; all I can wish for, He possesses. Well it is a great thing to have a few believers in a congregation. Christ, comparatively, never had more than a few, but it is a wonder of everlasting love that any wretch of the human race should be found a believer in the God of grace, in the Lord Jesus. May He be pleased to enable us to believe in Him.

AMEN.