

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel Brighton by Mr J.K. Popham
on Christmas Morning 25th December 1936

“For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

A great, glorious word is this, the Arminians have taken it for themselves, and marred it, but they have not hurt it really. This word takes us to the chapter I read just now (Revelation 22 verse 1). "And He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." This is the blessed water, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," God is love. Love is of God and the greatest possible example, or manifestation of love in God, this text contains, and tells us of. "That He gave His only begotten Son." He was the Son of God, before He was given. He did not become the Son of God, by the gift of Him. It was not a person given, whose name became the Son, when He was born. He was the Son of God in eternity, and as such, in time His Father gave Him. Hold that fast, if we are wrong in regard of the Trinity, we are wrong everywhere. If we deny the Son, we deny the Father, so the Holy Ghost tells us in the first epistle of John "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (verse 22) He that hath the Son hath the Father also. I and My Father are one in essence, in their two persons on the Trinity.

The Father and the Son, these two, are revealed in the Holy Scripture, by the Holy Ghost, who is the third person in the Trinity. Not third, not second, not first, in regard to nature, but only numerically considered. May the Lord look on us and make us sober, humble, firm believers in the Trinity. It is not indifferent what we believe, in regard to the Trinity. Think of this and if nothing more were done in the service this morning than quickening our hearts, in knowledge of, and love for the Trinity, it would not be a vain thing for us to have met.

The love of God found expression. He looked on the world, as it is written in Psalm 14 "He looketh upon man, to see if there were any that did seek after God" and this is said as the result, "there is none that seeketh after God" (verse 2) "There is none that doeth good, no not one." (verse 3) That is true of all men born in this world. Each one says to God in his spirit, if not in word "Depart from us; for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21 verse 14.) And God looked on this world of enemies, a world at enmity with God, and He said, this world, this whole world of enemies, shall not die in sin, and be condemned, and punished for ever. I will take a people out of it for Myself. This is the doctrine of predestination, and out of the dead world God chose a bride for His Son. Sinners, who would become, by the Spirit of God, believers. For these God gave His only begotten Son.

The universalists and the arminians, must in the long run, make God a disappointed Being. For if He tried, as they say to make the world good, and has failed, and must fail, then He must be disappointed. It pleased God to choose a people, and give them to Christ. "Those that Thou gavest," This is Christ's own Word. "I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." (John 17 verse 12). And this His gift, is the only begotten Son. A wonderful mystery.

A profound mystery, that the Eternal God subsisting in three persons, whose names are given in the scripture as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost by the Apostle John in his first epistle says, "For there are three that bear record in heaven. The Father, the Word, (Son) and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." (chapter 5 verse 7). And they agreed that there should be a certain number of sinful people redeemed, quickened, justified, sanctified and glorified. To do this every perfection of deity must be honoured. Justice must as much delight in the salvation of sinners as mercy, and so that this should take place and be, God gave His only begotten Son. Implicit in this is the incarnation of the Son of God, that the Holy Ghost should, as told to Mary "overshadow thee: therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1 verse 35) Jesus, the Son of God, took this into union with Himself in this holy pure, virgin birth.

This begotten pure person, as Isaiah prophesied (chapter 9 verses 6 & 7) "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." This is the only begotten Son Incarnate. If we are born again, or are to be born again, one thing will be sure and certain in us, we shall know Jesus Christ. We shall know Him in such a way, as to desire Him. He is called in the scriptures "The desire of all nations" (Haggai 2 verse 7), and when that desire comes, according to Proverbs 2 verse 7. "He is a tree of life" Everyone who receives Christ, has received the Tree of Life.

"That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So that Christ according to this scripture is the proper object of faith. The faith of God's elect, the faith of God's operation, the faith that Peter calls precious faith. The proper object of faith then is Christ, that is according to my text, the test, and moreover all who have this faith are to live for ever, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life".

In my view this is a singular, beautiful scripture. It brings the matter of salvation to a great, a distinct point. If we are the Lord's people, we are believers in Jesus Christ. If we are believers in Jesus Christ, we are not to perish, but have everlasting life. What is it to be a believer in Jesus Christ? It is to have a solid, solemn heart affecting belief in His person. It is to believe that He was sent of God. It is to believe that He redeemed His people when he said "It is finished" (John 19 verse 30). It is to believe that He is the prophet of the church, the High Priest of her profession, and the King of Kings to her, in her. You may see by these remarks what a very great matter it is to be a believer. It is to be a child of God. It is to be received as a child of God. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God." "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1 verses 12 & 13).

It may be that some here may be saying, we really believe, we are believers. Some are blessed with that, they do believe, they must believe that they are believers, but often troubled, much cast down, in heavy conflict, filled with grave fears of their safety, believing that they are full of sin, knowing that they depart from God in many, many ways, day by day. Still they are believers. Faith is not always, if indeed often to be judged by feelings. If you judge your standing, according to your feelings, how often do you stand firm? But if you are enabled to judge according to the Holy

Scripture, and to what I hope to show, in this text, then though you shake, though the storms that beat, the rain that falls may frighten you, they will not move you from the Rock on which you are built. Christ is the proper object of faith. In what regards is this so?

First as regard to the great end God had in sending Him. What was that great end? This; that He should make an end of sin. That He should magnify the law and make it honourable. That He should, by His precious death harmonize every perfection of deity, with the salvation of a sinner. Now a child of God, that is to say a believer in the person of Christ is brought to realise that "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." (1 John 4 verse 9). This is the first object.

A poor convinced sinner finds the object of his faith. He is as it were shut up under the law, and in unbelief, and he is much engaged in looking at himself as in believing what God says about him. In believing in his just condemnation by the law. In believing the testimony of God concerning his nature. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up." (Isaiah 1 verse 6). That is the description that a poor convinced child of God believes in. He looks at himself. He looks at his transgressions, they are a thick cloud, and he cannot see heaven from that cloud, he cannot see mercy, through that cloud. How mercy can come to him, he cannot understand, and yet the Holy Ghost makes Christ the object of the faith of that person. Here let me say this; that divinely given faith fixes on every object God reveals to it.

That is why some tremble at the majesty of God, and think that majesty can only be honoured by condemning and damning him. Later the same faith has Jesus Christ revealed to it, and that faith lays hold of Him. "Lay hold on eternal life, where unto thou art also called," (1 Timothy 6 verse 12). Then let me repeat the words, then Christ becomes a proper object of faith, and that in these several particulars.

First as the prophet of the church. In the twenty second Psalm verse 22 Christ speaks, as you know, I will praise Thy name. "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren:" He declared that God sent Him, He declared the reason, "I speak that which I have seen with My Father:" (John 8 verse 38). He came to be the prophet, to reveal the Father's love and goodness in sending Him. He came to declare Himself to be the Good Shepherd of the sheep, the Rock of Ages. The refuge for sinners, and the wonderful and divine Redeemer of His people. Ministers are charged "to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20 verse 28). Now Christ is the object of faith in that particular. Now poor child of God, you say you are doubtful, about your interest. What have you to look on? What do you desire to believe in? In whom would you be found? On whose side do you stand in your desires, whose name, whose merits, do you plead when you pray, when you feel a hope, what is the object and ground of that hope? Now if you speak the truth concerning yourself and your exercises you will say this, though I doubt my interest, I do not doubt that Christ is the Saviour, and must be my Saviour if I escape the wrath to come.

Is not that true, of some of you here, then whosoever believeth in Him, He is the object of faith, the proper object of faith. The prayer of faith, the desire of faith, the longing of faith, the panting and hungering and thirsting of faith. He is the desire of all. That is a great point, and I would press it on

your attention, and do not think that your safety depends on full assurance; your comfort depends on that. Safety depends on having an interest in Christ. The comfort of love depends on your receiving divine revelation, the love of God in your heart. But the ground, the only ground of salvation the only object of belief, is that Christ died for the ungodly. The love of God is commended in this particular,

"But God commendeth His love (in this) toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (the ungodly). (Romans 5 verse 8). Here you will fix. He is the proper object of faith in the next place, as the High Priest of our profession. You have no sacrifice to offer God have you? What makes it very difficult for you to pray sometimes? Is it not a sense of your sins, of your sinful nature, of your departures from God? Of your unbelief, of your worldliness. You may sometimes say, how can I be a Christian, seeing I am so full of inconsistencies? How can I be a child of God, seeing I live as I do, a poor carnal creature? The Holy Ghost can let you see, beneath all that; the source of your fears is this, that you have such a vile nature. O but the object of faith is Christ crucified. The Apostle Paul sets this forth, very clearly when speaking of his own determination. "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2 verse 2). That was Paul's determination, arising out of his own experience, that Christ had redeemed him, called him, justified him, and saved him. Christ crucified was the object of his faith. Now sinner, poor believer, whenever you pray rightly you pray in the name of Jesus Christ. When you plead rightly, you plead what He did, even that He "gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Timothy 2 verse 6.) This is the object, the proper object of faith.

Then you believe in Him as the King of Kings. He not only is in heaven interceding, but He is in heaven the King of Kings. There are two names given to Him in the Revelation, in the same chapter, the first is the Lamb of God, a Lamb as it had been slain. What a sight in heaven, the Lamb of God, bearing the marks of His crucifixion. An attraction is it not, and the sight of God in heaven as having been slain as Peter says "before the foundation of the world," (1 Peter 1 verse 20) is a wonderful sight for a sinner. Oh plead Him as well as you can. There is no other plea left to you.

The second name is, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who hath prevailed to take the book, and open, and look therein, and that expresses the Kingly position and authority of Jesus Christ in heaven King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Now I ask you poor believers this, 'What King would you wish to have reigning in you, over you, and for you.' King self is abominable, is it not to you, that lordly self?

Is it not sometimes your one desire, for this wretched self to be put under your feet. The one you would have reign over you, you sometimes address in the hymn

*Reign o'er us as King, accomplish Thy will,
And powerfully bring us forth from all ill;
Till falling before Thee, we laud Thy loved name,
Ascribing the Glory to God and the Lamb.* (Gadsby's 129)

Here then in these three particulars, some of you, if you speak the truth about yourselves, will say, you do believe in the name of the only begotten Son. It does not shut out doubt and fear on many

grounds, but it does shut out all other grounds here - only one Saviour, one Redeemer, one High Priest, one King, the true proper object of faith.

Well dear friends what next, "should not perish." Should not perish in his sins, the thing he often fears.

*Dream not of faith so clear
As shuts all doubting out;
Remember how the devil dared
To tempt e'en Christ to doubt. (Gadsby's 312)*

Should not perish in his sins. There is a word which may have been good to some of you, in the Romans "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6 verse 14.) - Should not perish by the law. We have broken the law, and were it to take vengeance on us, as not being redeemed, it would be just. But a believer is not under the law, he may feel he is, he may feel its curse in his conscience. But that is because he has the life of Christ in him, and is a believer. Should not perish by the devil's temptations. "Lead us not into temptation," (Matthew 6 verse 13). Should not perish in his afflictions. These may be many, but the believer in Christ is secured, and therefore he is secure. "but have everlasting life" It is in Him and he is to enjoy it. There is a better life, than that we now are living, to come. The life of God in the soul, can never be improved, as to its nature, but to its measure.

Of the difference between our languished state here, and the fullness of life and glory hereafter. "Have everlasting life" in Him who said "I am the life" (John 11 verse 25) "Because I live ye shall live also." (John 14 verse 19). Faith unites the soul to Christ, and brings this wonderful word - everlasting life. These, says Christ, I have redeemed, these the Holy Spirit has quickened, and imparted to them My life, and because I live, their Redeemer, their High Priest, their King, they shall live also. Christ said that "Because I live ye shall live also", and the Apostle Paul says, of Christ's life "He liveth after the power of an endless life." (Hebrews 7 verse 16).

The power of life is a power to overcome and swallow up all death. No death will conquer the child of God because Christ has plagued death. "O death I will be thy plagues" Hosea 13 verse 14. The sting of death is sin, and that sting was removed by Christ, and therefore the person, the sinner for whom Christ died, shall have everlasting life.

Now if I have been enabled to make this text clear to you, you will see, the love of God to you. At least you will hope that it is His love to you that caused Him to send His only begotten Son. And that only begotten Son came freely to purchase you with His own blood. He is in heaven now. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." (John 3 verses 13). This Son of Man is the only begotten Son, "Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Timothy 2 verse 6)

May the Lord open this, and apply it to us, that we may see the profound mystery of the Incarnate Deity, and see the blessed mystery of redemption by Christ, and see the greatness of being made a believer in Jesus Christ. That 'there shall be no perishing but everlasting life.'

Amen.