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Sermon preached at Galood Chapel, Brighton, by Mr J K Popham on
Wednesday evening, 30.8.1922.

Text: Matthew 4, 24.

"And His fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them."

In the scripture which I have read this evening, there are three outstanding points to which I will briefly draw your attention. The first is in the latter part of the third chapter of this gospel in which Christ is seen to be anointed by the Spirit according to the prophecy of Isaiah. Christ said - "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the meek," and so on. The literal anointing, the coming of the Holy Ghost to Christ and anointing Him and qualifying His sacred humanity for the work which His Father had sent Him to do, to speak the words which He had heard His Father speak in Eternity, in the covenant, and to do the works which He had seen His Father do and which He was sent both to speak and to do. Christ was anointed for that very work, when, coming up out of the water, having been baptised by John, He saw the Spirit descending upon Him and heard Him say - "This is My Beloved Son." What a testimony for the man Christ Jesus to hear and receive into His heart. This gave Christ that perfect faith, perfect love, perfect hope, which you see in Him all His subsequent life of sorrows and grief and labour. In Isaiah's prophecy, Christ is there speaking thus:- "I know that I shall not be condemned. The Lord will help Me. I shall not be confounded. He is near that justifieth Me". In the Psalm He says "I have set the Lord alway before Me, for that He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." He had set before Him the path of life that He was to go through, that dark path of sorrow and vicarious death. Christ is God, but Christ is man, and His sacred humanity was anointed by the Holy Ghost, and this, if the Lord should show it to us, would invest Him as a man with a peculiar suitableness to us. May we be led to perceive it - that a man suits us men. A suffering man suits men who ought to suffer, and the Man Christ Jesus, giving himself for His people, offering Himself without spot to God, suits those for whom He so offered Himself. When you trust the Man Christ Jesus, when you follow Him, when you depend on Him, when you listen to His intercession, you depend on One, you listen to One, who is in every way suitable and able to meet your cases. Turn to this blessed One when you are sick of self. Turn to Him who has the fulness of the Spirit, when you feel empty of the Spirit, and He will give you more.

The second outstanding point is this, and much to be remarked, namely that when

the Lord Jesus was thus anointed and blessed with the oil of joy and gladness above His fellows, He was at once led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. There He had His first encounter with the god of this world, I mean open encounter, recorded for us. There He met the devil, endured the presence of that foul spirit, allowed His holy ears to be assailed with abominable suggestions of idolatry and temptation, to presumption and worldliness and there, with the Word of God, this gracious Man Jesus Christ, true Almighty God, overcame. If we are to overcome it must be through Him, and by His gift to us of His Spirit to resist the devil. Whoever attempts to resist the devil in his own strength will be immediately overcome, but whoever is enabled to resist the devil in the strength of Christ's Spirit as that Spirit is given to him in some measure, will be a conqueror, and will believe that God will shortly bruise Satan under his feet. There used to be a belief that the atonement terminated on the devil. Some of the old fathers taught this. Now it is utterly without foundation in the scripture, without any truth, but it is true that in some respects Christ had to deal with the devil, but not in a way of suffering but in a way of conquering, and when He, the dear Redeemer, ascended on high, He led captivity captive, received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell among them. Here is the ground of our hope that we shall be overcomers. Here is the ground of any confidence we may feel of one day being delivered from the foul spirit and his plagues and attempts to dwell in us and to overcome us, even that Christ overcame and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

And the third thing I would notice briefly is this, that immediately after Christ's conquest over Satan, He came into contact with him again, not in his presence, so to speak, personal presence as He had been in the wilderness, but in the presence of some who were brought to Him, and as if He would give demonstration of His great power over the god of this world, these people were permitted to be plagued sorely, grievously devilled, as it is written of the daughter of the Syrophenecian woman, tormented grievously by the devil, that the power of the Son of God should be made known and manifested in casting him out. Personal possession of the devil evidently is proved, was in the days of Christ's sojourn on the earth, and I do not doubt for myself, is today, also, an awful fact, and only one can cast him out, that is Jesus Christ. They knew Him; they seemed to have had a more clear apprehension of him than even His disciples had. At the beginning they knew Him as the Son of God, and asked if He had come to torment them before the time. They knew Him as their Master and asked permission that if He cast them out of the man He would permit them to enter into the swine. O what a Lord Christ is; what a God He is over the god of this world. King of kings, Lord of lords, is Christ.

in opening His ministry and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, I say, He came as it were again into contact with Satan, but not immediate contact, only as he dwelt in others and plagued and tormented others- and these, His works, soon began to be talked about and so, as it is in the text, His fame went throughout Syria. Whoever was so talked about as Christ? Whoever was so wrangled over and disputed about as Christ? But His fame spreads. None can hinder it. The very enemies that He has, the movements and the disputes and the talks about Him and against these, all spread His fame. He cannot be hid, as it is written of Him in one place - He could not be hid. He can never be hid. There are some others that will search Him out, some hearts that will follow after Him. and a gracious God that says it is His will that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, and do you not think that His dealing with men, afflicted men, as He did in the days of His sojourn, was typical? Do not you think that it was intended that men should have some hint and sound of what Christ was to do with the souls of sinners in what He did to the bodies of afflicted people? That, as He cast out devils by His word from men who were possessed, it would say "This is what He is to do with the souls of men?" That, as a mad-man sat at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, as he literally was brought to that, so men, poor sin- possessed and devil-possessed and devil-hunted men, should be delivered from the dominion of the god of this world, and be brought to the feet of Jesus, to sit there, clothed in His righteousness, and in their right mind, having the mind of Christ given to them by His Spirit. If this thought of mine is correct, and I think you will join with me in it, now I will leave the literal part, not attempting at all to run the parallel between this disease of the body and some disease of the soul, but take these diseases just for convenience of speaking, as setting forth an incurable condition, a case beyond the skill of all men and physicians, a soul case, and show how that such a case is brought to Christ and that Christ heals, takes the case up, and deals with it. But you may say - who is to bring the creature? If you will run that to the issue and say - Who is to bring the creature? then I will say this in answer - the Holy Spirit. He will bring, He does bring sinners to Christ, as well as reveal Christ to sinners. He is a Minister in the name of Christ, has the care of the church committed to Him, and the management of sinners is in His hand. Their steps to Christ are ordered by Him. The faith to look to Christ is wrought by Him, and their hearing about Christ, is from Him. Their views of His glory are given by Him; so if we are to notice this word - they brought unto Him these creatures, I will say the Holy Spirit brought them, brings men now, has brought some of us. His fame, a great Name, a Name above other names, a fame in men's hearts, a great fame. A fame that says to sinners, if you can get to Him, you will see something. If you can only hear Him, you will hear something and if you can persuade Him to touch

you, you will feel something. It is a fame. I would like if the Lord would so honour me a little to increase that fame in this building from time to time. He is worthy of it. Can we join the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect and sing now in our hearts "Worthy is the Lamb?" "Worthy to receive honour and glory and power, and might and majesty and dominion for ever and ever, and can we, do we, wish to join with those who harp with their harps, who sing unto Him "Worthy is the Lamb, who has washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, amen?"

Let us look then in the first place at this disease. All these diseases are in it. First of all it is the terrible, incurable to ourselves and all else, disease of the fall; the guilty fall of our father in the guilt of which we do participate. Be it denied, as men do deny it, let us stand fast here in this - "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" One of two things you must admit - either that the guilt of the fall of Adam is righteously imputed to us his children, by a righteous act, and therefore, that we stood in some relation to Adam, to make it proper for his guilt to be imputed to us, or you must deny the justice of God. The fact that we are sinners cannot be denied. How we became sinners, the scriptures teach us, and that we became sinners righteously through our union with Adam, and the imputation to us of his sin. We do not become sinners by our own personal act first of all, but being sinners, we commit sin. Born in sin, shapen in iniquity. An important word if you consider that first of all - We were shapen, created in righteousness, after the image and in the likeness of God. An important consideration this brings before us. If we were so created, what an awful thing it is to consider how we have become misshapen, horrid, void, without form or order in our being. If you confess your own participation in this dreadful fall, you will sympathise with Dr. Goodwin who says that on one night in his life, such was his conviction of partaking of the sin of Adam, that he had to rise and kneel before God, and confess that it was, as if his were the hand that took the forbidden apple. No little thing this, but here is a fallen nature. You have it, I have it. The first sin we actually did, did not constitute us sinners. It added to our guilt, but it did not make us misshapen. We were shapen . We were born before we acted, and being shapen in iniquity, we could only act iniquity. I know there are very vast questions connected with this in respect of representation and union and the justice of God, but if we are taught of His Spirit, I am sure we shall receive the testimony of the scripture and be content with that. Well, this is a disease, an awful disease. It means that we are depraved, that our utmost and our best must be sin, that our thoughts are dreadful, that there is a deep within us of iniquity; a

deceitfulness unsearchable, a wickedness desparate and beyond our management altogether, and, if you should, any of you, dispute this as a truth, just take your own case in hand if you can. Just try now to manage one thought of your own mind, arrest it, say - you are a wicked thought and I will put you out of being. Just try it and if you are sincere you will soon say, I was a fool indeed to think I could manage this, that I could do that. Well, but are we convinced? Well, what a Spirit there is to take us to Jesus Christ for this. What a Holy Spirit there is to carry in the power of a God wrought faith to the cross, such a person who says, I was born in sin, Lord sprinkle me with the blood of Christ, and grant too that I may know this, even that my life is derived from my Head. My sinful nature derived from a sinful parent now is, as it were, put down and under and superseded by another life. This is the only cure to kill the old man and as the Apostle Paul says, so may we say -"I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" and this, as we may be led into it, will show us how, that the Lord God has another Man before Him in respect of the second and the new creation. That other Man is the Man Christ Jesus, incarnate Deity, and He is before the Lord God for all His children, and it is His life that is so beautiful, so pure, which they are to have and live for ever. It is His purity in which they are to stand efectually, for sin is imputed to Him. His conquest over the devil is made theirs, and His acceptableness to his Father is theirs also. Come then, poor sinner, and see another Man representing you, see one in heaven standing for you, One whose righteousness is made over, one whose atoning blood accounts for all the forgiveness of sin that ever shall be known and enjoyed in the church of the living God.

Take next the fearful disease of indwelling sin, its work, and spreading. It is a sad subject, but it is a dreadful thing to blink at, a dreadful thing to say I am not going to think about it. He who is left to push it aside, or into a corner, declining to think about, or look at it here, will find it with him throughout eternity. It is a fearful disease though. Think of it. This is the cross that you must take up. This is the disease - the body of sin and death. If you had no other trouble in this world, nothing to perplex you or pain you, or thwart you, nothing to come right athwart your path to mortify you, doubtless you would have quite enough exclusive of other troubles. He who had many, the Apostle Paul, treats of this one in the seventh of Romans - He would do good but was hindered. He would not do evil, but was driven into it. He would fear God but could not, love Him, but was unable. Would not hate Him, but did. If you have this conflict, this burden, you know what trouble is. Is it curable? Is it curable to you? No. You know it is not. Is it curable to any? Is there any hand that can take hold of it?

Any remedy that can be applied? Is there anyone who can deliver us from the dominion of sin here and finally the being of sin? Yes, there is. This dear Lord Jesus Christ, this great and mighty Saviour. He is sufficient for it. But how can I get to Him? May the Holy Spirit show you that it is His power, and I think you will find it in the Romans to be set forth thus - "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered. He will take you to the throne of grace, give you access there; open to you the power of Christ, bring to you the blood of the everlasting covenant, and show you how that He who is exalted at the right hand of God to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, is the One who can take the case in hand." And He healed them." That is a beautiful scripture where the Apostle speaks of the weapons of our warfare not being carnal but mighty through God to the casting down of strongholds and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and the bringing into captivity of every thought unto the obedience of Christ, every thought. Five minutes of this will make an impression on your hearts never to be forgotten, and never to be erased. O the happiness of it, the peace of it, the blessedness of it. O the sweet prospect that it sets before you. What! is this that I am enjoying for these few minutes to be throughout eternity in a measure I now have no conception of? Is this to be the blessedness - that sin shall not mar my spirit? That evil shall not entangle my feet? Is it to be so? It is very sweet to find your thoughts captivated, held in sweet subjection to the Lord Jesus. A compulsion on the heart that is more acceptable than anything you can imagine. The cross effects this cure. The cross brings the peace of God, and that peace is a powerful peace, keeps the heart and mind as in a garrison. And He healed them. Every thought. A rebellious thought, "I wont have this", "I wont take up that cross" and now you say "Lord I will do it". Blessed be God for an experience of that kind. A thought that God is not kind, removed, and you say Why, He is nothing but love. A thought that you cannot hold on because the way is difficult, and you say "Lord by Thy power I can do all things." As said Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" The thought that one day you will be found wanting. That is subdued because you see union with Christ and justification in His righteousness, and cleansing from sin by His blood is sufficient for you. That, and that only, is needed for a good standing and for an everlasting conquest over death and hell and sin. A despairing thought that because the difficulties are so many and so constant and so persistent as that you are not able to take a step or draw another breath, overcome, brought into captivity to the great Christ who says "I have overcome the world. Be of good cheer". Dismay at your ignorance as you feel it, subdued. What because you now know much? No, but because you

see that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and that He has enough to give to you, so poor and so small a person. Brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Then there is the cure. When it pleases Christ to bring it, it is most sweet; the cure to all our prayerlessness. There is in us, I am sorry I know it too well myself, an awful aversion to prayer. It arises from our pride, from that awful spirit that Satan blew into the mind of our parent when he said "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." You shall not hang on Him always. You shall be independent. And that has increased in us till at last we are ready to say with Pharaoh "What profit is there if we should pray unto Him". Now this, so painful to a spiritual mind, is cured, wonderfully cured sometimes. Probably you will follow me when I say the cure comes by the Holy Spirit being poured out as the Spirit of grace and supplication upon the soul and when that is done, that also follows as in Zechariah "Thou shalt look upon Him whom thou hast pierced." Once your eyes get fixed there you will for the time say "Lord, never let them be bewitched again". "Keep them there". And as your eyes are fixed on Christ pierced, you will then pray to Him, commit the keeping of your soul to Him in well-doing. Ask Him that He would be in you in every step of life, in all the difficulties that may come to you, in the mazes of divine providence, and in the still more terrible mazes of indwelling sin; that He will help you so to walk before Him, and so to walk as that He may alone be in your view. "And He healed them" He heals the people of that.

He heals them of another trouble. He heals them of that inveterate unbelief of their nature. Happily unbelief as to its dominion is broken in every child of God as soon as some divine truth is demonstrated. There is demonstration of the Spirit in everyone born again, as, for instance, demonstration that there is a God. But unbelief as to its being, is not uprooted, though broken as to its dominion, and so sometimes the transgression of the wicked will say in your heart "There is no God" I do not know of a more vile, piercing, painful suggestion, that can ever be made in the heart of a child of God than that, but the Lord cures this inveterate spirit. He brings some further demonstration, some new touch of the Spirit, some fresh ray of light in the understanding, some sweet out-pouring of new life from Christ's fulness, and the sinner says "My Lord and my God" or if he cannot say as far as that, he says "Hear my cry O God". "Pluck Thy hand out of Thy bosom and come and save me". Again he presents his case, again he comes to the Lord with what he has, and what he feels, and what he fears. He has demonstration. So Christ cures unbelief. If unbelief impinges on some trouble, some providential

trouble

this is curable to Christ, not to self because as a rule some providence looks unkind. Some providence may seem interminable as to the affliction of it; may seem to say - Now this is come for your life, and if you so regard it, there seems then an end of hope, but the Holy Spirit comes in and says "My son, be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long for surely there is an end and thine expectation shall not be cut off" God will appear in providence. He is immutable. God will come. This shall last no longer than is for your good. This shall exercise your heart Godward. This shall cause you to pray. This shall give you errands to Him. He has fulness for your supply, power for your weakness, light for your darkness, mercy for your misery, and healing for all that now is so painful. And He healed them. He heals them of themselves. We do feel that we are poor believers, but we can never be half thankful enough to be poor believers. God make us strong in faith but if we are not strong in faith may we not deny His goodness in giving us little faith and may we also be thankful when He says "O thou of little faith." He owns faith. He ever will, because it is His own gift and work. And He healed them. He cast out devils. Sometimes the devil comes as a subtle spirit and you can hardly perceive that it is Satan working. Sometimes he comes as a roaring lion or makes violent assaults when you do not perceive that it is the enemy, but the perception is not a cure. You may see the snare, but that is not deliverance from the snare. You will want to be able to say "My soul is escaped out of the snare of the fowler". Who can meet this case but the Lord Jesus Christ. He is able for this and may we not forget that He said to the dumb spirit "come out of him" and that is all that you need, for the Saviour of sinners to say to the devil "Come out of that sinner." "Come out of that man, you have tormented him long enough: Come out of him". He may have tormented you with Atheism or with blasphemies or with horrible thoughts that you have not uttered to any creature. He may have plagued you sorely with such things. Now the cure is His own commanding voice "Come out of him."

He used to open the eyes of blind people, and that is what we need Him to do for us, for we get very blind sometimes. Blind to what is best for us, and think that if this trouble were gone it would be better, if that thing could come which we see to be so desirable it would be better. We do not know, and the cure is not the removal of the trouble, not the gift of the thing that we desire, but the opening of the eyes. It was beautiful with regard to the servant of the prophet who said when he looked round in the morning and saw the encampment "Alas master, what shall we do"? We are just as dead men. O Lord, said the prophet, "Open the young man's eyes." The prophet did not say "It is no use", or say that I know better. The other must have a stronger conviction. Lord, open his eyes, and the Lord did it. And you may have your eyes opened to see that the path God has put you

in is the best for you, that the burden you are carrying is the best burden you can have. That the way He has ordered for you to walk in is the best possible way. Then you are cured. People get a good deal of healing without losing some of the sickness. You may lose your trouble and keep it, but when Christ comes and opens your eyes you see that then you are walking in the way the Lord has ordained for you and that is the best way of all. And if you get paralysed in your faith sometimes there is a cure for this. Not in your own hand, no, but in the power of Jesus Christ. "Lord increase our faith", they said. Something seemed too much for faith and I think the Lord's people often get into such cases where they find that things are beyond them but they are not beyond the faith that Christ gives when He strengthens it so as that they can credit contradictions, talk with Him they never see. When they can laugh at impossibilities. When like Abraham with all nature dead they can believe God will make them fruitful. Then they give glory to God and the paralysis that they suffered for the time in their faith is removed. And He healed them. And as these works are done how His fame increases. His beauty increases, His love increases, His grace increases, His power increases. Not in themselves, but in the view and esteem and affections of His people. They say He is all over glorious; immortal honours rest on His head, is the language of their souls. He has come. He has done this for me, He has done that, and then each says to the other let me tell you what I have suffered and what the Lord did, how He cured me there and healed me there. His fame went through all Syria and they brought unto Him all sick people. All those who had tormenting troubles, and devils and palsy, and He healed them and may we know in a spiritual sense what it is for Christ's fame to grow by what he does, to increase in our hearts by the working of His mighty power.