

Sermon preached by Mr J. K. Popham at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Friday 10th April, 1925.

"Doth not wisdom cry and understanding put forth her voice." Proverbs 8: 1

Jehovah in the council of peace had formed a purpose of grace for the glory of His own eternal Deity, in wisdom and justice and love and power, and each Person in the adorable Trinity took part in that council, and decreed to take and perform His part in the performing, fulfilling, of that council.

The Father's part was an eternal choice of the body, the bride of Christ, the giving to His only begotten Son that numberless number that should constitute His body, His bride. And the Son received the gift, as in the 17th chapter of John, Christ said to His Father of these men – "Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me." This was in Eternity; this was the council, this was the act of the Father, the act of the Son. The act of the Father in choosing these men, giving them to His Son, and the act of the Son in receiving these men. He received them all; He knew what they would become, how that they would efface and deface that image of God in which they were created and given to Him. He foresaw all this; that every faculty of the human soul would be defiled, deformed and crushed beneath the weight of guilt; that they would be law-breakers; that they would bring themselves into such a condition that would mean eternal ruin and hell, unless they were redeemed. And this beloved and only begotten Son decreed to take these people, with all the evil and ill and death and guilt and condemnation that would become theirs, and take it on Himself. And in order for this, the Person of the Son of God said to His Father – 'Lo, I come. In the habitable part of the earth are these My people, and I rejoice before Thee in them. I come and take that body which Thou, by Thy Spirit wilt form for Me in the virgin.' And thus the Eternal Son of God became the very Son of Man. And the Spirit undertook to be with the Man and in Him, the Man Christ Jesus, indeed God. The Man Christ Jesus, as a creature, began to be when He was conceived in the virgin Mary, and in the council of peace it was decreed that the Spirit should dwell in that human nature and equip it for all the work, arduous work, which God had undertaken to do in the Man Christ Jesus. And so revelation informs us of this marvellous truth that God interested Himself in the creature to such an extent that He would give His life a ransom for them; that His infinite gaze should never be removed from them. To watch over them was His great undertaking; that His love should never depart from them, but should be their convoy, should be their help and become their comfort; that Himself would be with them so that they should say, each one for himself in time – "The Lord is my portion saith my soul, therefore will I hope in Him."

Now this God has manifested Himself. This is a truth, that if the Eternal God is to be known, it must be by revelation. God is a revealer of Himself, else He cannot be known. "Who by searching can find out God?" But God reveals Himself; He began early to do this. He revealed Himself as soon as the fall took place and man lost and ruined himself. Then in time He revealed Himself variously, and ordained that the scriptures should be written and be His very revelation of Himself; that the Bible should not only contain the words of God; but should be the very revelation of Himself – the Word, and so we have the Bible, inspired, inerrant, infallible; light to enlighten; a sword for war; a girdle for strength; bread for nourishment; a guide for the erring, slipping feet of all pilgrims. But how can this Book, in the hands of all men, become spirit and life to any person? Only by the Holy Ghost; He opens it.

In this Book we have wisdom; wisdom crying, understanding the same thing, putting forth her voice. There are many voices, many voices in the world, many voices today, voices of apostate churches

beckoning the mother of harlots, whose numberless daughters are following her today and superstitiously and blasphemously celebrating that greatest of all great events in the world's history, the crucifixion of the Son of God. But wisdom lifts her voice up and cries in the highways "O ye sons of men turn in hither, see the house wisdom hath builded, see the beasts which she has killed and the wine she has mingled," and hear the voice of Wisdom, standing on the last day, the great day of the feast, and crying - "Let him that is athirst come unto Me and drink."

The blessed Lord Jesus, during His sojourn on earth was a teacher, and a preacher, and when He opened His ministry this was what He did - He opened on that passage in the prophecy of Isaiah and read - "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This is wisdom; this is the wisdom of God.

Of this wisdom the Spirit writes by Paul - "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." This is the very Person who speaks in our text, no other than Jesus Christ; no less than the very Son of God. And in this chapter, He tells us where His heart is; He speaks of His generation; He speaks of His eternity; He speaks of Him, His Father, with whom He was before the world was, before the highest part of the dust of the earth was created. He tells us that He was then with Him, rejoicing always before Him; He tells us where His affections were, where His rejoicing was, in the habitable part of the earth. "And My delights were with the sons of men."

Time is nothing here; the church is one and her continuance is in the scriptures. The scriptures were written during the course of generations. They are written for this day. Remember that the church is one and that whatever is written is written for our learning and that, when Christ speaks, He speaks thus. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." This is His voice; this is His voice, reaching down the ages to this day, which has come to some in this chapel - mystery, mercy, wonder; wonder of love; wonder of grace. The continuity of the Scriptures and the continuity of the church you may say must be very beautiful in the sight of God, and may it be so in our heart. Christ has lifted up His voice to give certainty of redemption to all who look for it. He has lifted up His voice and told us this - "That all flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof fadeth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever." And the Apostle Peter quoting that passage in his first Epistle says "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever." What is that Word? The voice of Wisdom.

"The Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you." To the strangers then scattered abroad, and to sinners in Galilee this morning, whose eyes are wet sometimes with tears of sorrow, who realise their mortality, who believe that their comeliness is as a fading flower, and who look for redemption in Him who is the Redeemer and for righteousness in Him who is the righteousness of His people, Wisdom lifts up her voice.

"Doth not wisdom cry?" This is a very arresting question; the opening of this wonderful chapter, this chapter that in a sense is culminating, a culminating word, gathering wisdom up all through the Proverbs into the very Person of Him who is Wisdom, Jesus Christ.

"Doth not Wisdom cry?" Let us attend a little, as enabled to what Wisdom says, not in a hesitating whisper, but in a great cry, that shall enter the hearts of sinners. It says this, a wonderful word; addressing His Father, the everlasting Son says to Him – "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not; burnt offering and offering for sin Thou didst not desire", because He knew that they could not satisfy infinite justice; they could not bring a conformity to the holiness of God in any sinner; they could not make the sinner's salvation consistent with the glory of God. Therefore God did not, for that purpose, desire them. For the purpose of Israel, as a type, He did desire and ordain and command them, but for salvation He did not desire them.

What then? O cries Wisdom in the ears of His Father – "A body hast Thou prepared Me. I delight to do Thy will. Thy law is within My heart." So flew the Son of God from heaven to earth; He who 'was' before His incarnation, became man; He who was in His Father's bosom in Eternity, came to the womb of the virgin in time, to take up that body which the Holy Ghost had created there. This is Wisdom; this is the Wisdom of God in a mystery. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard what things God hath prepared for them that love Him, but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." "We speak," says Paul, "the Wisdom of God in a mystery." The Wisdom of God which is perfect, but which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." This is that blessed person of whom they said, when He was doing God's work and will, "He hath a devil." They sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, imputing to the agency of the devil these works which the Lord Jesus did by the Holy Ghost.

"I come, I come from My throne, from My Father's bosom," He says. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And when that was true that He said "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"; when He had obeyed the law with perfect obedience for those whose wicked weakness forbade their doing it; when He had gone to the end of the law rendering it all the honour it claimed, rendering it an honour which He alone was capable of rendering it; when He had fulfilled it in its every jot and tittle, there yet remained one thing, one thing for Him to do.

He said to His Father – "A body hast Thou prepared Me." What was to be done with this sacred Person? What would He do with Himself? Having, with infinite pain and skill, wrought out that perfect obedience, what remains for Him to do? Give His life a ransom for many. And so, when they had taken away His judgment, they led Him away to be crucified, and they crucified Him and two others with Him, two thieves, the one on the right-hand and the other on the left. They crucified Him and they mocked Him; they scorned Him; they proclaimed their unbelief and their infidelity and their enmity when they said "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe Him." There, fixed to that cross, was the Son of God. And when all things were accomplished in and upon Him as there transfixed; when He knew that wrath to the uttermost had been poured out into His soul and into His bones like fire; knew that now there remained no more curse for Him to endure, He said, "It is finished." And we are told that He cried with a loud voice – "It is finished." Doth not Wisdom cry here? What was finished? Daniel tells us - He finished transgression; He made an end of sin. That was the finish; that was the work.

"It is finished." And if enabled I would call your attention for a short time to something of what that

solemn, mighty and wonderful word contains. Transgression was finished. What is transgression? It is breaking the law, doing what God told us not to do. Breaking through the hedge, the serpent of death bit us. Going against that which reveals God's nature and His will, that is transgression. This transgression committed by all, even by the elect, as well as others, God must punish; He must punish sin. He necessarily hates sin; may we believe it. It must be punished. Bless God that He contrived a way in His wisdom and love and in His power made that way, cast it up, wherein the principal in the matter, the transgressor himself, should escape and the person of a Surety suffer in his stead.

Transgression is relative; it relates not only to the transgressor, but to God. It is against His law, against His justice, against His goodness. All that beneficence which God manifested in our creation, and our law, we despised and trampled underfoot, and now the transgression is taken away from those who committed it, and laid on Him who said "Lo, I come to do Thy will O God; Thy law is within My heart", and transgression was visited on His holy soul. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." This was finished. His obedience was to the law, and His Father in the law, and the curse poured like fire into His bones. Was it that which He had to endure for our escape? So transgression was finished; sin was finished in respect of those for whom He stood and for whom He died. Sin was finished; He made an end of it. An end of it means that it will never rise against those who the Saviour died to redeem; it means that the law will never accuse them as in the sight of God, that it will never be a hell in their consciences, a fire in their bones, a punishment running through eternity. It was finished, finished, an end made of it. He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; He hath made an end of it; He hath perfected for ever them that were sanctified; sanctified by the Father and given to Him to redeem.

Perfected for ever. It means therefore that there is now made a new and living way and this new and living way has a double relation; it has a relation to the Father; you could never get to God by the old way. The expulsion of a fallen Adam from Eden meant this in type – no more approach to a Holy God for sinners and by sinners in that way. That awful death we died meant that we should never, in the old way, find access to God. It has this relation also to us, that God can never come to us in that way, and this is terrible; He can never bless you in the law. The law is not made for a righteous man and when it deals with a sinful man all it can say to him is that he shall be punished according to the terms of the covenant which the man has broken, so God can never bless you in the law. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Sinner, never look for God in the law; if you find Him in the law it will be an eternal ruin to you. If you never find Him near to you till eternity comes, you will just have, if I may say so, one minute and an eternal banishment. But now, Christ has become a new way, and this new way has the double relation; it has the relation to a sinner that he may come.

Yes, Wisdom lifts up her voice and cries in the great day appointed of God for the feast of the gospel – "Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And this voice goes out by the servants of the Most High God Himself commanding them - Go into the highways and hedges and when you meet poor cripples and blind persons and persons who are so ragged that they are ashamed to be seen, tell them of a palace, a house which Wisdom has builded; tell them of the sacrifice that has now

been prepared, and of wines, and when they, in their sense of evil and sin and rags and shame and crippled condition, say we are not worthy, and we are not able, compel them to come in; tell them of a good God, so good that He gave His only begotten Son for them; so good is this Son that He gave Himself for them; so good is the Spirit that He wont let them perish for lack of grace to come; He gives them all they need.

This is the voice - "It is finished"; no bar remains. I say, sinner, the gospel is for sinners; the gospel is for sinners; it is a sinner's gospel, not a gospel of a Pharisee. It is a sinner's gospel, and a sinner's gospel is a gospel that suits his condition, his want, his weakness, his emptiness, his guiltiness, his fears, his rags, his pollution. It is a sinner's gospel and a sinner's gospel is this; it is without money and without price. So the poor shall not perish in their poverty, and the polluted shall not die in their pollution and the guilty shall not die in their guilt, because this blessed gospel says - "Without money and without price." And then it says to a poor creature, quickened, but very legal, who is saying to himself: "What shall I do to please God", O it says this is the work that will please God, that you believe on Him whom He hath sent. This is what will please Him. And who gives that faith? Jesus, who is the author as well as the finisher of faith. And when He is the author of faith in a sinner, that faith goes out to the Saviour and says - 'Foul I to the fountain fly; naked, I come to Thee for dress; helpless, I look to Thee for grace; poor, I look to Thee for wealth; dead, I look to Thee for life, and come this way.'

Wisdom cries out. O yes, there are so many deaf people, they must have this cry of Wisdom; it sounds in their hearts; it goes beneath their ear; an outward ear may not hear it; a person may be so situated as not to know the gospel outwardly, and yet this voice gets right into their hearts; there it performs and there it purifies the heart.

Doth not wisdom cry "It is finished." The double relation then is this, that there is a way to the Father for sinners, and there is a way to sinners for the Father. I will come and they shall be received by Me. "If a man love Me My Father will love Him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." O, but, says a sinner, I am not worthy that He should come to me. The Archangel is not worthy, the whole host of heaven is not worthy. The heavens are not clean in the sight of God. What creature is worthy of the infinite God to come and consort with him? O but Jesus is a new way and the Father comes to him, and Christ comes to him, and the Spirit comes to him. So when we look at this new way, may we be enabled to believe in the double relation it has to God and sinful men. A way for them to go to Him. A way for Him to go to them.

And wisdom cries in the scriptures. Wisdom cries in invitations, and these reach sinners. That is a beautiful word in Matthew, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." What love the Saviour shows to poor, troubled, sinful creatures, labouring with sin and against it; labouring under guilt and with many fears, He says: "Come unto Me." You can never get relief in yourselves; no creature can give you relief except I use a creature as means. I alone efficiently can help you; My bosom shall be your repose; My love shall be your comfort; My blood shall be your cleansing; My righteousness shall be your justification. "Come unto Me", Wisdom cries, and unbelief will stop your ears, and you may say, I cannot believe it. When the voice of Wisdom penetrates through unbelief, then faith listens. "Hark my soul, it is the Lord", and you begin to listen. Berridge puts it in his own way tersely - "My soul is in my ears", and you will always find it so, whenever the

dear Saviour drops in an invitation, your soul comes into your ears and you listen. "Speak Lord for thy servant heareth." A beautiful speaking it is.

"Doth not Wisdom cry." Wisdom knows how to speak; Wisdom has skill; skill is the application of wisdom. The skill of Christ is a very wonderful thing. He can speak, He does speak to cases. I speak to a congregation; Christ speaks to individuals. He speaks to their hearts, touches their cases. He brings them to His footstool. He says, "Come unto Me." How can I come? The Father will draw. "No man cometh unto Me except My Father which hath sent Me draw him." What then? "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." The drawing is internal; it is felt; it is peculiar; it is softening; it is humbling; it is penetrating. It is beautifully spoken of by Hosea, where the Lord, speaking by the prophet, says "I drew thee with cords of love, with the bands of a man." God will never draw you except by the bands of the Man Christ Jesus; His eternal love; His sweet suitability; the suitability of His human nature, His precious death, His compassion, and His love, and as these are cast round about a trembling, fearing sinner, who dares hardly to lift his eyes to heaven, he finds the sweet power of it, and he is drawn.

He comes, He cannot but come, though he fears to come, because of his sins. He speaks to a guilty conscience; Wisdom knows how to do it. You object; you set up the thorns and briars of your sins, of your guilt against Him and you say – How can I expect God ever to come to me? Says the Lord "Who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle, I would go through them. I would burn them up." He will burn every objection of your legal heart, burn all up; wont listen to one of them. What will He say to a guilty conscience? If God, an absolute God, should speak to any guilty conscience, it would be eternal death, but if the Man Christ Jesus, in His precious blood, speaks to a guilty conscience, this is what He says – "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions and as a cloud thy sins." That is Wisdom's way, and a wondrous way, an efficacious way, a glorious way it is for Wisdom to take. It goes straight to the case and says, all you have done against Me, all the blasphemies you may have thought or spoken against Me, all your turning aside from Me, your birth in sin, your life in unregeneracy, your unbelief of Me, I blot all out as a thick cloud, a thick cloud that would not let you see the sun, that admitted not a ray of the sun to reach you. I have blotted all out.

"Doth not Wisdom cry?" Wisdom hath cried, in some of our hearts that very truth – "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions." Wisdom says this too – All this mercy is consistent with justice. "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Wisdom cries out, O sinner, you need not fear, justice is on your side; holiness is on your side; the Trinity is on your side; all, all is finished. "I am thy God." Wisdom cries this, cries it in the heart, makes the sinner believe it, brings a witness into the conscience.

I must say a word or two more. Wisdom cries to troubled people; it cries concerning their enemies, the chief, the arch-enemy, Satan, and it says, "God will bruise him under your feet shortly." O you say, I have sold myself to him. The covenant with death God will disannul. Then many enemies rise up. Says the Lord "I will bruise all under your feet." Troubles come, afflictions come, and friends may come to you and be about as wise as Job's friends were; irritate and trouble you. Wisdom sends an Elihu and an Elihu says "He looketh upon men, and if there be any that say 'I have sinned and perverted that which was right and it profited me not', then is He gracious unto him and saith deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." He speaks to your troubles; speaks to your troubled mind, speaks to your circumstances. Reflect on this; Wisdom knows how to do it.

Peter has a beautiful word on this point - "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

Doth not Wisdom cry in the scriptures, on the cross, in the ministry, by the Holy Ghost. Wisdom cries; fools stop their ears, but some have their ears opened. The seeing eye and the hearing ear, the Lord hath made both of them. He will not speak in vain. His voice penetrates. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty; the voice of the Lord is powerful, so that when He directeth it under the whole heaven, it reaches the objects. He sent out a word and it lighted upon Jacob. He is wise in the word and He is wise in the direction of the word to the particular object. "I love them that love Me", says Wisdom. I will make them all to inherit substance; their poverty shall not destroy them. Solomon says - "The poverty of the poor is his destruction", but there are some poor people who die in their poverty, to whom is given everlasting riches. Durable riches and righteousness are with this great One and He gives them.

May we listen to Wisdom; may Wisdom talk with us by the way. Then we shall not stumble. May it please God to grant to us to hear what He says in His great Word, and on the blessed, glorious cross. Glorious, as revealing the perfection of God; His hatred to sin; His love to the church, the church He purchased with His own blood.

AMEN.