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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening 24 August 1924

Psalm 119 v 144

The righteousness of Thy testimonies is  
everlasting, give me understanding  
and I shall live

I desire to add to the observations which I made this morning on justification, two or three more remarks which appear to me to be, perhaps if not necessary, seasonable. The doctrine of justification can never be exaggerated with respect, either to its nature or, to the subjects of it. It is all important, it is all covering. If we are not justified persons we are condemned persons, under God's displeasure, under His curse. And what I would now say is this, justification in the first place requires a law, a standard, a measure, a statute, that is to say, a limitation. It requires a law that enquires into conduct, into the conduct of the heart as well as of the hands and the feet. It goes into the affections - "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself". Justification requires a sinner, yes it requires a sinner. The law approves, without trial, a person who is perfect. It can, it does, it must, bless a perfect person. It cannot enter into any controversy with him. It cannot find any fault with him who is weighed and found sufficient, measured and found right, tested and found that the test is not too much for him who bears it. But when justification comes then there must be a sinner. He has broken the law, he has broken through the statute, he has transgressed, he has overstepped the divinely given boundary. His affections have become wild, his worship is idol worship. His ways are wrong, his thoughts are evil, his affections are warped, his will is twisted into perverseness against God. Justification requires a court; yes, there must be a court, not set up by the sinner, but by the judge, by the law, and there must be witnesses in the court. No one witness against a man is sufficient. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every matter be established. And the process is very solemn,

for the law states its claim upon the person who is there, and the witnesses against him are his filthy rags, his guilty, but quickened conscience, the holy Word of God, heaven and earth which have witnessed his sins, the Holy Spirit in his heart. These, the Word, heaven and earth, conscience, and thoughts, these all bear testimony against the sinner. There is no escape for the man from the court; he is there. There is an adversary there too. Satan, an adversary; the devil, an accuser; the accuser of the brethren. Now this matter is to be settled. The decision does not rest with the sinner, that is obvious. He has no excuses, he has no self-justification. His mouth is closed, his heart is condemned; it condemns him. The law condemns him. What is to be done with him? In the court there comes another, an Advocate, the Lord, who is in a position to say to the accuser, dealing first with him, "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan, even the Lord which hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Then this Advocate is in a position to turn to the sinner, clothed with filthy garments, and to those about Him, His ministers and servants, and to say to them "Take away his filthy garments, remove them," and say to him "there is a change of raiment". And the man's case is settled, not by himself, but by his Judge, of whom we read that God justifieth the ungodly through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and this justification will stand eternally. It is in Christ, it is by Christ, it is for the sinner, it is for the glory of God. Heaven shall sound forth the praises of the Justifier by the justified through eternity. Now brethren this doctrine is not a letter, naked and empty, it is a divine truth, and you must know something about it, if you are to go to heaven. Natural religion wont help you, naked knowledge wont help you. A general profession and an expressed approval of what the doctrine is wont help you. Only God, the Holy Ghost, according to the righteous testimonies of the Scripture, can bring this matter into your hearts, and make you know that that wonderful process of the law - and you must go through it - ends in your justification, your righteous acquittal, God Himself having nothing to say against you. The law being on your side, and looking on you, as clothed in a pure garment, as absolved from all charges, must say that it approves of your discharge. That doctrine is heaven. That doctrine will bring you, as you know it, into felt union with God, for the righteousness is Christ Himself and you, receiving Him for your justification, must be in union with God.

"This is the Name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our righteousness." And the transference is so complete, so wondrous, as that this is the Name whereby she, the church, shall be called, the Lord our righteousness. Christ and the justified are one. His wonderful righteousness justifies so that she is His body, He is her Head. She is His wife, He her husband. "As He is so are we in this world". "That they all may be one", a just Christ and a just sinner, no longer a sinner. A just Christ fulfilling absolutely the law which the unjust sinner had broken and the sinner completely justified and made just, standing on equal ground and terms throughout eternity. O my brethren may the Lord bring this to you, bring it to me. You say, it is too high. No, it is not, because the Spirit can bring you to it. You say, it is too great for you to apprehend it and embrace it and love it and praise Him who brings it to you, This is the one doctrine which I would for the moment press on your attention. Have you had understanding given to you in it? Have you entered a little into the beauty and the blessedness of it or have you so seen it as that, though you stand without, guilty, and forlorn, and wretched, you are not hopeless? Do you feel a little hope in it? Then I would say - rather I quote Hart to you -

Urge thy claim through all unfitness  
Sue it out, spurning doubt,  
The Holy Ghost's thy witness

It wont be long before our external religion will stop, before my preaching ends and your hearing ends. It wont be long with me, of course, naturally. It must come soon as I have stood in this pulpit now, in another month, for 42 years as the poor minister of this people. My ministry must come to an end soon and then my life, and your hearing will cease to hear, and then we shall come to this, how do we stand? Now if we are born again, we are at it today. How do we stand? What ground of hope have we? What reason have we to think that God is kind and favourable to us? What reason have we to think He wont reject and spurn us and banish us from the glory of His presence for ever?

This doctrine is so beautiful and you see it is done on and for and in the sinner. That is how the case stands. No decision \_

rests with him, he is the culprit, he is charged, he confesses the charges to be just and now the case stands thus - will God acquit me? Can He justify me? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Now may the Lord bless you. It came strongly into my mind this afternoon when seeking His face about this service to say these things to you, to refresh your memories, to stir up the pure minds of the godly and to testify to those who are not concerned that, unless they are justified they must perish for ever. "Give me understanding and I shall live".

Next, and following this, give me understanding in the matter of worship. You may think this is an unnecessary thing for me to take up, but I think otherwise. To me worship is very important; it is in the Scriptures. The chapter which I read shows the importance of worship, the great importance of it. The Jew must take the sacrifice to God. He has a field; he says I will worship in this field, I will kill my sacrifice here. Says God, you must not do it. If you do then I will cut you off. There is a place I will choose, thither you must go with your sacrifice. The place where I will put My Name, there you must worship. Three times a year you must go up, all you males, you must go up, and if you fear enemies, if you think some of the tribes about you will make incursions, will take away your wives and children and substance while you are away, I promise you this, no man shall desire the land. These thieving tribes about you shall not so much as cast one desire to the land whilst you are away. Worship is solemn, worship is spiritual, worship is pure, when real. I am disposed to say that I believe it could be manifested from the sacrifice that, whenever a person is drawn by the Holy Ghost into spiritual worship in respect of any matter, in that matter that person is right. He may be deceived about many things, but in any matter in which he is brought to real, spiritual worship in Jesus Christ, there he is right, and if you are enabled diligently to follow up this, I believe you will find that it is so according to Scripture.

Worship God then in His Son,  
There He's love and there alone  
Think not that He will, or may,  
Pardon any other way

in any other way commune with you. Worship is very solemn and when under the influence of the Spirit a sinner worships, his whole soul, in the faculties of it, is engaged. His understanding, his will, his affections, his reverence, godly fear, they are all engaged. The sinner is prostrate. Worship is the reverence of an inferior due to a superior, and the worship of a sinner is the worship of his humble soul in and through Jesus Christ, where he sees the God of all grace, omnipotence, justice, mercy, truth, life, light, power, sufficient supplies. He sees everything that he can admire, adore, love, depend on and draw from. He sees all in Christ, and his will goes out in acts of worship. In worship there is confidence. You can trust Him you worship. You can trust his power to defend and support you, you can trust his faithfulness to help you. You can trust His mercy to pardon you. You can trust His blood to cleanse you. You can trust His robe to justify you. You can trust His wisdom to guide you. In worship there are, at times, such solemn feelings that you cannot express. You go out to the Lord and speak to Him when you have no word to utter. "Groanings which cannot be uttered" are in worship. The feelings of your soul may be too deep and too acute for words. You just, as it were, prostrate yourself before a holy, eternal, Three One God. In worship there is a committing yourself - "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit". There is a committing of all to Him; what you are, where you are, what you have, what troubles, what mercies, what difficulties you have. These you commit into His hand. If the body is afflicted, if the circumstances are afflicted, if the family is afflicted, if the church is afflicted, you draw out, under the power of the Holy Spirit, your soul. You worship God in committing these troubles and matters to Him. And is not this according to the testimonies of the Word of God? Yes - "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass". "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". "Roll your burdens on Me, I will sustain you". "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you." "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." All this brings worship, my friends, solemn, real, holy, acceptable worship in the beauty of holiness. You hate evil when you worship the Lord. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil", every evil way, and you really

believe what is in this Psalm "Concerning Thy precepts in all things I esteem them to be right" Everything is right that God is, that He does. Everything is right. And that beautiful passage may be with you sometimes, "Thou most upright dost weigh the path of the just". He weighs it up, numbers the hairs of your head, watches over you with the care that He speaks of, much more than of sparrows. "Not one sparrow can fall to the ground without your heavenly Father". "Ye are of more value than many sparrows". Concerning these testimonies, do we not esteem them in all things to be right? Give me understanding. Did you ever understand worship? How many people pray without worship, that is to say, they do not pray. They do not forget their sins when they worship. You say, surely that would disturb them. No, not when they are under the Spirit's power, for when they truly worship in and by Jesus Christ, they confess their sins. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity", says the Lord. "If we confess our sins". How sweet is confession, to us. Some of my sweetest moments have been in confessing my sins. You are not far from a sin forgiving God when you can worship Him and confess your sins and bemoan your condition and groan under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Give me understanding. How understanding will draw you out, how it will make you cleave to and follow after this good God. Dear friends, it is a great thing to be a worshipping person. No matter where you are, if you have this Holy Spirit in you you will be worshipping. Yes, you can be in a crowd, not voluntarily, you wont at least remain in it, but you can be engaged in something which involves your being in a crowd. You may be engaged in matters which, of themselves, have some distracting influence in them, and yet, with this Holy Spirit prevailing, prevailing over the distractions, your spirit is quiet, there is a holy calm in your soul. Your circumstances may be very turbulent and painful but there is a holy calm and you worship God. And when you worship Him, you have a good many things to ask of Him, have you not? Lord, do hold me up. I am too weak to stand alone. Mercifully guide me, I am too foolish to know what to do, or which way to take. Teach me lest I should wander out of the way of understanding, and enter into the congregation of the dead. Teach me the Trinity, teach me the truth, teach me the doctrines of divine grace which are in the Scriptures. Teach me what I need to know. Teach me how to pray, how to believe, how to live, how to fear Thee, and how to walk with Thee, and how to walk with Thy

people. How to treat the Scriptures, how to deal in providence, how to walk in the midst of perplexities. Teach me. "That which I see not teach Thou me". And all this is inside that little word "worship". Does the Lord give us understanding in it? Happy the man, blessed the man, who really worships Jehovah as revealed in the Lord Jesus. What humility is here, what simplicity is here, what singleness of eye, and consequently what a fulness of light there is in the body. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light". And sometimes what a voice is heard in your heart when you worship, what a voice when your gracious God and Saviour tells you not to fear, when He says, "This is the way walk ye in it". When He promises never to leave you nor forsake you. When He opens something of the riches of His grace, when He lets down some solid piece of heaven into your desolate heart. He does these things. The Scriptures declare them, experience says it is so. I, in my own very small measure, know that it is so. Yea, worship will stretch itself to heaven and make you say "To glory take me in, for there I long to be". Sometimes, yea, it will stretch itself to the blessed living fountains of waters, where Christ is, yea, which He is, and ask that the day may come, and even soon, when He will lead you to these fountains of waters, that you may thirst no more, and that God will wipe all tears from your eyes. How many worshippers are there here? And, come to service, you may worship. I am of the opinion that where the Holy Ghost is the entire service is worship. When you sing solemn words, you want reverently to sing them, humbly to worship Him who is in them, and when the Scriptures are read you want to follow them in a spirit of faith, and to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in them, there is worship, and if one preaches under the influence of the Spirit, by some gracious anointing and says right things, says the thing that is right of God, and you want to receive these words rightly, there is worship for there is prayer that the words may come in the power of the Spirit and be made spirit and life in you and to you. My brethren think of these things and may you be exercised about worship, both alone and here, wherever you are, worship, for that pleases God. He is a Spirit and He will be worshipped and He seeks that men should worship Him in spirit and in truth. One word more here. In this worship is holiness, true holiness, not some imagined holiness in your feelings, not something that you can work in yourself, but that which comes from the Holy Spirit, from His divine touch, His heavenly touches, and

from the rich grace which He brings into your hearts by and from Jesus Christ.

O the blessedness of holiness. I do feel that it is a great thing to realise, in a measure, what holiness is. And if you were to ask me to describe and set out holiness, I would say it is a spiritual conformity to the holy, the revealed will of God in Christ. And following it is a true conformity in your conduct to the revealed will of God respecting conduct. Holiness. It is being apart. God is Holy, and the seraphims sing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts," infinitely removed from everything that is imperfect. Now when worship is in the soul, though there is such imperfection as to make those who worship God ashamed, yea, sometimes distressed at the thought of their unholiness, there is, when they worship, as they worship, insofar as they worship, a separation from all that is unclean, unholy. But I must not linger here. It is a beautiful subject, and if what I have said upon it, should invite your attention and draw out your desires, I shall not have spoken in vain.

Now the testimonies of God respecting His people are pure, and we need Him to give us an understanding in them, and as to how we are to conduct ourselves. His testimonies are very clear. There is no relationship in life that a Christian, a true child of God, can sustain, about which the Scripture is silent. This, you know, as readers of your Bibles will know well. It comes to all relationships in life. It tells the husband to love his wife, and the wife to see that she reverence her husband, and according to God's institution, obey him. It tells the father not to provoke his children lest they be discouraged, and the children are to honour their father and their mother that their days may be long in the land. And the Apostle says that these things are to be attended to, that whether we eat or whether we drink, we are to do all to the glory of God, that the ministry and the life of the people be not blamed and that we give no offence to the Gentile. He disgraces his profession who openly makes a breach in these holy precepts. He bids the master rule in the fear of God, and he is to pay proper wages. O would not the Scriptures, if they were attended to and believed, break up all the discontent and melt it away as between masters and servants. May we here, as a body of people, follow those precepts and if those of you who are masters



attend to the precepts properly your servants will be satisfied. And it tells the servants how to obey. The present spirit of the day is an old spirit. We read in Job that the servant earnestly desired the shadow. He had not his watch so he put up a stick in a certain position, a stick on which the sun would come at a certain hour and cast its shadow and he earnestly looked for it, that he might cease his labour. Says the Scripture, "Servants obey your masters". The Lord give you understanding in these things. It speaks to spiritual people. It speaks to some who may be offended and tells them to forgive. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses". That professor and that church that would withhold a requested forgiveness will find sooner or later the displeasure of the heavenly Father. Depend upon it it is true - If your brother offend you and turn again and say I repent, forgive him. If he do so seven times in a day forgive him. "How often", says Peter, "how often shall I forgive my brother, till seven times seven?" How the Lord astonished him and the disciples when he said "not seven times only but seventy times seven". O what a stretch of faith we need, O what grace we need, but I say again, if we do withhold forgiveness when it is requested, when repentance is manifested, then we are against the Lord and against His blessed Word. "Give me understanding and I shall live".

The Lord has promised perseverance to His people. Now you may say, I believe that. Ah, and you may turn the promised grace into lasciviousness. But if you understand it, if you realise that your strength lies in your weakness, that "by your weakness you shall prove that Christ is strong", you wont be offended with weakness, you wont be offended with that sense of inability to stand that you have in your heart. You will say, this is Christ's way by which I am to prove His strength. Then you will be fitted to enter into the spirit of Paul who says "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". You can do everything that way, take up every cross. Every burden you can bear, every difficulty you can face. You can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you; not otherwise. We need an understanding heart. How pleased the Lord was with Solomon when he asked for an understanding heart. "Thou hast not asked for riches nor the life of thine enemies but hast asked for a wise and understanding heart". I will give thee this as well as

riches and all other things. If you can ask the Lord for a wise and understanding heart, to enable you to walk in the midst of your perplexities, to carry your burdens, to humble yourselves under His mighty hand, all will come out well. Yes, all will come out well. I am not afraid of proving a false prophet to you when I say that. "God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble". "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God". You have a tempting devil and a heart that soon catches the spark that he strikes by temptation. And the Scripture says, resist him. The Lord give thee understanding in this. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". I cannot, says one. If the Lord give thee understanding thou wilt understand what to do. What is that? Not to mock lightly, not to lightly laugh at the devil, but to say "The Lord rebuke thee O Satan." The Archangel had no mocking, light word for the adversary, but that was it "The Lord rebuke thee". You will find the devil too much for you if you try your own strength against him. You are no match for him, either in logic or power. But if you are weak enough to pray, if you are ignorant enough to call on God, if you have faith in the Lord Jesus, if you can look to and plead and put Him in mind of His promise - "The Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly", you will come off well. So in all things, according to the Scripture, the precepts, the Word of the living God, the precepts are right in all things; therefore call upon Him. Give me understanding in all things. You may look at the word "Whether ye eat or whether ye drink do all to the glory of God", and you may say, well I think I will try that and go on in some little way. What a mistake you make. But if the Holy Spirit helps you to enter into the word and shows you how that in all things in your life, the things that daily come to you, and with which you have to deal, that in those things, if there be faith, if you can cast yourself on the Lord in those things, and do them as unto Him, that is to His glory. But we need an understanding, we need understanding, we need to appreciate, we need spiritual intelligence given to us by the Lord in order that we may enter into these things. Some may say, well, but they are beyond us. If you are children, do not try to be men. It is unseemly for a little child to try to talk as an old man. "When I was a child" says Paul, "I thought as a child, I understood as a child, I spake as a child". Now, while you are children, walk according to that rule. Beg that you may grow, grow downward, strike the roots of faith into the soil of faith, into the grace of Christ,

into the Person of Christ and His precious work, and then you will bear fruit upward, you will grow and the day will come when you will say, certain things I heard when I was a child, certain things I read in those days, I could not enter into. Now I see them. While there are some things my old minister said fifty or sixty years ago which I thought I did not understand, now I see his wisdom and hope I understand a little of what he intended. So, do not be impatient, if you do not know all. Go on begging, go on asking, go on asking according to this word "Give me understanding and I shall live."

And what is it to live? It is to have the favour of God; it is to be in His sight "accepted in the beloved". It is to have the Holy Spirit in you, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It is to have the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon you. It is to be one with Christ. It is to be in His blessed Person by union, in His atonement by interest, in His righteousness by justification. It is to have His power resting on you. May the Lord help us to regard this great Word. He will, I trust and believe, pardon all the imperfections of my poor utterances and if He is pleased to take the substance and make it over to you, and show you how that you can, though foolish and ignorant in yourselves, be made wise unto salvation so that you may beg and beg and yet beg - "Give me understanding and I shall live", it will not have been in vain that we have taken up this subject and thought about it today. May the good Lord hear us and be with us, for His great Name's sake.

AMEN.