

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 10 February 1929

Psalm 36 v 9

For with Thee is the fountain of life: In Thy light
shall we see light.

It is a terrible thing to be sinners. If there is anything that may be said to be more terrible than sin it is to live in ignorance of it. I got two things one night when unwell. I have lived a good deal of late in looking back on a long life, a long profession, and on the particular night I refer to I was engaged in looking back with shame on my misspent, unprofitable life. Then I got, in the light of God, such a sight of sin as He sees it, as it is in His holy sight. Not actions, but sin. Not sinful ways, but sin in one's nature, and I said, Lord I cannot bear it. You can look on wrong actions and have remorse but you cannot look on sin as God sees it and bear very much of it. I said, Lord I cannot bear it. I believe black despair would quickly swallow up a sinner if he saw sin as God sees it and got no relief, but I got relief. Almost instantly, the precious blood of Christ was shown to me and I began to bless God for that blood. You may never glory in a good life but you may glory in the blood of Christ, that precious blood, that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. I would say to any poor troubled people here, do not expect to find one little spot of your nature untouched, undefiled and guiltless. But O, if, while looking at yourselves as sinners in the light of God, it is given to you to see the precious blood of Christ, then you will believe that you are as spotless, innocent and pure as the Son of God. "As He is so are we in this world". If it should please God to come and cut my testimony short now, remember what I have said to you, remember that you will never see yourselves, if you are taught of God, other than most guilty. But if you see the blood of Christ you will see yourselves washed throughly from your sin and cleansed from your iniquity. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile". We have to do with God and He will have to do with us sooner or

later. The mystery is this, and the mercy, that He comes to His people in His Son and speaks peace to them, and brings the everlasting gospel, and I judge that we have that gospel in the text. "With Thee", the blessed God, "is the fountain of life". Here let us not divide the Trinity, Three Persons each possessing the same nature, the same eternity, the same power, the same glory. This God, in Himself, is the fountain of life, of natural life. God formed Adam of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul. Hence our immortality. Evolutionism will never live. When God judges men they will know Him to be their Creator. Our natural life is from Him. Our natural motions and activities are from Him. Here we have to separate being from sin. I would be thankful, and so ought you who know the Lord to be thankful, that sin is separable from a sinner. Man was made without sin and he can subsist eternally without sin and the church shall so subsist. Yet we ought to acknowledge God to be our Creator and our preserver. It is "in Him we live and move and have our being". Remember this dear hearers, your life depends on Him from whom it came, and spiritual life is in Him as in the fountain. God has given this life to His Son that He may communicate it to His church, His body and in the communication of this life the Holy Ghost has a part for He is the Spirit of Christ and He communicates it. Every motion of an affectionate heart Godward, every believing look cast on the cross of Christ, every entwining of the affections around the cross of Christ, all the buddings of living hope, all the patience of a humbled, submissive soul, proceed from this life whose fountain is God. Thus no flesh shall glory in God's presence; all the glory must be given to Him. "With Thee is the fountain of life". It is said in the verse preceding the text that all who trust in the Lord shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house and that God will make them drink of the river of His pleasures. Who can satisfy the vast desires of a child of God? Watts says that he had infinite desires. Who can satisfy these? Only God who is the fountain of life. Everlasting being needs an everlasting support and such a support alone can come from this blessed fountain. Since we are dead, dead by nature by the fall, how can we live? The life is the blood. When Israel was to come from Egypt there was a life given for a forfeited life, the forfeited life of the whole nation, and every child of God is brought to know this, that he can live only by the shed blood of

Christ. The fountain of life in respect of merit is there. You must live by that precious blood if you live at all. Sinner, you will never live before God without the blood of Christ. The life is the blood, and so when Jesus shed freely, vicariously, His blood there was then an open fountain, opened for sin, which is death, and uncleanness, which is separation from God, and in that particular the fountain of life is in God. And the fountain of life in respect of efficiency is in God. The efficient operator is the Holy Spirit. He is given. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes people free to whom it comes. Think of this; no motions of faith without the Spirit, no movings of love without the Spirit. Seasons come; "As the days of a tree are the days of My people". Winter comes and it seems to everybody who has any knowledge of this as if when winter comes, death reigns. The efficient of reviving in nature is the sun when the Spring comes, and the efficient of all movings in the soul when there has been a winter state and the Saviour says now the Winter is past, all such movings come from Him who is the only efficient worker, the Holy Spirit, and all growth is here. The fountain of life is that only source of growth in grace that the people of God are made to look for and desire. "Grow in grace". Take root downward and then you will bear fruit upward. To take root downward is to cast the roots of your faith into the Person and merits of the Saviour. To bear fruit upward is to live a life of faith on the Son of God, and to walk by faith and not by sight, and this is from the Lord Himself for no man can keep alive his own soul and no man can make his soul lively and fruitful in the knowledge of God. Life from God in you will beget likeness to Him. You reflect on it brethren. We have received from Adam the awful image of death. We receive, if the children of God, we receive life from Christ, and thus, His image. We have borne the image of the earthy. Shall we bear the image of the heavenly? It must be in the first instance, and in all instances from beginning to end, from this fountain. Well look at this. If you have a hard profession, if you have an untried confidence, if you go on without communications from God, then you will resemble death, only death. But if you are kept lively it will be by communications of this precious life from this glorious, exhaustless fountain, the Lord of life and glory, and this is relating, in the greatness and the freeness and the efficiency of it, to the whole church of God. Nothing can make a church for the glory of God but the communications of life which will

beget all proper movements in the church. The less of human organisation the better. Where God is, there is life, there is glory. "Thy God thy glory". Beware of anything and all things that would be substitutes for this. Doubtless the further God is from a people the more active their religious nature will become, and they may say, without even knowing they are saying it, in the spirit of it "The bricks are fallen down but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars". (Isaiah 9 v 10). O what a solemn thing it will be for individuals and for churches to hear God say in regard to much of their religion, if not all of it, "Who hath required this at your hand?" Life from God, O what a thing it is. Would you be pure in your mind? It must be the spiritual life that will cleanse away the impurities. Would you be satisfied? Then you must be satisfied ^{from?} out of this goodness of God. Would you see how you can be eternally happy? Then you must see that pure river of water of life clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Would you be strong? Then you must have the communication of this blessed life to your soul. Everything that is good must come from this fountain. I am not preaching a sermon to you but just telling you what I believe is revealed in the Holy Scripture, what the Holy Spirit teaches, that all religion that is acceptable to God, saving to a sinner, comes from Himself, and you have it in Timothy where Paul says to his son, of God "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1 v 9) O, dear sinner, seeking God, look to this fountain. If you look into yourself, what will you see but sin. If you want some qualification by which you may approach God, you will never find it in yourself. A conditionless gospel, an open door, a new and living way consecrated for you in the flesh of Jesus and His precious blood pleading before God. Nothing better, nothing else, nothing less. Ah, sin stands between you and God does it not? Bondage by sin, bondage by the law. Well there is one remedy, one remedy, only one. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever." "With Thee is the fountain of life". To this God I would direct you, of whom I would speak well to you. Other god there is not. "I know not any" said the Lord. "A just God and a Saviour". Just, to condemn and punish the Saviour, to redeem and deliver and make happy. What a God. Hart has a beautiful word, often

have I with pleasure quoted it to you, and I will do so again

Christ is the Friend of sinners
Be that forgotten never
A wounded soul and not a whole
Becomes a true believer

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Let me refer for a moment to the tabernacle in the wilderness. You know that it had no windows, that all the light it had was from within itself, the golden candlestick, the seven lamps, and the teaching is this, the fountain is in this blessed Lord. He has no contributions of light from all creation. In Himself is everything. Think of it and do not expect anything from nature to assist in salvation, in the illumination of your souls. The fountain is in Himself, and in the church of God it must be so in a secondary sense. The golden candlestick is spoken of as the church and she must have her light from the Lord. "With Thee is the fountain of life". Everything there. Do not look into yourselves for anything. And yet there is in us all such a legal disposition, such a desire to have something in self and from self that there is a perpetual disposition to turn away from God and a good deal of God's dealing with His people lies here that He has to call them back again and again and again, saying - Return unto Me, for I have redeemed you. What a wonder it will be to get to heaven and see this sun that never sets and worship where there is no temple built with hands. When it pleased God to take to Himself our dear young sister, one could not avoid a reflection upon this that she was taken at the age of 31 and I, an old stick, as I thought of myself, left. God seems to have taken away the green and left the dry but the hope is that one will be one day in that same happy state and a good many of you I believe will be there. O it is wonderful to think of it. "Where I am there shall my servant also be", and I think one of the most sweet, happy reflections a child of God can ever have here with respect to his great affliction is that he may lose that affliction, even sin. If you can see sin as your chief trouble, holiness your element, thank God for the grace that enables you to see that. "I would be holy" is an aspiration that the Lord is pleased with when He sees it and wherever He sees it. Holiness. You must have it from this fountain. A holy life. The saints are called holy brethren, called with a heavenly calling, and they are holy brethren

only and simply because a holy life is imparted to them. It is called eternal life for this reason, there is no sin in it. If there were sin in it, it could not be eternal. Sin must mean death.

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Well now look briefly at the second part of this text. "In Thy light shall we see light". A very exclusive word. It excludes all the candles of natural religion, all the aids to religion that men may invent and it says to people, now if you are to see things rightly you must see them in God's light. I say this is very exclusive. What shall we see if we have this light and in it see things? We shall see sin. I would not have you, my dear friends, ignorant of this on any account and as long as I can speak among you I will bear testimony to this damnable thing as being in your nature. May we be thankful if we do not live in sin, but it is here. It is a great mercy to be honourable, upright moral people. Bless God there is a good deal of morality still in England, degenerate though we are, but when you come to things which are to be for ever, you must have this light to see them. You must have light to distinguish between morality and spirituality, between what you can acquire by effort and what you must receive by revelation. You must have light to see how horrible and sinful thought is. It is not much - that is what we think naturally - it is not much. Even that flitting through your mind, O what grief it will cause you, as you see it in God's light. What grief it will cause you. This is not an affected holiness, but it is a deep moving of the life of God and a penetration of that light of God in the understanding and the conscience. You must see the law in God's light. If you see the law in God's light you will see how it penetrates to the thoughts and the affections, how it condemns selfishness. "Thy neighbour as thyself" is a big word for men who are selfish and self-centered. "Thy neighbour as thyself". Yea, and beyond that, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength". What a word for you, for me, as we are under the law. No wonder it works wrath, no wonder that it provokes God to anger to see men living in perpetual disobedience; everything and everybody before God, least of all and not at all in our thoughts. God is not in the thoughts of the wicked. No wonder that a man who sees God's law in the light of God who gave it feels unutterable trembling in his spirit. Even though the thought of hell may not be present with him at the

moment, he feels an unutterable trembling before God for he sees himself to have been, from his birth, a breaker of God's law. But he sees the gospel in God's light. O yes, and that is wonderful. The gospel, great, free, glorious, covering everything wrong, washing away every stain, cleansing the soul from all sin and bringing a perfect righteousness. A perfect righteousness for a perfectly condemned person. To see this in God's light, O how warming, attractive it is to a sinner. Here is the remedy, here is the agreement of salvation, here is the holy anointing oil, here is perfect cleansing, here is that which pleases God so as to bring forth that commendation from His holy lip - Thou art all fair My love, My sister, there is no spot in thee. And in the light of God O what a sight it is, the sight of a promise - "I will never leave thee. I will never forsake thee". That promise is more than all the lions, and the pits and the snares and the devils and the temptations and the difficulties and the tribulation of the way. The wilderness is not a death for the saint who is surrounded by that promise as the mountains are round about Jerusalem. O sinner, did you ever see a promise in God's light? How full; O how full, how firm. No end to what is in the promise, so to speak. Yea, a supply for every need of every kind you will see in the promise.

You will see chastening in the light of God, as you cannot see it without that light. "As many as I love" - What, like a fond parent shutting his eyes to all the faults of the child? No - "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent". In God's light you may see His jealousy. I would thank God for His jealousy. Is there any jealousy where there is no love? Why does God say He is jealous for Zion? Because He loves her. Why, even the Apostle Paul was jealous of the church at Corinth because he had great affections for her as being the fruit of his labour. O the love of God to His people. It brings the rod, it utters reproofs, it puts people's foolish, wandering feet into stocks, it lays a rod on their backs. Love, love divine, all loves excelling, brings affliction. "In the world ye shall have tribulation", not simply trouble - man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward - but tribulation, the old fashioned flail, the cart wheel. "What is the chaff to the wheat saith the Lord". Keep close to the meaning of Christ in the word "tribulation" and if you see your troubles in that light then you will

see love. Cowper said to see love inscribed upon them all, all the trials, this is happiness to me. Trouble, as trouble, the fruit of sin, is not in itself and alone chastening tribulation. Judge then of this Are your troubles blessed to removing some chaff? If you see tribulation in the light of God, you will see He means good to you when He sends trouble. See death in the light of God. We must needs die. See it in the light of God when He says concerning His saints "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints". The best day of a saint's life is his last day. It is better to die than to live. "Better is the day of one's death than the day of one's birth". O who can believe that unless he sees it in the light of God, when God, as it were, says to him, when you leave this world you come to be My guest for ever and ever. I will lead you to living fountains of waters; you shall never thirst again, and all the tears you shed I will wipe from your eyes. Here you worship in a temple made with hands. There, there is no such temple, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of that place. Here we see in the light of the sun. There no sun shall set, but God is the Sun, and so on. "In Thy light shall we see light". Do you see anything in this light? Do you see eternity in this light? Nay, do you see the King in this light? Men see Him in the Bible and they see nothing in Him, a root out of a dry ground. Sometimes a saint says, O I have no word to express even remotely what I see in the Person of Christ. This is no imagination, not a naked, empty sentiment - many people have a sentimental religion - but it is just the inshining of God into the soul enlightening the understanding. You see the world in His light and if you see that in His light you wont want to be the friend of the world, for says the Scripture - If any man will be a friend of this world he is the enemy of God, for the world lieth in wickedness.

Now may the Lord bless you and bless me, give us to live in this fountain and to walk in this light for His great Name's sake.

AMEN.