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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Sunday evening, 11th. September, 1927

Text: Psalm 36 v. 9

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

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How we have come, with what intention, willingness, desire, God knows. If we should be summoned to appear before God, what would our hearts say? If we realise in any measure how a person must be attired, how free absolutely from sin he must be, to appear with joy before God, how many of us would welcome, as being thus fitted, the summons? If we believe that Jesus Christ is that Man by whom God will judge the secrets of all men, and if believing that, we have some acquaintance with the heart as it is described by inspiration in Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it", would we welcome the thought of standing before that awful, holy, just Judge? But whether we experience a fitness, or whether we just stand as we were born, in sin with an accumulation of guilt not to be estimated by our own finite understanding but by God Himself, He knows, and whether you realise it or not, it is a solemn thing for us to be here, by our presence professing to believe in God, and very solemn for me to be standing in His Holy Name before you. You must give an account of it and I must give an account of my ministry. Shall I do it with joy with respect to some of you, and not with grief? What is our state by nature? The Scripture gives the answer, "Dead in trespasses and sins;" enemies to God and worse than enemies, we have enmity. You may make of an enemy a friend but you must kill enmity if it is to be put out of the way. And what is heaven? That holy happy place into which nothing that defileth or maketh a lie can enter. Must there not then be a radical change in every person who is to enter that glorious abode of God, and if that is so, is not this, should not this be a searching question, whether we have experienced that change, that is to say, have we any experimental acquaintance with this scripture,

"With Thee is the fountain of life." That life alone can properly animate any human soul and being a pure life it purifies, and coming from Him who is Wisdom itself, a wise life, making the prudent who possesses it foresee the evil and hide himself from it. It is an everlasting life. I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither by their own hand, - their own sin, that is to say, - nor by the devil their arch-enemy, and certainly not by time, for the life is eternal. "They shall never perish." Of this life I spoke a little this morning. The fountain of it, the Eternal God, the Trinity, - the Father in electing His Son and giving Him sinners to redeem; in the Son who redeemed them, in the Holy Ghost who quickens them into eternal life and reveals in them the Lord Jesus. A religion this, that nature cannot approve. A religion this, that saves those who have it, from sin and from sinning.

The second part of the text, I just named at the close of the service. "In Thy light shall we see light", and I would as enabled speak a little on this wondrous and beautiful subject. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." What a great subject! This light penetrating the heart, the understanding, affecting the conscience, instructs a sinner in many many subjects and the first is the subject that I named this morning: the black, the abhorrent, the repellent, the dreadful subject of sin, and here I would say, do not talk of the gospel if you are unacquainted with your sins. Sin was in Eden before the gospel was preached. Adam fell, - we fell in him. Adam became lost, - the image of God in which he was created was destroyed. The law given to him, - he broke. Now, God came. Shame preceded comfort. "I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." Professor do you know that? Are you naked? Are you ashamed? Are you afraid? Afraid of Him against whom you have sinned? It will be great indeed to have all your hell here in conviction, to have all your shame here in conviction, to have all your fear here in conviction. It will be shame, it will be fear, hopeless fear, endless shame, if you awake in eternity to find yourself without grace and without Christ and without God. Beware of an easy religion. Beware of a gospel that is not preceded by the law. Beware of taking up the name of Christ before you know the name of Moses. If you have this light shining in your understanding and penetrating your conscience, O sinner, you will understand then, a little of this word, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light."

God said let there be light in creation and there was light, and He saw that it was good, and if He says concerning you, let there be light in that sinner's conscience, let it penetrate his heart, let it teach him that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; if it tells him that he is radically wrong, that he is a law breaker, that he can never make up the breach that he has made; if it tells him of a hell that is prepared for the wicked, of endless, holy, just punishment in that hell, that will be good. God will see it good, the good effect of it in you, telling you what you are and that unless there is found for you a ransom, hopeless will be, and endless will be your captivity to sin and under the law. I will venture to name again what I said this morning on this point. It is one thing to see deceit; one thing to see a lie; to see a theft; and another to see the malignancy of those sins as in God's sight. You may naturally know that you have done wrong and not have this discovery let into your understanding. The nature of sin must be known or you will never know the nature of salvation. You may talk of both and be ignorant of both. Sin .. What is it? It is just the opposite of holiness; the contrary of God's nature. He is holy, sin is unholiness. Sin brings guilt, guilt brings death. Death is banishment from God. The Lord keep us from self-flattery, self-deception; from satanic flattery, from satanic deception. Take heed O professing Christians. "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Happy the man whose eyes are oft wet with tears on account of his sins; whose soul is depressed till redemption comes; happy the man who has to leave the ways of sin and run out of the broad way that leadeth to everlasting destruction. O sinner, God teach you by shining into your heart. The law is light, it is a lamp. It shines, and when it is directed into a particular conscience, there is an understanding. We may play with religion, we shall not play with the law. We may play with God's Name, but He won't play with us. He will deal seriously and solemnly with us, either in the law or in Jesus Christ. He never plays with people. All His dealings are very solemn. I know a little of this. It is great even to know a little. When I look at you young people I sometimes go back in my memory to my own youth, when more than 60 years ago it pleased God to send this light I am trying to speak about, into my

conscience and from that day to this, though a continually failing sinner, I have never been for long from under this light. The Spirit brings it. He shall convince of sin. He does. He tells sinners what they are. Adam, "Where art thou?" Happy he to whom the Lord puts that question. This light let into our life, our practice, our thoughts, our words, will make us ashamed of them all. Tempers, passions, petulance, anger, dwelleth in the bosom of a fool. All these things are seen to be just what God calls them when His light shines on them. You may see sometimes even rationally, naturally, that anger was very unreasonable in you and had no adequate cause and you may stop there, but if this pure light shines on that evil disposition in you, then you will see it is a sin against the ever meek and lowly Lord. So, unbelief which I call the greatest immorality, so, hardness of heart, so ingratitude; these, these sins, seen in God's light make a man who has them and does them, ashamed and afraid.

Secondly, we see the light of the gospel in the face of Jesus Christ. The face, or the Person, of Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? Various answers are given today to such a question. He is an example and nothing better to some. He is a man and only a man to some. He was a Jew. He spoke under the influence of Jewish prejudice, to some. He was to His enemies in the days of His sojourn here, a deceiver, a gluttonous man, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. He had a devil, He was mad. What do you think of Him? What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? Whence did He come? Why did He come? What did He do? How did He do it? Where is He? What think you of Him? One may say, well, I can read the original languages and I have some belief that He really is divine; other say, we have been brought up to believe that He is God and we do not doubt it. Did the light of God ever come in heavenly beams into your heart and understanding, and guide you to the manger so that you did what the wise men of the east did, worship Him? Did the light ever show you that wondrous Man Almighty God, with sin, with your sin imputed to Him? He was made sin. Were you ever guided by that in shining to Gethsemane's garden to see the God-man prone on the ground and sweating as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, and taken with Him to the Judgment Hall and there see Him stand silent under false accusations and did it take you another step, a remarkable step, even to the cross and there with the ignominy, the shame

the anguish, the curse, the fire, the hiding of His Father's face, did you look on Him and did you see in that priestly act of His on the cross, the one offering by which He put away sin for ever, and see His Father's acceptance of Him as He rose from the billows which had rolled over Him, and from the curse which had slain Him and from the anger that had oppressed Him unto death, and into the hell, - not the place but the punishment of hell, - that His people all deserve, rising and in that wondrous act saying to His own soul, 'now fly to heaven', for He dismissed His Spirit. He dismissed His Spirit. It was an act of His own. No man took away His life, He gave it up. I gave My life a ransome; "I lay it down of Myself." The Father commanded Me to do it. My Father gave Me this commandment. Ah, that was a wonderful thing and the light of God exhibiting this to your faith will make Him a glorious Man, a glorious God, - one Person. It will tell you in your heart: this is the way to heaven, - by Jesus Christ. It will say in you: this is the righteousness by which you must be covered and justified; it will point out to you the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness and say: this is the only cleansing, by this alone can your sins and your pollution be removed. We see Him, in God's light. We may acquire some correct notions of Him by a close attention to the Scriptures, but we can only know Him savingly by the inshining of His glorious light. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Now come, shamed sinner, come, you who can answer to that word that I read this evening, "If they be ashamed, --- show them, --- the house." Look at this House; this, that is to say, this Great One, the Altar of God, the Mountain of God; this Great One, the Lion of God, the Holy Mount all round. The holy mount shall be most holy. The superlative is used in respect of the holy mount. It shall be "most holy." In the Levitical dispensation, the "most holy" was limited to that part of the Sanctuary into which the High Priest went once every year. In the gospel dispensation the holy mount, - the holy nation, - is most holy, a nation of priests. When we see the Lord Jesus in the light, the bright inshining of His great name and mercy, then we see several vital things. I say several, one could not for a moment dream of entering into more

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than several. This, first. It is seen how God can be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. That is a great sight, - to see how a condemned criminal, a guilty criminal, an apprehended criminal, one that is to say, who knows his condition and realises the justness of his condition under the law and the justice of the sentence that is against him, pronounced by the law, for one so apprehended in his guilt to have discovered to him by the Holy Ghost, how that he, without improving his case himself, without scraping off any of his pollution, without getting rid of any of the excrescences of his sins, without lessening his sinfulness at all, he can be just made just. This is a great sight. Moses said of another case, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight," and the sinner says, 'What is this great sight, that I, a sinful man, a guilty man, am just.' O, but how? He, Jesus Christ, was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. No other reason can be found. It took its rise in eternity, in the love of God designating His Beloved Son to be incarnate and to bear sin, the sin of many and to make intercession for the transgressors. Sinner, has that light shined in your heart to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that you, so blessed have said, "Surely, --- in the Lord have I righteousness and strength?" Ah, it is a great thing to see in the teaching of the Holy Ghost, how a sinner can be made a just person, so just as that God's law can find no fault in Him; so just as that the lip of divine truth can say to that sinner, "Thou art all fair, --- there is no spot in thee." What then can keep that sinner out of God's presence and glory for ever, what can take place to keep that sinner from God's embrace for ever and ever? - "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." And so, consequently another sight is given in this light, namely the adoption of this once-alien into the family of God. Alienated from the life of God by his fall, by his wicked practices, an enemy of God and righteousness, now he is brought into that blessed family that is named of God Himself; predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son; predestinated unto the adoption of children to Himself by Jesus Christ. One in bondage cannot enter into it under the law, it is unbelievable that such a person as now one finds himself to be, can be a son of God. He must have this beautiful light, this strangely blessed light shining; he must see

what Paul speaks, - "through a glass, darkly," - what again he mentions when he says, "We all with open face," the veil of ignorance removed, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." Is Jesus the Son of God, so is this person. Is Jesus pleasing to His Father, so is this person. Did Jesus eternally repose in the bosom of His Father, so this sinner reposes in the love of the Father, in the love of the Son and in the love of the Holy Ghost. Did Jesus receive the words of God in the council of peace, this sinner receives the words of the gospel by the Holy Ghost. Did Jesus, and does Jesus for ever and ever stand in the presence of God, so is the adopted child destined to be there. And was it shown to the Man Christ Jesus that there was at the right hand of God a river of pleasures for evermore, the same sight is given to him who now is Christ's younger brother. He is not ashamed to call these people brethren, and God is not ashamed to be called their God. Only, you must see it, if you ever rightly see it, in this light. "In Thy light." Thy heavenly light, the light of Thy love, of Thy grace, the light of Thy atonement, the light of Thy righteousness, the light of Thy holiness alone, can show a sinner his new standing, his ineffable relationship to God, as a child of God.

And this will follow in the next place: that this adopted child of God is "an heir of God", and a joint-heir with Christ. It is something among men to be an heir of a wealthy parent or friend. "Hearken my --- brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?" Why should we be sorry to be poor and why should unbelief drag our minds down and put the horizon of our future so near to our eyes that we cannot see a yard before us when the Apostle says by inspiration to the Corinthians, "Let no man glory in men." Let no man lean on another man. Let no man think that he is poor if he cannot count his possessions by thousands. 'Why should he not?' says one in the light of divine grace and truth, and by inspiration Paul says, "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "Joint-heirs with Christ!" Did the Father's love fall on Christ? As Christ saw that love, you share in it. Did the Father's commendation come on Christ saying, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?"

You share in that. Did the Father strengthen His Son for all He had to go through? So He will strengthen you. Did the Father make a covenant with His Son? So He makes one with you, and this is the covenant, - He will no more forsake. He has done it for a small moment, - He will no more forsake. Joint-heir with this Great One, this God-man! Did the Father give glory to His Son? His Son has a glory not by gift but by nature, for He is equal with His Father and the Holy Ghost, but as the Mediator, as the Man Christ Jesus, glory was given to Him and He says in John's gospel, "The glory which Thou", - that is His Father, - "gavest Me, I have given them." A joint-heir, - partakers of His wisdom, for He is made Wisdom to His people. How many of us have had this bright inshining? - this mysterious instruction, this penetrating light, that in spite of all our unbelief and misgiving and misjudging of God, we were sweetly constrained to believe the things it discovered to us. Depend upon it you will never know divine things rightly, but by and in this light.

We shall see, if we have this light, the exceeding, the unspeakable riches of Christ. We shall see in it the suitability of Christ to us, a Saviour and a great one, an infallible Guide, an all conquering Commander, a glorious Prince, of whose government and peace there shall be no end. In this light we shall see something in it, - a given promise; something we shall see in it, - a begun work not yet finished; a begun work of grace is only finished when death puts an end to life, a begun promise may bring much trouble. A given promise to Abram brought trouble to him for twenty years; waiting was no easy thing. A promise of God's presence and sustenance and defence, brought Jacob much anxiety, for the frost bit him at night and the sun consumed him in the day time but he would see, and he did see by it, infallibility in those great things God had promised him and he came to realise their fulfilment. O sinner, if you have had a promise in this light you have seen beauties in it, sufficiency in it and an inexhaustible supply of all you can need, in it. You will never empty the promise of God; no matter how many fulfilments you have had of it, you have not exhausted it; you cannot exhaust it. It is good for myriads of people, for all ages. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee", but we must see it in this light; we must see it in this light; no other way can its beauty, its fulness, its certainty be seen, and in any measure realised.

One word more. There is before us, an eternity, - a great thing this, to consider. We must needs die. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." - "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, --- whether it be good or bad." We must be assembled and appear before Him, that Man that God has appointed to judge all men and the secrets of all hearts. O sinner, you may fly from religion, you may fly from the Bible, you may fly from godly friends who wish you well, but you won't fly from this great assize that one day will be set, and then you must appear. You must appear. You may say, I won't listen to that, and I won't believe that, but you will listen to Him when He speaks; you will listen to Him and what will He say to you? He will judge you according to your works. Then, what are your works? What are the works of your heart? Can they be expressed thus: "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways", thus: "Who is the Lord?" what profit is there if I pray unto Him? "I know not the Lord;" thus: "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Now if such be your works, listen sinner, listen to a poor man, - what will He say to you? "Depart from Me," ye cursed, you workers of iniquity, lovers of a lie and lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, "Depart from Me." Ah, to depart from God as you now think, may be pleasure to you, but to depart then, will be endless hell, misery unspeakable, unimaginable to you, but if your works have been good works; if you have believed in the Lord Jesus, - the great work that God will have and does get, because He gives faith, - if you have done that good work (you say, but I am so often unworthy in my feeling, because I am an unbelieving believer. Ah, but He looks on men in His own righteousness, His own obedience, and He is not unrighteous to forget their labour of love, and their work of faith, and their patience of hope in His Name, and what will He say to those when they die? They enter heaven by prayer. As they live, they are sorry for their sins; they grieve over many a departure from Him and they say again and again, O what an unworthy, unprofitable, unfruitful believer we are) what will He say to them? He will say to some in this chapel, - I verily believe it, - "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And this can be seen by faith, even here in this wilderness, in affliction, in temptation. Under a very depressing view

of your own unprofitableness, you may see this, which will alleviate your heart and mind beyond all expression; when you say, "Surely --- in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," and when you can, in your measure enter into the language of Paul, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me --- and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Now let us close by looking at the verse that follows the text, "O continue Thy lovingkindness", or as the marginal reading is, "O draw out at length, Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee." Draw it out and we need it. We need His patience; we need His faithfulness, we need His power; we need His goodness, we need His love and we need the Fountain that is opened for sin and for uncleanness. O continue to draw out Thy lovingkindness.

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