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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 8 August 1928

PSALM 45 v 2

"Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace
is poured into Thy lips: therefore God
hath blessed Thee for ever"

If we have ever been under the unction of the Holy Ghost in some measure bringing Christ to us, we shall, in that measure, understand the spirit of the Psalmist when, in the first verse of this Psalm, he says: "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." The warm affection, the enlargement of faith, the outgoings of the soul in prayer and supplication, adoration and worship; every one knows in some measure what this experience is as the Holy Ghost has been in him. You can never fully express the sensations of your soul; the confidence you have felt in Him; the casting of every care and interest of your immortal soul and of this world on Him; the view of His power, of the infinite worth of His blood, the blessedness of His salvation. You can only say that you worship Him, adore Him, go to God in Him, trust the salvation of your soul to Him, and come up out of the wilderness, leaning on His arm. My heart, the heart of a sinner, the heart of a poor creature, my heart, under the secret, sweet anointing of the Spirit, suddenly, or ever it is aware, suddenly, powerfully, graciously, entering into the holiest, entering into God's sacred presence, where confusion and bondage and tormenting fear are taken away and wonder at His love, wonder at His goodness, fills the soul. "My heart" - and when the emphasis is in you, when you can say it, then what a poor, dead thing, this world is, what emptiness is in every created thing to you, for the King in His beauty, the King in His authority, the High Priest in His infinite merit and His mediation; how precious is Jesus Christ in these particulars. "My heart is inditing a good matter", and it is a blessed thing to get this. And this is what the Psalmist says of Him: "Thou", the King, the King of glory, the King of saints, "Thou", anointed of God to be a preacher, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up

the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; "Thou" before God, ever living to intercede; "Thou art fairer than the children of men". O what a wonder it is to believe in the Lord Jesus, what a wonder it is to be a believer in the Lord Jesus. It is common to many, to most people, but particular to an elected, redeemed and regenerated person. And this wondrous thing said to Him: "Fairer than the children of men", shows how He is lifted up high above all creatures. His throne is high and lifted up and cherubims sing unto Him: "Worthy, worthy; Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, and His train fills the temple. He fills a sinner with His goodness, He brings into the soul everything that the sinner needs. His own train, His own furniture, His own light, His own life, His own glory, these fill the sinner. What is this exceeding fairness? Hebrew scholars say that the word literally is "beautifulness", all beauty, all beauty, no blemish, no spot, no imperfection, but just beautifulness in beauty. Word heaped on word to express the greatness and the glory of this Lord Jesus Christ. I would like, if enabled, to say a few words about this fairness of the Lord Jesus, above all fairness that can be found in men.

In the first place is it not the infinite fairness of His divine Person as He is the Son, the only begotten Son of God? None can compare with Him in this particular. God has a multitude of sons by adoption, but only One Son by eternal generation. Many sons will this Son bring to glory, but none of them shall ever have divinity. He alone has that; He alone stands in this that He is the very Son of God, of the essence, substance, equality, glory and power of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. My dear friends, may the Holy Ghost give us so to believe in the Sonship of Jesus Christ, to see and feel how essential that Sonship is to the integrity of the Trinity and to the salvation of sinners, as that we may esteem it to be more than life, better than all creation. Here then is the exceeding, the infinite fairness, the superiority of beauty and glory above all the children of men. Do you believe this? If you say, it is too high, you only say what is true, but though it be too high for any sinner to reach and comprehend, it is not too high for the Spirit to bring it and, though it will ever remain a mystery, it is a truth apprehended by faith and held by faith. If you try to reason about it and

comprehend it that way you will never, never succeed, but if the Holy Spirit is pleased to come and take of this Jesus Christ, His divine Person, one Person in the Trinity, the second Person, then you will say to Him: Thou art fairer than all angels, than all the fair sons of men, fairer than all the justified ones, fairer than all the redeemed, because there is no creature can partake of this divinity.

And in the next place, is He not fairer than the children of men in respect of His incarnation. His human nature alone is not different from the human nature of all He took up into union with Himself - "The children being partakers of flesh and blood He likewise took part of the same" - but its union to the Son of God gives it a glory that renders it fairer than all other children of men; a beauty, a blessedness, a suitableness, a fulness, a life, a power, that no other child of man, none born of men, can ever reach. We shall ever be beneath the human nature of the Lord Jesus though we shall be made like to Him, if we belong to Him, "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body", but our nature will never be exalted as that wondrous nature is that Jesus took into a personal union with Himself. Now I beg that God may be pleased to reveal this mystery in our souls for I apprehend it is part of this great character given to Him here, "fairer than the children of men", and He must ever be the Object of the faith of the child of God. He must ever be the blessed Object of that faith that is begotten in the soul by the operation of the Spirit. And whenever you get, O people of God, a view of this Person, Jesus Christ, you will find your heart bubbling up, boiling over and inditing matter of praise, adoration, admiration, confidence and trust in Him. You will find it so. A worm of earth meditating on incarnate deity, a guilty sinner looking to the blood and the righteousness of this Person, Jesus Christ; a weak worm trusting to His omnipotence; an ignorant creature looking to Him for wisdom, you will find this that He will be to you, and in you, "fairer than the children of men". And this leads one to say in the next place, He is fairer than the children of men as He is the great High Priest of our profession. It was not Moses who blessed Israel; it was Aaron. Aaron was to say: "The Lord bless thee". Aaron, the type of our High Priest, was to say: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee". And so our Aaron, fairer than Aaron and all his sons, priests

of the Most High God as ordained after the law of a carnal commandment; He is fairer than them all. Look a little - the Lord help us to look a little - at this Priesthood of Jesus Christ. It is fairer than Aaron's. Aaron's priesthood made nothing perfect. The law, with all its ceremonies, was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those things. The law made nothing perfect, never took away a single sin, never purified a conscience, never justified a sinner, but our great High Priest is different. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He offered Himself without spot to God and in doing that He obtained eternal redemption for us. This is what His Priesthood is. An infinite glory attaches to the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus. As a Priest, when He had accomplished all His Father commanded Him to do on earth, He passed within the veil, entered into heaven with His own blood.

He passed within the veil
Did on His bosom bear
The worthless names that did prevail
With Him to enter there

My friends, if this comes into our souls it will make them bubble and boil over with good matter and we shall make a good thing in our hearts concerning our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, our hope, the only reason that we have for approaching, with a bold spirit, to Almighty God. The only ground on which to rest, the only righteousness that can ever enter the heart of a sinner, the only one who can say, "peace"; peace by His blood. Is this our High Priest? And therefore, is that great word in this Epistle, where poor sinners, searched, dissected, analysed, as it were; the thoughts of their hearts and the intents of their hearts, thoughts in embryo, thoughts that have not taken a definite shape as yet, all these things naked and opened unto the eyes of this great God; it is said to these "Come boldly" Do take, as you may be enabled, that connection and do not sever what God has joined in that connection, for you will find this, there is a searched sinner, a dissected sinner, a guilty person, a person who is, in the eyes of God, just like a putrid corpse, corrupt in every way, and yet, to that person the word is "Come boldly". "Let us", "Let us", Paul and all to whom He writes: "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find

grace to help in time of need". His Priestly sacrifice is the ground of prayer, is the door of access, is the ground and foundation of all good building for eternity. It is the plea, the only plea, that a sinner at any time in his pilgrimage is led and instructed to make as he approaches God. It is the entrance into the Holiest of all, the new and living way to God. O the Scripture is full, and may the Holy Ghost make our hearts full with this blessed Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. None can compare with Him. Aaron, the only one who can be named, as it were, and his descendants and successors in the office of priest, could never be named by the side of this blessed One except as an imperfect type; not a perfect image, but a shadow of this great One, our High Priest before God.

Come, then, repenting sinner, come;
Approach with humble faith;
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum
Is cancelled by His death

In the next place He is fairer than the children of men as a prophet. Moses was a prophet; David was a prophet, and the prophets all of them as you have them in the Scriptures, these all foretold events and preached righteousness, but none of them can be compared with the Lord Jesus. These prophets spoke messages that were given to them; the Word of the Lord came to them, as Ezekiel said. The Word of the Lord came expressly. But then when Christ preaches it is very different for this is what is said of Him. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And this is the blessed One who says, in Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek". And what the good tidings are, we have in the Psalms. The Lord Jesus said: "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation". (Psalm 40 v 9). "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren". (Psalm 22 v 22). Think of this, He came immediately, His divine Person came immediately, from the bosom of the Father and so He said: "I speak what I have heard My Father speak. I do the works I have seen My Father do". No prophet like Christ, revealing God in His nature, in His love, in His purposes, in His sovereignty in His choice of men to eternal life, and saying, with respect to the awful sovereignty that rejects others:

"Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight". This is our prophet. Sinner, you cannot reach heaven to know what is there in the heart of the Father; no fellow creature can tell you except as an instrument; but Jesus can, for He came from the bosom of His Father, He is equal with His Father, and has a commandment from His Father to preach and was anointed by the Spirit to preach, to bring good tidings from a far country. Angels were commissioned to announce His birth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men", but He Himself brings great tidings, good tidings, infallible tidings, glorious tidings. He says to Zion: "Thy God reigneth". He says to a poor, tried, tempted creature, who says his way is hid from the Lord and his judgment is passed over from His God, to him He says: "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding..... Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." Only Christ can speak so, with divine authority. He says: "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage". He is a prophet, yea, and He says to a sinner in conflict with the world and himself: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world", which means you also shall overcome the world. Yea, He says more, He says "Where I am there shall My servant also be". Ah, He prophesies good concerning sinners. He prophesies good concerning seekers. He prophesies good concerning the naked and the needy and the destitute and the halt, and the maimed, and the blind, and He says to His servants, bring them in, compel them to come in, and I will give them hands and feet and eyes and heart and I will forgive their sin and remember their iniquity no more. Good news from a far country, my friends, this fairer than all others preaches. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek". He says, I dwell in eternity; it is my habitation, but I will dwell also with him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word. And one word here more, He is fairer than all the kings of the earth ever were or shall be. He is King in Zion. Says God, to His enemies, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion. And no matter what opposition

shall be offered, no matter what devils take counsel in the gates of hell, no matter what storms and seas and moving mountains shall say in fearful hearts, this is true, He will say "Peace be still" and there is a great calm. "He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still". He restrains the enemy. He restrains devils. He rules in heaven and in earth. "Thou art fairer than the children of men"

He is fairer as being the fountain of life than any other. There is no fountain of life but Christ; no fountain for sin but what He opened, and therefore none can stand in comparison with Him. He is fairer; He is the fairest. "He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely".

"Grace is poured into Thy lips". What is this, but the gospel? I apprehend it is just that. The gospel, full, free, sufficient gospel. This grace is the grace first of forgiveness. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared", and it is a wonderful ground on which to stand, on which to move toward God in prayer and supplication, that there is forgiveness with Him. No peradventure as to that. There are many questions and peradventures in the hearts of coming sinners, but the fact of forgiveness being with God is unquestionable. "There is forgiveness with Thee." Well, poor sinner, this then may be a great help to you if you can believe it, that God has forgiveness. If you can go to Him He wont say No. He never gives a stone when a child asks for bread, never will. Go then for this forgiveness that is with Him.

Grace, the grace of justification, is with Him for the ungodly are justified that believe in Jesus. The grace of perseverance is with Him. "The righteous shall hold on his way and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger". The grace of glory is with Him. "I have given them the glory Thou gavest Me", and "Father I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am that they may behold My glory which I had with Thee before the world was", and this is grace. "Grace is poured into His lips".

Now I would like briefly to speak of these mercies in respect of experience. Here is a doctrine; now this becomes experience. Every

doctrine of the gospel is intended by God to become an experience in the Church, in individual members of the body of Christ. Then take this first, the fairness, the incomparable fairness of the Lord Jesus. Has that been made an experience in us? Has the Holy Ghost revealed Him so in us, as that He has shone brighter than the sun, been more precious to us than fine gold, yea than the golden wedge of Ophir? More precious than rubies and all the things that may be desired? The Spirit's gracious office in the Church is to fulfil Christ's promise: "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you". A poor sinner, a destitute sinner, a guilty wretch, a rebel, humbled at the throne of grace, trembling for fear he shall miss, trembling lest the wrath of God should come upon him, this sinner shall find one day his praying soul suddenly blessed, his humbled heart suddenly lifted up. Himself, in the pit, in the dust, on the dunghill shall be lifted up and taken away from that miserable deplorable state and exalted to sit with princes. As it is in Ephesians, made to sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Thus He is the King; thus He is the fairest of all ruling in and over the sinner, commanding death and devils and sin and guilt and pollution and an unjust condition, all to depart from the sinner. Now this is the blessing that is in store for every seeker. This is the blessing that is to fill every emptied soul. I say emptied; everybody is empty really by the fall, but only the saints are emptied by grace. The Spirit convinces of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, and when that work has been done, when He has been as a Spirit of judgment and of burning, then comes the change, the blessed, the desired, the prayed for change, when Jesus shall come and show Himself and then, O what a change. The persuasion enters the soul and the sinner can then no longer doubt. He is obliged to say humbly, does say humbly and thankfully: "My Lord, My God; Thou art the fairest; Thou art the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." When His Priesthood is revealed then the sinner sees the Priest between himself and the Holy God. He sees the Priest with the interests of God and the interests of His immortal soul in His heart and in His hand. He sees there is One sufficient, able in every particular, to be his Saviour. The Priesthood of Christ fills the soul with peace, and "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the

righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." O sinner, this is an attraction to souls under the teaching of the Spirit. Their faith moves to this Priest. They see in Him every virtue needed for their salvation, every ability of every sort and kind to bring them to glory; everything they need to reconcile them to God and make them the children of the living God without spot or blemish or any such thing. That is what you have got before you, you who are seekers, who cannot give up seeking, who think about, sometimes, think about dying and giving up everything in this world rather than ceasing to pray; who, when you are unable to pray, cry to God for a prayer. This is before you, the Priestly work, the gloriously sufficient offering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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And take Him as a prophet. O what good news He brings to sinners. They hear His voice. "My sheep know My voice" He tells them that He has given to them eternal life, and that they shall never perish. He shows them their security in their Father's hand and in His hand. "No man shall pluck them out of My Father's hand". "No man shall pluck them out of My hand". He prophesies good concerning them. O it is good when Jesus speaks, when this fairest of all opens His lips into which the grace of the gospel was poured by the holy and blessed God, and He pours it out into needy souls. He is their prophet; He tells them that they shall have tribulation in the world, but He tells them that He overcame the world and tells them that He overcame the world on their behalf, and that therefore they shall overcome the world. Good news which, coming from heaven, carries their souls up to heaven in affection, in faith, in hope, in love, in admiration, in adoration. I cannot express it fully. I can never tell you. You must know it for yourselves; the peculiar sensation of believing in this Lord Jesus, of believing the gracious words which proceed from His mouth, believing the holy teaching that there is in a particular Scripture as it is opened; believing in the testimonies of the gospel so as that you can say: My soul has stuck unto Thy testimonies, cannot give them up; there is a treasure in them. Ah there is a treasure in every word the Lord Jesus speaks, and you will find it so. You will treasure up every word. Sometimes you forget the words, and then the enemies may say, they did not come from God; if they had done you would not have forgotten them. I know that

trouble and I know the deliverance God can give you from that trouble as He gave me. Remember this, it is written of the disciples, "Then they remembered His word", which means they had forgotten the words of Christ, then the Spirit brought them back to their memory, and they kept in memory what had been delivered to them.

Look at Him as a Priest, a King. My brethren have not you prayed many and many a time: "Thy kingdom come" and as you have looked into your heart and nature you have said I believe if that kingdom comes it will destroy the kingdom of sin in me. Yet you have said I would not call back that prayer for the world. I want that kingdom, long for it; beg of God to rule in me, to set up His blessed kingdom. And it is not easy; this self love, this love of the world, this love of sin, O how hard to give everything up, and yet faith says, this is it. The kingdom of God; it is destined to break to pieces every other kingdom and to fill the world and to fill the soul. Says the soul, O if it might but be so with me. And when He comes and asserts His authority, spreads over you His gracious influence, and rules with that blessed rod of grace and truth and peace, keeping your heart and mind by Himself, His own power within, you say this kingdom is a blessed kingdom to me. It is "not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost". Then you see a beauty in what follows: "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men". (Romans 14 v 17/18). Well, it is very wonderful to have this kingdom, to have this King in His beauty, and if you see Him by faith here it will be a prophecy, as it were, saying in your heart, the day is coming when, without a veil, without ignorance, without dimness of vision, you shall see the King in His beauty and the land which is very far off. "Thou art fairer than the children of men."

And He gives this, His fairness, to His people. Jesus is a diadem of beauty to Zion when all the beauty of created things is destroyed. When God has moved many moveable things and shaken all irremovable things, then, then comes this: And the Lord shall be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty unto the remnant of Israel. O my friends, praying people, see what is before you and press after this. Remember that the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. This is what God has set out in His blessed

Word. And He says, now with Me is forgiveness; come to Me for it. With Me is grace; call upon Me for it. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." Come to Me with your troubles; cast your burdens on Me and cast all your care on Me. None could say this properly, but Christ. No sufficient help can man find in man, but all sufficient help is found in the God Man, Jesus Christ. Come then, my brethren in tribulation, in sorrow because of sin and with desires and pantings, to this great One and may the Holy Ghost move in your hearts and in my heart, so that we may say, our hearts are bubbling with a good matter, a matter that says, the King is in His galleries held; that says Jesus is the Friend of sinners; that says, true repentance, and faith, and obedience, and hope, and love, and peace, all come from Him, none else. "It pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell".

"Therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever". And the blessing of God on Jesus Christ is this, that He gave Him a Church to save, a bride to redeem from her fallen state. This is it. God showed to Him, as it is by Him in an earlier Psalm (16) "pleasures at His right-hand for evermore." For the joy that was set before Christ, He endured the cross and despised the shame. This is the blessing that God has given to His dear Son, Jesus Christ, and it is a blessing with which He blesses all His people, for they are blessed in Him with everlasting blessings. Now I pray that this very poor, very feeble word - I mean what I say - that I have said about this fairest of all may, at any rate, be the means of attracting you to Him, of moving you to say, in petition, Lord Jesus come to us and be in us the fairest of all, and then His Name shall have the praise.

AMEN.