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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday morning 12 September 1920

PSALM 62 v 4 (1st clause)

"They only consult to cast him down from  
his excellency"

Science, falsely so called, tells us that the fall of man is but now an exploded theory. While the Scripture stands we may fiercely contradict so vile a statement. Man once had an excellency, for he was made in the image of God, created, and came out of the hand of God, a pure man. Man has not improved. We are civilized but it may, ere long - God only knows; I wish I may be wrong - but it may not be long before it will be seen what a thin veneer our civilized condition is, and if that veneer is ripped off only God knows the length to which human nature, in its depraved state, will go. I believe man was beautiful in his spirit, in his moral nature, in his capability of obeying God, in his love for God, and highly exalted in his intimacy with God in the terms of the old covenant. When you turn your back to the east and your face to the west and walk westward and walk away from the light, it covers you, but it will go down, and that is something like man. He turned his back on God; he was expelled from the garden of Eden. His back, so to speak, was on the sun and all his movements and emigrations have been westward from that place. What is the result? Man is now declared in the Scripture to be abominable. By Jeremiah it is said that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" The Apostle Paul, inspired, tells the Ephesians that they were dead in trespasses and sins before the Holy Spirit quickened them; that they were sometimes darkness. He tells others that they are alienated from the life of God through ignorance and wicked works. We read of deceitful lusts, of murders, of debates, and this is man, whose fall is denied. This is man, whose powers are exalted. This is man who can order his own ways. And yet, with all that he can do, he is just a creature of that providence that God sends to control him. And I wish that all of you may, if you have not now, come to have a penetrating conviction of your utter depravity, and then you will want a Saviour and will seek

one. But there is an excellency which man has - some men have - a beauty, a glory, and in a word, it is this. "Thy God thy glory". What an amazing, everlasting wonder of eternal goodness it is that God comes to His children, when He takes away their death in trespasses and sins, removes from them their filthy rags, washes away their guilt, and brings them into union with Himself in Jesus Christ. But they do not stand in this given excellency undisturbed. There is an enemy who aims to cast them down from this excellency. There is a world that is at enmity with it and there is a nature in them that would fain be rid of it. The gates of hell, these are in consultation; these aim to cast down from their excellency, the Lord's people. Nor need we wonder, when we know from inspired Scripture that Jesus Himself was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and that all he could devise, all he could dangle before the eyes of that spotless One, all he could do to allure and catch away His heart, he did. But it was in vain, and blessed be God, we shall stand because our Captain stood. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". That is the victory of every saint - "I have overcome the world", and you shall. "Be of good cheer". The excellency then, one would look at this morning, is, first of all, God, who has made Himself over to His people as their God. He has given Himself to them. He says of Himself to them: "Thy God thy glory". All the excellency that is needed for heaven, all the holiness that is necessary for the approach of a creature to God, all the freedom from sin that must be known and felt, all the righteousness that one must possess in order to stand before infinite justice, God has made Himself to and in His people. He has made Himself all this. "Who, of God, is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption". More than this you cannot have, more than this you cannot crave. Less than this will leave you fatally and eternally wrong. This excellency then which we have in God, God in Christ, we would look at a little. First at the union that subsists between the Lord Jesus Christ, true almighty God, and His people. This is set forth in the Scripture in beautiful ways. The figure of the vine and its branches, the Lord Himself uses. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches". If the stock be excellent, if the root be fat, so will be the branches. No bunch of grapes will ever say, this is in independence of the root. Rather it will say, see the root, look at the root, when you look at me. See its virtue in my

sweetness. The foundation and the building we have to set out this excellency and beauty. Every building takes the form and shape of its foundation and is as strong as, and no stronger than, its foundation. Not even the bonding of the brick will make the walls strong to stand if they be not on a foundation, and if they are on a foundation they take the shape of that foundation, and they stand as long as the foundation is sure. On the Rock of Ages is the Church built. "On this Rock will I build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". The marriage union is taken by the Lord to set forth that ineffable, intimate union between Christ and His people. "I speak", says the Apostle Paul, having treated of the marriage union, "I speak concerning Christ and the Church". This is a mystery; it contains in it more than appears on the surface; it contains a mystery. It sets forth a beauty, a glory, a mystery. It sets forth a oneness, the oneness between Christ and His people, and I am sure no spiritual mind will ever want any excellency above this, will be content with this, will glory in this, will thank God for this, as it is realised.

'Twixt Jesus and the chosen race  
Subsists a bond of sovereign grace  
That hell, with its infernal train,  
Shall ne'er dissolve nor rend in twain

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh". This represents the union that subsists between Jesus Christ and His people. Here is the excellency of the Lord conveyed to His people. The name of the husband is given to his wife and the wealth of the husband and the honour of the husband and the protection of the husband and all that he has, as a husband, belongs to his wife. Modern ideas about the marriage union and modern legislation concerning it, destroy the beauty that God has put upon this union and destroy the figure. There is the beauty, the excellency of justification. 'Tis a great thing to be straight with God's law; wonderful to be in such a condition of straightness with the law as that it cannot come to you and claim anything from you in the way of obedience for salvation. It is great to be saved in strict accordance with divine justice, as well as in strict accordance with infinite love. These unite in salvation, and

these constitute an excellency. But now, for the moment, look at justification. Here is a person who has broken God's law, who is born in sin and shapen in iniquity, who now has no power to do his duty; had power in his creation state, unfallen; had power to do what the law told him and required him to do, but he sold himself and has committed iniquity and does commit iniquity and now he is as a dead person; can do no good, can never please God as he is in this condition. And he is unjust; an unjust person, given to evil, given to idolatry, to theft, to murder, to lust and to all kinds of sin. And God comes to him and claims him and the law siezes him, arrests him and charges him with the sins of his nature and the sins of his life. It brings all the charges to his conscience and fixes them there and uses memory to fetch back to the man what he has been and what he has done, and he comes in guilty. He confesses himself guilty; he feels guilty; he sees no way of escape. The law demands perfection, will accept nothing short of perfection. All the sin and turpitude of his nature he gets fixed upon his spirit, lodged in his conscience, by the Holy Ghost, and the man has dealings with God and God has dealings with the man. They come together, and yet are apart. They come together in, so to speak, the work of the Spirit, whereby the sinner is brought to his knees, and God speaks to him and he confesses his sins. He comes to this: "God be merciful to me a sinner". And then the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, sent for this very purpose, this immediate purpose, to glorify Christ, takes of the things of Christ and shows them to this person, opens his eyes, directs his heart, and moves his thought to Jesus Christ, and a wonder appears to this sinner:

Behold a scene of matchless grace  
'Tis Jesus in the sinner's place

and the vicarious sacrifice of Christ liberates this sinner, and the righteousness of Christ becomes the justification of this sinner, and what Paul teaches in the Romans becomes his experience: "For 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". And this person is free; the law lets him go. Honourably he goes; he is acquitted and the law has nothing to say against

acquittal. He is justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus and so, submitting himself in an act of faith to the righteousness of God, Christ becomes the end of the law to him for righteousness. It is great to be a justified person, to rise up before God in that form, and the Lord to say: "I even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud, and as a cloud thy sins. Return unto Me for I have redeemed thee."

O, look to this excellency. See, poor sinner, what God has for a believer; see what a robe, what a justification for guilty people. And there is an excellency given to a sinner when sanctification is given. When, as Paul writes by the Spirit, "Christ is made sanctification". When the sinner, who fain would not sin, but alas does sin, and who, realising his ever changing experience - now hot in the ways of God, now cold in his heart; now pure in his desires and fervent in his prayers, then turning his back on the throne of grace; now loving the holy Scriptures, then looking on them as a Book rather wearisome to read; - feels that that kind of goodness, so short in his experience and so soon overcome and buried, as it were, in sin, would never do; he must have a holiness that changes not; that is not more one day and less another; that is given to him as freely as justification is. "Christ is made wisdom and righteousness and sanctification". All the holiness you must have for heaven, the Spirit will bring to you from the Lord Jesus, and you will then say, when the top stone is laid on, I will shout grace, grace unto it. When the work of Christ is done, then the praise of grace shall be without weariness; then I will sing, then I will praise. Ah when men see that there is a temple in which the saints shall endlessly worship, a sun in which they shall live which can never set, they perceive that it must be something more than their own corrupted nature can do to fit them for that temple and that sun, and the Spirit brings to them the Lord Jesus, and shows that He, and He alone, can fit them for that holy, happy place, and give them harps of gold and palms in their hands and secure to them a welcome. This is their excellency, a given sanctification.

And my brethren there is an excellency beside what I have mentioned, that is given to the Church of the living God, namely the

Word of God. The Word of God is very pure, a wonderful Word, this inspired Book, given of His Own immediate teaching. Christ said of His disciples, to His Father, "I have given them Thy Word". Jeremiah, in his trouble, said: "Thy words were found and I did eat them". The Psalmist, in his experience, said, "I have taken Thy testimonies unto me as a heritage for ever. I rejoice in Thy testimonies more than thousands of gold and silver". And another said, "I have esteemed the words of Thy mouth more than my necessary food". This is a wonderful Book. The Bible does not contain the Word of God; - a container may be different and is different from what is contained - the Bible is the Word of God. The Apostle says: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Holy Bible. The older I get the more I love that word, "inspiration" in the full meaning of it. Not ever so many sorts, but one inspiration. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And this is given; the world has it, and how it is treated today, you know. The Church has it, and she will hold it; she will hold it as the very Word of God, as given by inspiration, as a revelation of the nature of God, His excellencies, perfections; His claims on man. As a revelation of His eternal love to the Church, revealed by the gift of His only begotten Son, first of all, and above all. The love of God can go no higher, reach no deeper, spread out no more, than it has done in the gift of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the revelation of the Trinity. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." It is the revelation of divine purposes concerning both the church and the world, and the end of all things, the chief end, being the glory of God. And there is a very intimate sense in which the Bible is given to the church, namely that the Holy Spirit is pleased to take of the Scriptures and use them, speaking in them to the saints, setting them with power and unction upon their hearts; using the Scriptures for conviction and for comfort; using them as that wondrous way and medium of the communication of Himself to them. They are brought to a double submission to the Scriptures by faith. First, they submit to them as the very and immediate Word of God, and then each one submits himself to such and such passages as the Holy Ghost is pleased to set on his heart. If the Lord finds you in a wrong way and says, what hast

thou to do by the waters of Sihor? you will find an authority. If He reproves you for backsliding, the reproof will stick in your conscience, and if He is pleased to come and comfort you with His love, you will find that that love is in your heart, shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, and some Scripture will probably have been used. And is not this an excellency, that you should know the mind of God, that you should have the Word of God set upon your heart, that it should be the communication to you of His mercy, that you should have an authority in your soul, that there should be a power conveyed to you? Bless God for His Word. It were well for England if she were brought back once more to the Holy Scriptures, and if that criticism that men now indulge in, were slain, and the Bible were to catechise them and deal with them and show them their sins, and how that they are but as grasshoppers in the sight of God. Woe is it to any nation to reject the Word of God. Says God, by Jeremiah, "They have rejected the Word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?"

The excellency is this, also, that they have the Holy Spirit. He was promised by Christ; He was promised to Christ by the Father, and He abides with the Church. Christ committed the keeping of the Church to the Father and gave the Spirit to give light to her and to reveal Christ, to bring His glory to her, to instruct her, to deal with her, to bring her to Christ. Great is the mercy given to a sinner when the Holy Spirit is given to him. The Apostle, meeting twelve Ephesians, said to them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" If you have a religion without the Holy Ghost it will be a mercy for you to lose it, as those men lost their first baptism. A Holy Ghost religion alone will take you to heaven and carry you indeed safely through this life and bring you honourably to your graves. They have the Spirit. Says Christ, the world knows Him not, cannot perceive Him. Ye know Him for He shall dwell with you and be in you. And He promises that He shall glorify Christ. "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you".

And lastly, on this point, the excellency which the Lord's people have is the glory of Christ; this covers them. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them". This is a great covering. Whatever they appear to men to be, it signifies nothing at all, matters nothing to God. He sees them covered; He is their

excellency, and this glory comes to each one in measure. "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you". And in this there are many things which might be noticed. One or two only will I mention, as first, He works faith in them; works the work of faith with power, as He did in Abraham who, having received Isaac in a figure from the dead, esteemed that God was able to raise him up again from off that altar on which he had laid him. Faith here can laugh at impossibilities and cry, it shall be done. It says, there are no contingencies with God, no difficulties there. All contingencies are with us; all the difficulties that stumble us are in ourselves. Faith, drawn into a lively exercise on God, by the Spirit, can perceive this, yea, do it - say to the mountain, be thou removed, and it is done. "All things are possible to him that believeth." Faith will bring supplies to you, yea providential supplies. It will fetch your food from a far country, even bring in Jesus Christ, so that you will eat His flesh and drink His blood, and live in Him, and by Him, and to Him, and for Him. The Spirit also is the Author of all prevailing prayer. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications". And that is connected with a sight of Christ. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced". A wondrous thing; and this is spoken of by Paul in the Romans, where he says: For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. We know not what to pray for as we ought. You are in trouble, and your first cry is, O, to get out of it, but the Spirit may lead you to say, "Thy will be done". You are in some pressing necessity, and the first thought is to run here or there, and lean on that arm, and draw out of that bank, but the Spirit may lead you, in your deep want, to look to God, and you will find answers of peace come. The old way was to obtain promises by faith, to work righteousness, that is to call upon the Name of the Lord, and it still is good. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shall glorify Me". 'Tis an excellent thing, 'tis a beauty that God gives to His children, when He gives them this. Here is the Spirit, here is the glory, here is everything that we need to have. And is this disputed? Why should men dispute it and why should the devil seek to cast down one who is placed in this wondrous elevation? God has done it; man did not do it himself, could not have done it. God has done it; He has taken the poor out of the dust and taken the beggar from the dunghill and set



him with princes. He has, as Paul writes to the Ephesians, He has set the person up to sit with Christ in heavenly things. Ah, but Satan says, he shall come down. He sought to cast Peter down from his excellency. Said Christ to him, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." As to its immediate actings it seemed soon to be failing, and it did. As to its root, Jesus looked upon him, and faith instantly arose and brought tears to his eyes. He went out and wept bitterly. You may be tempted; the enemy may say, well, I am going to try what I can do with that person. He will touch your nature; God may allow him to touch your substance, nay to touch your body; one only restriction, limitation - touch not his life. There is a great God who permits things. Jesus submitted Himself to the tempter for the time, not to be a prey to his temptations, but to cast him down, and instead of his design being accomplished, God bruises Satan under the feet of His people; as it is written by Isaiah: The lofty city, the lofty city, He layeth it low, He bringeth it down to the ground. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy. Trouble may come and this may appear to be sent to cast you down. Job's excellency in grace shone brilliantly when trouble first came. No Sabeian, no Chaldean, no wind, no fire, appeared to him, but only God. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord." But when his misunderstanding friends charged him with hypocrisy, then he was irritated and maintained his integrity, and it seemed as if, in the irritation and the irritable words he uttered, his excellency would go, but it came up

Gold in the furnace tried  
Ne'er loses aught but dross

"When He hath tried me", said Job of God, "I shall come forth as gold". Do you feel weak? Are you too weak to stand? too ignorant to understand the motions of your own minds? Are your feet ready to slip? Well, there is one thing God will do. This towering strength of the enemy shall be as a bowing wall - whose foundation is loosened by torrents of rain and soon the mud wall, for it is nothing better, shall come tumbling down - and as a tottering fence shall it fall. Their consultation shall come to nothing, for Christ says: "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand". Hold fast then, my friends,

to that excellency which God has given you; to that blessed Lord Jesus whom the Holy Spirit has revealed. Hold fast, and the day is coming - who can say how soon - when the enemy shall no more be able to reach you. May the Lord help us to stand fast. Of a weak man, Paul says: "God is able to make him stand." Now may He that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can think or even ask, even that preservation of our souls which we long for, help us to wait on Him and to say with the Apostle Paul - who knew that though the ship must be broken, he and all with him should get safe to land - "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me",

AMEN.