

SB. 814  
B631c  
L-PS12

Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Morning  
5th July 1936

Text Romans 1 verse 16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

This epistle is remarkable for the wonderful argument, from the fall of man to justification, and for all the particular doctrines, which are involved in that statement. The Holy Ghost inspired Paul, and used his great abilities for the glory of God in writing his epistles, as well as in preaching. But this epistle seems to stand out with so much prominence in this particular, that the Apostle was inspired to argue the case, beginning with the fall, and ending with glory, through Jesus Christ. It behoves the people of God to be very anxious about doctrine. It behoves you, who profess to know God, to be very careful about doctrine. Good doctrine is the foundation of good experience. The latter cannot be without the former.

I do not mean to say that every child of God has an equal knowledge of doctrine, but I do say that in principal, by the Holy Ghost good doctrine is laid in every soul, as the ground and reason of a good experience. And if it were the will of God, I would like to be enabled, in my remaining days to be very expositional on this great point, the doctrine of God, that we might increase in the knowledge of God. But we cannot increase in the knowledge of God, except in the way that He has ordained, which is by His word. Which word is the word of doctrine, and if the Lord will help me this morning, I want to bring before you something of doctrine.

Last Wednesday I had this same word for a text, but dealt more generally with it, now I would like to bring before you something which I apprehend is in this word, the power of God unto salvation. The gospel reveals the power of God unto salvation, some may say, well we believe that, because we have felt the power. That is a good thing for you, but there is this to be said, whenever you feel the power of God in your soul, whether you realise it or not, there is involved in that, implicit in that, remarkable things, some of which I would like now to bring before you. I shall speak in four particulars if God will help me, the first particular is this, the covenant of grace, the council of peace.

It was a powerful council, it took hold of these things which shall be for salvation, experience, and hope here and glory hereafter. If the Spirit should guide us, and carry our faith back to eternal things, to the council of peace, we shall see this in some degree. That Jehovah in council of peace, the three Persons of the Trinity being there, equal in nature, power and glory, entered into a covenant, "Ordered in all things and sure." (2 Samuel 23 verse 5). And made over wisdom, love, grace, power and glory, to the whole Church in that council. And you have this stated by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all Spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world," (chapter 1 verses 3 & 4) "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself," (verse 5) "In whom we have received an inheritance," (verse 11). And all these blessings which, beginning with regeneration, are carried on by teaching, and revelation in the heart of those blessings, which were designed, fixed, and settled in the council of peace.

The will of God there, ordered and purposed everything, according to His own volition and movement. That is a wonderful power, omnipotent purpose and covenant, the Apostle teaches the same thing, in his second Epistle to Timothy, where he says, "Who (God) 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 verse 9). Everything relating to the Church, every blessing she was to receive, eternal life, justification, sanctification, regeneration and every blessing in the gospel to be experienced. God gave Jesus Christ for His people, and this is the power of God unto salvation. The covenant of grace was no after thought conceived after the fall, but an eternal purpose, a purpose so powerful, so fixed, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one word or little thing shall pass unfulfilled. If we rightly conceive of omnipotence, as it respects the Church, we shall conceive that, if I may use such a word, it commenced at its origin in eternity.

The second point is this, the Incarnation of Christ, the Son of God. It was no ordinary birth, no ordinary circumstance, the child born then was born according to the Angels declaration to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of the God." (Luke 1 verse 35). "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest:" (verse 32). We very commonly speak about the incarnation.

But if we are led into the truth of it, we certainly shall find it is a powerful thing. And of course without doubt you believe that it was connected with the salvation of the Church. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given:" (Isaiah 9 verse 6), Miraculously, gloriously, no pomp attended it, no celebration of men noticed it, for it was without note of that nature. But so wonderful was this event, so miraculous, so glorious, involving such mighty issues, that an Angel came to some shepherds and told them, "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke 2 verse 12). "Because there was no room for them in the inn." (verse 7). How that declaration was made, we read, "And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God." (verse 13). When men looked on that infant, not an ordinary infant, Angels came from heaven and proclaimed that He was no ordinary child. "He was, "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel," (verse 34), God's own incarnate Son. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of Angels; but He took on Him the Seed of Abraham". (Hebrews 2 verse 16). A great act, a loving act, a condescending act, a mighty descent from above to the virgins womb.

A mighty act of God, He came as the Lord's Servant, "All we like sheep had gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53 verse 6). Meditate for a moment on this mighty thing, God the Father loving His Eternal Son with an ineffable love, being equal to each other in Eternity, looked on that Son, and took (if we are the people of God) our sins, the sins of the whole Church from Adam to the last soul that shall be saved, and laid them upon His Son. Which means He laid the curse, all the pain, sufferings wrath and anguish, brokenness of heart on His Son. With all the hiding of His face, all the malice of the devil, and with the hatred of men, all of them together met on His Son. Was not that a mighty thing? the power of God unto Salvation.

No sinner could enter into heaven any other way than this, and God took the sins of the whole Church and imputed them to Christ. And He bore the punishment due, the desertion of God due, the curse of God due, with the hiding of His Father from Him, all due to the sinners, and laid them upon His Son. Also in this point, is this, it was a powerful thing, a power in the Son of God incarnate to receive that imputation. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," (John 3 verse 16), and His only begotten Son so loved the world that, as it were, He laid Himself bare, looked on the sinful people whom He loved, and, as it were, said to His Father, 'Lay all that punishment on Me.

Was He able, was He capable of receiving that ? Yes. "Who is this that commeth from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah ? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength ? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." (Isaiah 63 verse 1). " And there was none to help....Therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me;" (verse 5). Isaiah further prophesied, "For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded." (Isaiah 50 verse 7). "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned.....He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned" (verse 4) "The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious." (verse 5). "For the Lord God will help Me." (verse 7). I was willing to suffer all that, I have power to suffer it, My Deity is the foundation, and the gift of the Holy Spirit without measure, was sufficient to receive that imputation. If the Spirit reveals this to you dear brethren in Christ, you will stand before that mystery with hearts melting with amazement, and with a blessed hope of an interest in it. And you will not know how to get low enough into the dust of self abasement, nor how to praise God sufficiently for such mercy.

The third point is this, that the Holy Ghost undertook in the council of peace, with the Father and the Son, to be in Christ to help Him, to speak promises to Him, and help Him in all that He had to undertake and suffer. He was with Him, He was given to Christ without measure, as John informs us in the gospel, "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." (John 3 verse 34). That Spirit was with Him, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11 verse 2). This was power, divine power, wonderful omnipotence unto salvation. The Holy Ghost was first of all in the covenant, and actually given to Christ, before He was given to any saint after the incarnation.

In that blessed Jesus you have the fulfilment of the first promise that God gave in Eden, when speaking to the cursed serpent. He said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." (Genesis 3 verse 15). The seed of the woman is Christ, and Christ came and had the Spirit, "And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10 verse 18). He further promised the saints, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Romans 16 verse 20). The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of Wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. (Isaiah 11 verse 2).

Now my brethren these points, as I judge are of very great importance, and have an intimate connection with true experience. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."

Now we come to the fourth point, that of believing, every one that believeth, this power (which I have named so briefly and inadequately), to them it is made known, to everyone who has faith given to him, and wrought in him by the Holy Ghost. You will never rightly believe without the Holy Ghost, you cannot. In nature's condition you cannot, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2 verse 14). "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." (1 Corinthians 2 verses 9,10). That is the word of Paul by inspiration, to the people of God, He hath revealed them unto us, Why? Given us of His Spirit, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," (1 Corinthians 2 verse 11). Of course you understand that allusion to man, your thoughts are just your own property, nobody knows them, unless you express them. And God's thoughts are His thoughts.

A great minister of the gospel in Scotland, Doctor Duncan, when the Lord met with him in a particular way, said this, as he sat receiving the things of God 'I did not think I was well thought upon the other day when God favoured me, but that came into my mind a little afterwards, (rather I thought,) I in a very small degree, know what that means, it was not myself thinking, it was God thinking on me, and you will find it in a measure when you are blessed, it will be just what the Lord says.' "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29 verse 11). And He will speak these thoughts into your heart, that is by the Spirit.

Now it is this way of believing, do not mistake a general belief for this particular believing. You as a congregation doubtless believe these things. I suppose there is nobody present hearing me who would contradict my statement, but then the thing is the belief of them, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2 verse 8). A peculiar gift that, a creation of the Spirit in the heart. This faith believes everything that God reveals to it, when He reveals the law, it is true faith that believes it.

The sinner says, I am lost, I have sinned. Faith believes in the curse, and when the Spirit brings Jesus Christ to view, faith believes in Him, receives Him, holds Him, loves Him, and this is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. It consists in many things, in the communications of grace whereby a sinner's heart is lifted up toward God. It consists in repentance towards God which is very different to remorse, which may land you in hell. Repentance toward God will bring you to heaven,

Repentance is a gift bestowed  
To save a soul from death; (Gadsby's 241 verse 1)

This grace of faith believes in Christ's Person, the Son of God. He that hath the Son hath the Father also, He that hath not the Son hath not the Father, "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me:" (John 14 verse 11). And faith lays hold of this, as it is revealed, I am not speaking of a general thing, but of a particular manifestation of truth in some measure, and in some particular of faith. It lays hold of it, and that is salvation. You will then believe that verse in the Psalms, "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." (Psalm 130 verse 4). Now that will bring an act of faith into your soul, that will save you. You will never leave Jesus Christ really, if you have that faith. You will never leave praying for forgiveness till you get it, if you have that faith, that will be salvation in your soul. When you see Christ is called the Lord our righteousness, you will cleave to that truth, by faith. You will never be happy on that point, until you receive that righteousness for yourself.

Then it is written, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength:" (Isaiah 45 verse 24). I the worst of men, the vilest of sinners, I have righteousness and strength. It is a wonderful thing for your own working arm to be broken, and for you to have grace to do nothing, and to be nothing but a lost sinner. That Christ may come unto you and save you, and show you that wondrous robe Himself. "And this is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 33 verse 16). This is the power of God in the soul, a real believer receives this salvation. Oh says one, if you knew my case, you would not try to encourage me. Well, what is your case? Well I am the vilest sinner out of hell. Are you, as a sinner, greater than Christ is, as a Saviour? Can your sins be greater than His infinite merit? Can your guilt be greater than His blood? Can all your departures from Him, all idolatries, all adulteries, and all kinds of sin, can they be more than His blood? If any one could have sinned, more than Christ could forgive, I am that one. But, Oh you cannot stand with your objections, when He comes in some way and measure.

When He comes you will believe Him. That is salvation in your soul. It is personal, it is particular, it is powerful, it is sufficient to do what He intends, to save your soul. Ah when it is in some degree of fulness, you will say, you will take up the 103rd Psalm, as your own. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; (verses 1,2,3). Mark that, all thy diseases, that is all the corruptions, all the weaknesses, all thy fears, all thy troubles about thy sins, all outbreakings and evil irruptions of sin, all these diseases. You say, surely not, I tell you if Christ comes with His salvation, there will not be a disease left in your feelings for a moment. Not a thing. But my sins, you will search for them, and not find them, the power of God is more than the power of sin. The power of the atonement is more than the power of your estrangements. The gospel is pervasive, it pervades the soul, it touches, if I may so express it, it touches every faculty of your soul. And the gospel is pervasive, it pervades you. You cannot for a moment doubt the power of God unto salvation.

My friends, salvation does not mean comfort here only, it does not mean that for a few hours you will be blessed in your soul and no more. It means heaven. It means likeness to Christ in heaven, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3 verses 1 & 2).

Now that is salvation, completed salvation on earth is happiness, salvation on earth is holiness, salvation on earth is sweetness. The sweetness of God's salvation on earth is meat and drink to the soul. Salvation in heaven is complete holiness, complete happiness, complete conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. Take this inadequate word of mine, and may God bless it to you if it please Him. And grant that it may be made a sweet word to you, then you will say with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Some of us have been ashamed at times, perhaps you have been ashamed in a sense, lest any one should speak to you, ashamed in your house, if you have had company not agreeable to the gospel. But if you get a little love in your soul, a little of this salvation, then you will understand the word shame. In another sense you say, I am ashamed of myself, I am ashamed that I have been such a coward, ashamed that I have been such a sinner, that I am such a sinner. But of Christ, of His Father, of His Spirit, of salvation, and the Trinity which wrought that salvation I am not ashamed.

I have had a little experience, of that,

No; when we blush, be this our shame,  
That we no more reveal His name.

(Gadsby's 427 verse 4)

So when we blush it will be, because we are no more loyal to Him,  
that we love Him so little, that we praise Him so little, that we are so  
lacking in conformity to the gospel, that we do not walk worthy of God.

Amen