

SB.  
159

1364 o  
LaP812

27/10/02

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday morning 23 December 1923

ROMANS 15 v 29

"And I am sure that, when I come unto you,  
I shall come in the fullness of the  
blessing of the gospel of Christ"

There are two doctrines contrasted in this Epistle, doctrines which embrace all men. They are contrasted by the Spirit through Paul, so as, in the one case, men shall find there is no excuse for them in that dispensation under which they live, and so as that, in the other dispensation, they shall discover the eternal goodness, and glory of God. The law, which condemns all who make a breach in it, that allows no excuse, that stops every mouth by the brightness, the justice, of its sentence; the law in which the infinite justice, and uprightness of God, should shine. Though men say that His ways are not equal, He, even in that dispensation will say to them - Are not My ways equal, saith the Lord; are not your ways unequal. If a man keep these commandments of Mine, he shall live, and if he forbear, if he commit transgression, and I punish him, what injustice is there there? There is no inequality in God's law, nor in demonstration of it. Why, even in our own land, nobody says it is an injustice done to a thief that he is committed to prison; nobody, that the law of the land is unequal or its demonstration improper, when a murderer is hanged. What injustice does God do when He condemns a sinner? Do good, fulfil the law, keep every commandment, let there be no iniquity in you, in your life, and in your obedience, but perfect conformity to that law God has given you, and you shall find that His way is good, equal. He will pay you your wages when you have done your work, and done it properly. But if you fail, He who sovereignly made you and blessed you under a good law, will say, your ways have not been good, your life has not been righteous, your heart has not been pure, your affections have not been wholly placed on Me, you have forgotten Me, you have gone astray, you have rebelled against Me - "Now the soul that sinneth it shall die". By the law no flesh can be justified in My sight, because all flesh has corrupted its way upon

the earth. O sinner, God make you think of it, and make you feel it. He is righteous. He cannot do but what is right. I believe every condemned person will one day find that God, in His sovereign sentence, is absolutely just. Every newborn person is brought, sooner or later, more or less distinctly, to justify God in the law, and that whatever the law says, God is just in fulfilling what He has said, giving a reward to the righteous, and punishment to the wicked. This law stands up in this Epistle marvellously. Then, by the Holy Ghost, the Apostle contrasts this with another law, another covenant, and in this other law, and covenant, it is revealed that God justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus; that He takes the guilt of sin away by the blood of the cross; that He removes the filthy garments of sinners from them, and gives them a change of raiment, whereby they are justified, and that by His Spirit and grace He removes the pollution, and the dominion of sin from every person in that covenant, and herein is His glory. Justice, so terrible in the law, shines with mildness in the gospel. Majesty, that terrifies a wicked person, is so sweetly mild and bearable as not to terrify the approaches of a sinner. The gospel says, Come, and he comes, and mercy has full vent to the most miserable of all. And this gospel is put, as it were, against the law, so as that the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, shall shine, and shine, and shine through eternity in the holiness, in the happiness, of all who are justified by faith in Christ. And to preach this gospel was Paul's joy, and, hearing that the Lord had saints in Rome - knowledge of their faith had reached him - he felt a strong desire to pay them a visit; he would fain go to them. He said, I am ready to preach the gospel in Rome, though I know what it will mean. I am ready to preach the gospel to you; the gospel which was such a reproach, and is still a reproach, I am not ashamed of it. I am not ashamed of the Man Christ Jesus who was crucified through weakness, but who liveth by the power of God. I am not ashamed of that great plan of salvation revealed in the Scriptures, for therein is the very power of God made known, and therein is the righteousness of God revealed without the law, that righteousness which is upon all, and to all, that believe, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile here. And now, at the close of this wonderful Epistle, in which these two dispensations or covenants are made fully known, and so wonderfully contrasted; at the close of this Epistle, I say, he expresses a confidence with

respect to his preaching, and long desired visit to Rome to preach the gospel, and he says - "I am sure". We must remember he was an inspired Apostle, and that he was made the Apostle to the uncircumcision, and in remarkable degrees he was eminently useful, wonderfully blessed to the ingathering of the people of the Most High; so he says "I am sure that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Every minister sent to preach is, in his own measure, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, made of some use and blessing to those to whom he preaches. The word of God does not return void, but accomplishes that which God pleases, and prospers in that thing whereto He sends it. I wish it may please the Lord to make this so in my case here still more and more, as the end of one's ministry draws near. But I am not to speak about myself, but rather, as helped, notice this gospel. It has a blessing, it has a full blessing and these two things I propose by the Lord's merciful help, to bring before you. First, the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Second the fullness of that blessing. "I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

The gospel of Christ has the blessing of eternal life, life for the dead. "I am the Life" says the Lord Jesus. It finds every subject of divine operation dead, and quickens the soul into life. This is a blessing unsought, undesired. "I am found of them that sought Me not". God seeks a sinner. He desires to have him, to have him for His resting place. "This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell for I have desired it" God desires the heart of a sinner whom He has loved with an everlasting love, but it is a heart dead, and polluted, stony, and blind, and full of enmity, and every evil; a corrupt thing, not a fit dwelling for God, yet a dwelling which He desires, and will have. So the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus comes, and brings divine life into that heart which is the fulfilling of the promise - "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh" "I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord" and they shall not turn away from Me. This is a blessing of the gospel. It heals, it guides, it influences, it opposes sin, it tells a sinner there is a way to hell, it tells him there is a way to heaven, it gives him a new appetite, it sets him on a new pursuit, it shows him the utter emptiness of the whole of creation through sin, the

unsatisfying nature of everything that is in the whole world. It shows to him that there is in God everything that he can need, desire, and pray for. It sanctifies his affections, it directs his mind, it fills him with hope sometimes. It makes him long to know Him from whom the life has come, even the Lord Jesus. It fills him with desire, such as the Apostle expresses as being his own - "That I may win Christ". It brings him to esteem things as the Apostle esteemed them, loss, dung, and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, "for whom", says the Apostle, "I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him". It gives union to Christ. It contains, within itself, likeness to Christ. My dear friends, if we are born again we are born in the likeness of Jesus Christ, and in that moment when divine life was imparted, that began to be fulfilled in us - Predestinated to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. That was the beginning of it. That is one blessing of the gospel. "I give unto My sheep eternal life".

Another blessing of the gospel is that wondrous love that the eternal God has for the church, that wondrous love that has its highest, and greatest, and most glorious expression, and manifestation in the coming of the eternal Son of God to sojourn in the world for a short time, to be made a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Never through eternity will the free love of God exceed that manifestation that was given, as the Apostle John says - "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins". O, what a blessing. The love of God fixed on the unloveliest objects, on loathsome sinners. The love of God that could not, would not, be put off by all the untowardness, and ignorance, and enmity, and death, of those who were embraced in eternity by it. The love of God that said to His eternal Son, Thou must go into the world, and take the position, the precise position, and condition of those who are yours. I have given them to Thee, and I give Thee grace for them. Love that made the Son say - "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings, and offering for sin, Thou wouldest not", "but a body hast Thou prepared Me". "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart". Love that gave Him wings to fly from the throne to the cross; that was not offended with anything that

came in His way to seek to hinder Him from redeeming His people. Love that many waters could not quench, floods could not drown, money could not buy. Love that will bring Him to the poorest, and the most miserable, and the most distressed, to comfort, to enrich, and to save. Love that bridges everything, every river that comes, over every mountain, and every difficulty. Love that says - "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." O my friends, if we are loved of God, everything must come right. Every trouble we have shall have a good issue. Every difficulty we meet with we shall be carried through. Every burden we have we shall be sustained under. Every temptation that we have to meet we shall conquer. All indwelling sin shall be trodden under foot, and the devil also, for God shall shortly bruise him under our feet. Love will manage all, see to all, carry all its objects through, and bring all to heaven at last. O to feel this love is wonderful. To feel it is that, that every child of God desires. To hear the Lord say - "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" - is that. It is a voice that each child of God desires to hear. The blessings of the gospel of Christ.

Another blessing of the gospel is that to which I drew your attention at the first, namely justification, that wondrous act of God, even of God in Christ, taking the sins of the church and making them Christ's, and taking the righteousness of Christ and making it the property, the justification, and title to heaven, of the church. We must experience that if we are going to heaven. It follows in the conscience, condemnation. It follows, in the feeling, sweet deliverance. It follows a sense of distance from God, a sense of unfitness for His presence, a sense of realisation, powerful and painful realisation, of a deservedness of hell. It comes where it was not looked for. "I am found of them" in this particular "that sought Me not." O when God brings near His righteousness according to His covenant promise, it is a wonderful thing that takes place. "I bring near My righteousness". You may feel very far off from it, and feel you can never attain to it, but it depends not on the attainment of a person, but on God bringing it to him. "I bring near My righteousness". This is a rich blessing. If ever we come to know that, we have an interest in that amazing passage in the Corinthians -

"He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". We shall see wonders in this law. Think of it, my friends, think of the blackness, and the turpitude, and the guilt of your nature, and the consequent fitness for hell, unfitness for God's presence. Consider what sin makes us. It makes us obnoxious to divine justice, it makes us what is called in the Scripture "abominable". Not too strong is that word "abominable". Consider that the Almighty took all this away absolutely, took it all from the very people who had it as their inheritance, and their conduct. Took it from them and, in a way of infinite goodness, wisdom, and love, laid it all on that pure, blessed God-Man, Christ Jesus, and so laid it on Him as that it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be punished. It behoved Him to suffer. It behoved the Father to say to His sword "Awake O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My Fellow" So did God act to His Son incarnate. Oh, if we had but a view of this by faith now, how deeply interested we should be, how fervent would our desires be, to see that that was done for us. O how our hearts would long, and ache to know that, that marvellous transaction, that exceeds all our conception as to the wonder, the infinitude of it, in the wisdom, and the love, and the justice of it. How we should long to know that the dear Lord Jesus Christ did really take the place, a traitor's place, a condemned person's place, take it, and stand there, and be exposed justly to the wrath of God, and liable to the desertion of His Father. O sinner, may this be revealed to you. "He hath made Him to be sin". And what for? Look at the other side, so to speak, that we, whose sins He removed, that we, who deserve hell, that we, who are not fit for the presence of God, that we might, without an act of ours, without a thought of it, without a wish for it, that we, ere we were born, should, in the purpose of God, and then in the fullness of time in our own soul's experience, be made the righteousness of God. And mark that expression, "the righteousness of God". Not the righteousness of a man, a mere man, such as we ourselves should have had if we had not fallen, and sinned. That would have been wonderful, the righteousness of a man who had never sinned, but here is the Man Christ Jesus who is also God, so as that there is an infinitude of beauty, of justice, of goodness, of perfection, in that righteousness which is made over to the whole church of God, and to every individual person made alive by the Spirit. Now if we are the

righteousness of God, what fault can God find in us? And so it is written "To present you holy, unblameable, and unproveable in God's sight" but do not look for it in your own state here, except by faith as seeing it made over to you, for we shall be sinners as long as we live, but not willing sinners, and persisting in sin; not determined to sin, but having sin in our nature, liable every minute to fall into some sin; but still, as thus justified, made the righteousness of God. May the Holy Spirit put the emphasis where it is to be put in our experience "made the righteousness of God in Him." This is "being justified freely from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses". This is one blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Another blessing is sanctification. I know that I express the wish, earnest wish, of every Christian here, namely to be holy. Oh, but we have a body of sin and death. We have, through mercy, a conflict. We have, through the power of indwelling sin, many shameful defeats. We have a disposition against God. We have an aversion to all that is good. We have an intense untowardness to the throne of God's heavenly grace. We are poor, vile creatures. And do not you who are godly feel, sometimes, that it is most difficult for you to reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ. Are not vile affections in your nature which rise again, and again? the wrong desires that prompt you, the covetousness that is within you as a strong principle; are not all the wicked members that are laid deep in our very nature at times felt to be working, and lusting, and striving, most persistent in their strife; are not these, in your feelings a great, and solemn reality, and therefore give rise to what seems exceeding proper, a question whether you can have the life of God in your souls? And how can such people be made holy? How can sanctification be thought of in them, and by them? There are two ways revealed in the gospel of Christ which make up this blessing of sanctification. The first is, that sanctification is as much, as truly, imputed as righteousness is. "Who, of God, is made unto us sanctification". Mind that. That felt, that realised, that believed, will take off every child of God from trying to make himself what he ought to be for the presence of God. He will look to Christ alone for that. He will look to Him for all the holiness that is necessary to his happiness. Look to Christ

R emember what Hart teaches, and you sing it

Christ has holiness enough  
To sanctify us all

All who are in that verse can sing

That we're unholy needs no proof  
We sorely feel the fall  
But Christ has holiness enough  
To sanctify us all

Oh Christian, look to the Lord Jesus for your holiness.

But then, secondly, this blessing has in it a most wondrous subjective holiness, holiness wrought in the mind. What is holiness, but conformity to the will of God? He who submits in an affliction to the will of God has, in that submission, holiness. He who follows after the Lord Jesus, according to the word - "Be ye followers of God as dear children" - has, in that pursuit, holiness. He who worships God in Spirit and in truth has, in that worship, holiness. He who finds himself brought into a sweet frame of submission to God's holy dispensations in providence, has, in that submission, holiness. This is wrought, this is given, given by God. It is a blessing. Ah, you will never be healed of your unholy affections but by this grace of holiness imparted by the Holy Spirit. You will never be healed of any of your wild affections, of your contrary feelings, of your carnality, but by these blessings of imparted holiness. It really is the grace of the Spirit coming from Jesus Christ, that unction of the Holy One. Christ is the Holy One of the Spirit because He is that unction in the soul, and where that is, there is an imparted holiness. So the person blessed with it is really a blessed, holy person, hence these sweet names that are given to the Lord's people come to be real in them. "Called to be saints". You may sometimes fully sympathise with Erskine who says he was a devil. "I am both a devil"; you may hesitate to follow him - "and a saint". You will follow the first. It is a very sad, and very solemn place to make such a confession, but it is a mercy to be honest, and to say just what you feel; that you feel anything but a saint. "Called to be saints" therefore also "Holy



brethren, partaker of the heavenly calling", and again, children. "Be ye followers of God as dear children". "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." These names belong to the worst of men. They are given to them, not assumed, not taken, for they are afraid of such beautiful names even being addressed to them. I am sure some of you would be very much astonished at times if anyone should speak to you as saints, as holy brethren; you would instantly object all your unholy feelings; but then the truth remains - "Holy brethren". Hence also those wonderful appellations in the Song - "My sister, My spouse, My dove, My undefiled" all belong to saints, saints who feel themselves sinners; saints who feel the load of sin. To those God says - "My undefiled". What a wondrous thing it is to be holy. What an amazing grace it is in God that moves Him to say to a sinner who has been unclean "My undefiled". "The blessing of the gospel of Christ".

Another blessing that the Lord gives by, and through, His holy gospel is this, namely strength to hold on their way. "The righteous shall hold on his way". O the fear of missing "that prize such numbers never seek, such numbers seek in vain". A heavy fear, and sometimes it is felt. There is a coming of temptation on all the world. Who can keep us from it? from falling under it? There is a conflict in every saint. There is a struggle. There is indwelling sin, the "inbred law", and that claims and seeks indulgence, and who can overcome? Only the believer in Jesus. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God". No other person will ever overcome. Empty profession wont do. A name to live is not sufficient for this. The countenance of God's people wont help in this. Nothing will do but the all-sufficient grace of Christ, brought by the sweet operations of the eternal Spirit. What a blessing it is to be held on day by day. Troubles about you may come, but this state is not touched by those things. I would the Lord would keep this before us, nothing touches this state, nothing affects it, nothing can destroy it. It is beyond the reach of men, of devils, of time, of law, of everything that can be adverse. It is beyond the reach of them all. And now, says the Apostle, as a consequence of this - which it is, is also and first consequence - as a consequence of being justified, and receiving that justification by faith, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. Now this

is wonderful. If we are at peace with ourselves we have not much evidence of having peace with God. Are you at peace with yourselves? Do you think your state is not very bad? Do you think you will come off well? Or, are you quarrelling with yourself? I believe the fault of a great many professors is this, that they have never had a thorough quarrel with themselves, never been brought to fall out of love, and conceit with themselves. When a man's soul is quickened, his conscience instructed in, and by the Lord, and his understanding informed about God by the Holy Spirit, that man has a real quarrel with himself. Instead of being an enemy of God, he is an enemy of himself. "I hate my sins, I loathe myself" is his language sometimes. How stands the case with you in this particular? Now if you have no peace with yourself, if you have not peace with sin, if you have not peace with the world, then this will come, more or less it will come, come through Christ, come through justification in your conscience, namely peace with God. And this has several very beautiful branches in it; let me name two of them at least. The first is this, that faith perceives that there is no quarrel with the soul on the part of God. O, if He is pleased to smile on you, you will know He does not quarrel with you. When the Lord rebukes, when He frowns, when He holds a soul at a distance, when He is aloof, as it were; when Christ wont come near, when all your entreaties cannot bring Him to you for a time, then you think, now He has got something against me. I could not tell you how often I have thought that the Lord has got something against me, and you may feel the same. And if you look at your heart's life - I say your heart's life, for that may be very different from your external life - if you look at your heart's life you will see plenty of causes why God should be against you, plenty of causes why the Lord Jesus should stand aloof from you - why, you stand before Him for a moment on that ground! - but if, instead of His holding Himself at a distance, instead of seeming to frown on you, He smiles, and speaks comfortably to you, and says "Come to Me" and, in speaking comfortably to you, He comes near to you, and you feel His presence, then you see by faith that God has no quarrel with you, nothing against you. But O, it does need faith to believe this in the face of an hour's living. I say it really advisedly as out of a very painful acquaintance with it; if you look at one hour of your own inward life when sin teems, and struggles, and rails, and insists, and persists, and you think, I shall certainly be overcome, O that

makes His coming so wonderful. The Apostle's question about Abraham is very important here. Did Abraham receive justification when he was circumcised, when he was cut off from the world, or when he was uncircumcised? Think for a moment. Why, says Paul, in uncircumcision. That is to say when, in respect of what that rite did and meant, when he was a polluted person, when he had not that wonderful thing to recommend him to God. When you receive justification you wont be clean; you will be cleansed by it, but when it comes you wont be a clean person; you will be unclean, and be seeing, and feeling it. Then what a wonder for God to give you His peace. And mind that word - "My peace I give unto you". "My peace". A good thing to lose your own. Happy the people who lose their own peace, peace with themselves, and peace with the world. O, what a dreadful peace it is. But when you have lost that then the Lord comes and says - "My peace I give unto you". Justification in your conscience, peace in your spirit, God not calling you to book, not calling you to give an account. God not calling you to the bar of justice, not calling you to look at this sin, and that sin, though at another time He may do it, and do it graciously too. But here is the matter before us of justification; that is how it comes. Not in thy strength given for a full year, but every day. By thy weakness, sinner, and saint, thou shalt prove the strength of Christ. Paul, is it so? And so everyone finds it who is led in the same way, by the same Holy Spirit.

This is a blessing. You may say, with Peter, I will never deny Thee. But if you belong to Christ you will fall in some way to correct your error. I will never deny Thee, I will go to prison and die with Thee. O, but when the maid said to him, "Thou art one of them", He denied all knowledge of the Man, and he sware that it was so; he did not know Him. What a picture of a saint. What a picture. You have got the man, have you not, in yourself? You have got his boasting, and you have got his weakness; his cowardice you have got. O God keep us in the hour of trial. O to stand and "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Now these blessings of the gospel of Christ have many, many more to be added. One can only hint at any of them. I have only given hints now, poor hints too - still I believe they are right according to

Scripture - but let me name some others, as this for instance, the wondrous union that is in the gospel of Christ as between sinners and God, wondrous union set forth in the Scripture so beautifully - "I am the Vine, ye are the branches". My friends it is this that undoes all the work of sin in separating us from God. It is this that takes away the claim of the law to hold us, and to keep us at an infinite distance from God. It is this that removes all the barrenness of our wicked nature from us. It is this that brings us into a conformity to that word - "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples". You will never glorify God except you have union with Jesus Christ. You will never bring forth the fruits of righteousness except you have union with Jesus Christ. You will never be "to the praise of the glory of His grace" except you have union to Jesus Christ. Is it not a blessing then? Come, poor sinner, mourning your barrenness; come, you who say, barrenness is not all I have, but I have the rank weeds of sin growing apace; look at this blessing. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches". "Abide in Me, and I in you", so you shall bear fruit, and "Herein is My Father" - who sent Me to die for you, to whom I gave infinite satisfaction by My obedience and death, "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit". And what is this fruit? It is Christ-like, it comes from Him. The fruit of genuine humility, the fruit of unfeigned love, the fruit of a divinely wrought faith, the fruit of true self-denial, the fruit of obedience taking up a cross, and following Christ, the fruit of cleaving to Christ, and finding Him to be everything, "the chiefest among ten thousand", and that glorifies God. Not fruit that men can see very much of sometimes, except that there is always a savour of Christ where union with Him is in sweetness, and power. This is a blessing - union with Him. And remember, let me say it again, the fruit is Christ-like. When you look at the vine with branches growing out from the root, you find the fruit is the grape. You wont have the fruit of gall and wormwood where the root is Christ, but you will have fruit of godliness - "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God". This union is expressed also by the marriage union which, in a way is more intimate because more enduring than that which has first been named. When the fruit of the olive fails, and when all things here below seem to be dead, still the husband and wife are one. What an amazing word it is to be the bride of Christ, because she bears His Name, she

inherits His wealth. This is what the Lord expresses in the Scripture, and it is a blessing of the gospel. The law says, separation, and never speaks another word. The Gospel says, union, and effects it, brings it to pass in the experience. And one word more ere I close this morning. Another blessing of the gospel of Christ is fellowship, communion. When the law came on a sinner it cut him off clean from all communion with God. No friendly word, no cheering smile, will God ever give to a sinner through the law, never. Sinner, if you are under the law, you will have no fellowship with God. Now what a change, when one is brought under the gospel, for the Lord Jesus to speak friendly to him, to speak a kind word when his heart is distressed, a strengthening word when his spirit is weak, and failing. To speak an assuring word when he is full of doubt and fear. To speak a guiding word when he is uncertain as to which way to take. All this comes from the blessed gospel, the glorious gospel of Christ. No other way can it come. O think of it. And do you want a kind expression from God? You will have it by the gospel of Christ. Do you long to hear Him? He will speak to you by Jesus Christ. He does speak this way. What a mercy it is to hear Him. And says Paul to the Romans, I am come to preach to you, and when I come this full gospel I shall preach to you. This, I know, I shall come to you in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. May the Lord grant us to know it for His great Name's sake, and we shall then be blessed, happy people.

AMEN.