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Evening Sermon to leaflet 235

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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 10 June 1928

Song of Solomon 4 v 15

"A fountain of gardens, a well of living
waters, and streams from Lebanon"

I have good news for you, you who mourn, who may have felt this morning grief, grief for sin, transgression, and have confessed sorrowfully that your backslidings are many, and that you have greatly sinned against the Lord. News which, if properly received, will not make sin less in your judgment and feeling, but which will moderate your sorrow, remove guilt, cleanse defilement, and cause you to sing the song of the redeemed and bring an answer, in measure, to you, where the Saviour says - "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might be fulfilled in you", and yet it is not my good news. May the Lord make me the bearer of it to you, but it is His news. It is respecting Him - A fountain of gardens. Gardens, without water, are but a desert. A fountain in a fountain of gardens will make them an Eden, the joy of the Lord, and for His glory. A fountain specially set for these gardens; a fountain that God Himself has made; a fountain that is God Himself. And when I say it is made by Him, I mean that He need not have been a fountain to any garden, to any sinner. It is wholly of His goodness, divine goodness, that He is a fountain of mercy to any sinner, of life to a dead soul, of righteousness to an unjust person and holiness to a polluted sinner; of power to a weak creature; a fountain of faithfulness to an unfaithful person. God has made Himself this fountain of gardens.

A garden is a particular patch or place belonging to somebody, not a common, for all people to appropriate and walk about and over, an uncultivated piece; but a particular, a selected and enclosed piece belonging to a particular person to be cultivated and cared for by him. Solomon's vineyard - "My vineyard" says Solomon, "which is mine". It is his. "A garden

enclosed is My sister, My spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed". A garden is a place cared for. The difference between Israel, the land of promise, and the land of Egypt was particularised by God saying through Moses to Israel, the land whither ye go to possess it is not like the land of Egypt, a garden of herbs, watered by the foot, but a land of hills and of valleys; a land that drinketh in the rain of heaven; a land upon which the eyes of the Lord are from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Egypt, a garden of herbs, irrigated by the foot, the labourer going to the banks of the Nile and with his feet walking and making channels to his garden so that when the Nile should overflow, make its annual overflow, the garden would be watered and fructified. But Israel's land was not like that. Egypt had no rain from heaven; Israel had. This is the garden; the fountain of it is God. And it will be a mercy and it may be your comfort if I am enabled to speak of this fountain in the first place, a fountain of gardens.

This fountain is no other than God Himself; God in Christ. Christ declared that He was the Son of God, and this, His enemies well understood to mean, that He was equal with God. And the Apostle Paul speaking by the Holy Ghost, says of Christ, that He was in the form of God. To be in the form of God is to be God. God has no other form than Himself. To be in the form of God is to be eternal, self-existent, immense, and Christ is all that. Whatever is proper to Deity, Christ is. In His divine Person He is all that. Therefore we are told by the Holy Ghost through Paul that in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And every christian man or woman will be found to hold the eternal deity of Christ, believe that He is the self-existent God, the second Person in the Trinity, the only begotten Son of God, a mystery, and as it is in Christ, a mercy in itself incomprehensible; in incarnation, believable, seeable, knowable, obtainable, and to be enjoyed; a fountain of life. "With Thee is the fountain of life". The life of a christian is derived from the Lord Jesus. Its omnipotence is by the Lord Jesus; its growth is by the communications He is pleased to make; its everlasting happiness is by the enjoyment of Himself in heaven; a

fountain of light. By the fall we are darkness. Says Paul, by the Spirit, to the Ephesians "Ye were sometimes darkness but are now light in the Lord". "Ye are the children of the light and of the day". This light discovers our darkness, our alienation from the life of God. Regeneration brings people into trouble; the light of God shining on their sins makes them believe their sins, believe they are sinful and that they are alienated from the life of God. This light shows them the broad way, the wide gate into which they entered, in and by the fall, and also by actual practice. And this light shows the way from an evil state to a good state; from condemnation to justification; from pollution to holiness; from weakness to strength; and from all error to truth; from hell to heaven. A fountain of justification, and the ground, the comfortable truth to a sinner who is a sinner in feeling, is this - God justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus. We are justified. Says Paul "We conclude, we are justified without the deeds of the law". This justification changes a person in two particulars. First, it changes his state. Justification is a state, the state of a person. He stands under the law and he is condemned by it. He stands under the gospel and he is justified in that. His state is changed, and therefore he is under another law, the law of Christ. O what a great thing it is to be justified. Sinner, you cannot be acceptable to God without being justified. You cannot stand well with God without being justified. You cannot escape the condemnation of the law without being justified. You can never have a kindly smile, a friendly word, from God, without justification. Justification unites a sinner to a Holy God, makes him the friend of God. Abraham, being justified, was the friend of God. And justification opens out a blessed condition; justification alters the state of a person in another respect, namely, in his happy relation to, and occasional walk with, God. I say occasional, because it is not an uninterrupted experience here; it is to be hereafter, but O to have an occasional walk with God. Think of it; how happy this has made me occasionally. No condemnation "to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" No frown on God's face; no repelling of you when you attempt to make an approach to Him;

no upbraiding of you for your past wickedness and idolatries; no telling you to go to the gods you have had, because these are destroyed. He destroys the names of the idols out of the land, and now He brings these justified persons to walk with Him. What a state. And the fountain of this is Christ. Paul saw it and for himself said he esteemed all things but loss and dung and dross that he might win Christ and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That justification will open heaven to you, set wide the door, give you a welcome, a divine welcome. "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"

A fountain of holiness; a fountain of holiness. If the Scriptures told us to get this holiness in some way by ourselves, we might well despair, but the Holy Ghost's word is this, speaking of Christ, and to the Corinthians, He says "Who of God is made unto you sanctification", as well as justification; "sanctification, wisdom and redemption". It is a painful experience, that of sin working in your members. It was painful to the Apostle Paul not to be able to do the good he desired, and to be driven into the evil that he would avoid. It was painful to him, so painful as to constrain him to exclaim "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death". But it was great and great joy in him to be able to say - "I thank God through Jesus Christ".

A fountain of strength. Christ is the strength of God. Strength. You need it for prayer; you need it for faith; you need it for love; you need it for the exercise of every grace that God will have His people walk in and the strength of all graces is this fountain. O believer, you need not despair when you see your failings and fallings every day and every hour. Go to this fountain for strength. Let the weak say I am strong. The weak shall be as David and David as the house of God. This is our strength; strength rightly to believe in the Bible; strength to believe in the Lord Jesus; strength to submit to an

adverse providence, strength to take up the cross and follow Him. Strength to say "On Thy side are we Lord Jesus". Strength to say, I would be holy; though I am not, I would be. A fountain of strength.

A fountain of submission to the will of God. A fountain of submission enabling you honestly to pray "Thy kingdom come". What? when you read in Daniel that there was given to one like unto the Son of man, a kingdom and a dominion; a kingdom that should never end, never be destroyed, and that that kingdom is in the same book spoken of as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands and that it should break in pieces and scatter, like chaff before the wind, all other kingdoms; your kingdom, your love of sin, your love of everything that is wrong; this broken and scattered, and the kingdom of Jesus Christ set up. O what submission is needed for this; what self-denial is needed for this; what giving up of your own life; losing, hating and abandoning it, is needed for this blessed kingdom.

A fountain of perseverance. Left to take the least step in our mortal life, who could hope to enter heaven. The promise is for every moment. Happy is the man who gets that promise. Every moment. Every moment sin is watching its opportunity to overcome us. Every moment the devil, that foul spirit, that ceaseless enemy, is watching to devour us if he may. And now God covers His church, with a promise to keep her every moment, night and day. A fountain of perseverance.

The fountain of all fruitfulness; all fruitfulness; giving hope to a sinner that he may at least one day have realised in himself - "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit". Giving a hope of one day answering to that - "The trees of the Lord are full of sap". O, sometimes, when I read, or reflect on those words in the Psalm about the trees of the Lord being planted in the house of the Lord and bringing forth fruit in old age, it is a pain; the contrast between the promise and one's own condition. Can any of you sympathise with that? O but this fountain can give the fruitfulness.

A fountain of all fruitfulness. Here are the plants; can they water themselves. Here are the plants with endless enemies. A living tree has enemies. You might plant your garden as thick as you cared to do with artificial things, or dead sticks, and you would never see the fly, an enemy, on any one of them. Put in a living tree and you have got an enemy, and so the fruitfulness must come from the fountain, its care, its water, its efficacy; only this way.

A fountain of peace. There is such a thing as a divine peace in a soul, called the peace of God which passeth all understanding and it is said to keep the heart and mind by Jesus Christ. What a fountain, a fountain of joy. Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord and again I say rejoice. And Christ's word fulfilled in a person fills him with joy. That My joy might be fulfilled in you. A fountain of heaven, heaven itself in this Person.

Now my brethren, if you look at yourselves, you will see death; you will feel often, as the life of God is in you, death; death on your affections; death in respect of prayer; death with regard to faith; death with regard to submission and to walking in the ways of God. O, the awful death. And when this death is viewed and felt, then the enemy comes and says - well, you must give it up. No, says the Spirit, turn to this fountain, turn unto the Lord. You have indeed destroyed yourself but turn to Him. He said "I make all things new". All reviving, all helps, all things you need, I do. Turn to this fountain. This is a relative thing; it relates to gardens. A fountain of gardens, not alone. Christ will never be alone; He never was. In Eternity, rejoicing in the bosom of His Eternal Father, He said, "My delights were with the sons of men". He could not be alone. The mystery of the Godhead, let me just name this in passing, the mystery of the Godhead has in it this communion. There are three persons in the Godhead mutual in love as they are of one nature. Consultations, purposes, entered upon by these Persons - Can the Head, the Lord Jesus, be alone? Must He not have His body with Him? Can a church planted, be without Him? Can He be without the Church? Does He buy a piece of land and

plant, and will He leave it? Has He no further interest in it? The Church said in Jeremiah, next to the verse I had this morning, "O the hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land, as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night". A stranger has no interest in the land; he passes through it; perhaps he turns aside for convenience for a night. No interest. That is not the Lord; He seems to be that when He chastens and does not save experimentally, but that is not the Lord really. It was a question asked Him - "Why in Thy dealings shouldest Thou be so and so?" Now He wont be alone; He is a fountain of gardens; He must have His fellows with Him; He must have His children; He must have the purchase of His blood. He could not part with them; He must say something to them and they must respond and they do respond. He says "Let there be fruit" and fruit comes; "Let there be life" and there is life. "Let there be repentance" and repentance is manifested. He is not alone; He waters the gardens. He is for the gardens and the gardens are for Him. The gardens are made up of individual plants. Every plant that My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. But there are some plants planted by Him. "Ye are God's husbandry". He takes people who are dead and makes them living plants. Particular churches are gardens and there is this fountain, blessed fountain. And to look for a moment or two particularly at this point, we must make this remark, it means communications. You see a fountain "playing" as the word is. There is a communication made by it. It imparts itself, gives of itself. So Christ gives of Himself. Here is an experience. We, if we are right, we love experience. An experimental religion is the only religion the people of God can rejoice in and here it is. There is a communication, and mind this, the fountain does not communicate something different from itself. What it communicates is of itself; it is living water. This gives the character of a christian. This gives the kind of fruit that he bears. A solemn thing. You may make a profession without any communication of this blessed fountain and your fruit will be like the fruit of Israel, spoken of by the Spirit of God through Hosea - "Israel is an empty vine". Had he no fruit? Yes, but

this is it - "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself". Now the pharisee was that empty vine, he brought forth fruit to himself. He congratulated himself; he spoke well of himself but not of God. He had nothing to do with God except in the form. He bore fruit to himself and that made him an empty vine. The publican was a true plant, planted by his heavenly Father and nourished by this Fountain, so he brought forth fruit of repentance - "God be merciful to me a sinner". He brought forth the fruit of justification; he went down to his house justified. The dying thief was a plant of God's heavenly planting and he brought forth fruit; repentance, the fruit of faith, the fruit of prayer, and he got a promise of heaven and went to heaven the same day. This was a garden watered by the Lord; a plant made living and nourished and made fruitful by the Fountain. Never look for one atom of spiritual good apart from the Lord Jesus. If you do you will be disappointed. O my brethren, what a source is this Fountain; what a source it is for us to look to, to hope in and wait upon. A fountain of gardens. Solomon has this garden and he must have a thousand. It was let out to husbandmen. My vineyard which is mine, and the revenue is a thousand pieces, and the keepers have two hundred pieces; that is to say, the revenues go to Him. He must have a thousand. Do you praise Him; does your life praise Him? Does the state of your heart sometimes praise Him? Do your eyes sometimes praise Him as did the eyes of the church in this book? - "Thou hast ravished Me with one of thine eyes". Do the eyes of your faith praise Him? Does your humility praise Him? "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck". Do you praise Him? Does your fruit praise Him? That is to say, you may be very dumb sometimes, while your heart is for His praise and glory. Does your submission praise Him? Does your following Him praise Him? He must have His thousand; He will get it; He will get it. Does He get it from us?

A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters. To the woman of Samaria He said - "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith unto thee, give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

Do you know who speaks in this Scripture, who is in heaven on the throne of God. Who is there, eternal life filling Him that out of His fulness of that life He may fill His people. Out of the wells of salvation His people are to draw living water. Here you may have Holy Scripture, a well indeed of instruction, of reproof, of comfort. A well that has in it, so to speak, eternity. "The eternal God is thy refuge". Mercy in all its fulness; grace in all its freeness; life in all its power; holiness in all its glory. A well of water, for "the written and the incarnate Word in all things are the same". The ordinances of the Lord's house may be wells; they have been made wells to many. The ordinance of Believer's Baptism, rightly viewed and rightly walked in, is made at times a real well. There is peace in it, life in it, comfort in it, godliness in it, and glory to God. And the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; this rightly entered upon and observed is also as a well, when a dying Saviour is remembered; when His very body, His precious flesh and blood are partaken of, when faith lives on Him, then there is a well in the soul, a well of living water. The promises, these are wells also; so that the people of God have this sufficient supply, this wonderful supply, which says, do not despair. If barrenness is yours, despair not; if you feel dried up and withered, despair not; if you feel again and again that there is nothing but death in you, still do not despair. Go to this Fountain, to these living waters, placed here by the Lord Himself, yea, He Himself being these waters and you will find everything that you can possibly need and pray for, conveyed more or less distinctly to your souls.

And streams from Lebanon. Cascades of pure water falling down precipitous cedars of Lebanon, making all things verdant and giving forth sweet odours called the smell of Lebanon. These come from the Lord Himself; these convey somewhat of Himself to His people. Streams from Lebanon, perhaps to indicate certain more distinct communications, more evident manifestations, more soul satisfying mercy coming graciously, powerfully into the soul as a stream flowing down from Lebanon's height will be distinct, very distinct, and all this is the Lord Himself. All this, I

repeat, is the Lord Himself and to sum up the whole, I would say, it expresses what the Scriptures elsewhere speak of as living in the Lord, faith uniting the soul and the Lord coming and claiming and owning and blessing and strengthening and comforting the soul out of Himself. And what will this do? It will just separate us, if we are partakers of all this mercy. Separate us, what from? One says - well, the world, of course. Yes, but first and chiefest of all, separate us from ourselves, from our own fruitfulness so called, cut off and kill all our own religion, bring us to lose our own life and hate it and learn the mystery of dying that we may live. O if you feel this, if you come into this. Now one may say, but I am too weak in faith and too ignorant of God ever to hope. Here is where we make a great mistake. Many a child of God I doubt not is stumbled here. It does not mean that a person must have something in order to receive something. It means that a person must be nothing but death, nothing but death. You will never get a connection, natural connection, between a sinner and God except it be here, that the sinner is delivered from his evil state, his death, his unjust condition, his wickedness, his filth, his condemnation and is at once, by the Holy Spirit, transplanted from that state, called the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of light, and there is no natural connection; it is all of God, it is all of Him. Therefore if you could, as you would wish legally, do something in order to bring about this blessed union and communion, you would find God would have nothing to do with it. You must be dead to live; you must be lost to be saved; you must be poor to be enriched; you must be a poor wicked creature for the Lord Jesus to come and save you. I say it as I said this morning, only a lost person is capable of being saved; only an unjust person is capable of justification. May the Lord help us to believe it. And now may He graciously turn your eyes and mine to this beautiful text. A fountain of gardens, a well of living water; and streams from Lebanon.

O happy soul, happy church, brought to this wondrous God, this God of all grace and mercy and truth and love. Every providence will prove a blessing; every cross will be a gain to

you. Your weakness will be gain and everything will turn to the glory of God in and by you and by me, if we come to this Fountain and this Fountain sends its living waters into our souls And as it is with an individual, so with a church. May the Lord make this out to us.

AMEN.