

89

1897-89
La P 812

Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham
on Sunday evening, 5th June 1932.

Text: Zechariah 13, verses 1 & 2.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land."

The Holy Ghost uses no superfluous words, employs no useless figures. If there were no sin there would be no fountain to wash it away. If there were no causes of separation from God, there would be no fountain opened to remove them, so it comes to this - the gospel is for sinners. The spirit of the Pharisee in us, would like the gospel to be for good people, who flatter themselves and thank God with hypocritical speech, but God wont have it. If you are sinners there is mercy for you. If you are Pharisees you will go home worse than when you went up to the temple.

"Sinners are high in His esteem,
And sinners highly value Him."

What a truth, but how hard it is for sinners to believe it. There is a beautiful context, - a backlook in respect of the text. It begins at the tenth verse of the previous chapter - "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." - (When there was a great mourning over the death of Josiah their good King.) "And the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and.....

their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

One observation arises here, namely, the blessedness of gospel repentance. Legal repentance shuts a person up in himself; legal repentance fixes on the person who feels that, and one thing accompanying it is self pity. 'Why was I born thus - why was my position in life made what it is - why am I so helpless?' It is all natural - legal. God uses it, in His people, because there is something more, but where legal repentance is alone, it is self-centred. Gospel repentance looks to the Lord Jesus, and there is real sorrow for having killed Him. Wonderful that One we murdered, should give us heaven. O the bitterness of sin, when it is felt on viewing a suffering Saviour. Look at this, my friends, when you get any hint from the Spirit, of the Lord Jesus as suffering for sin, then you will begin to relent, and softness of heart and mourning over sin will take place, and you will find this - that a private religion is the best, - mourning apart. As Jesus made no noise in His walking and working, so you will make no noise when you repent in this sweet way of repentance, and in the day, that is, in the time, the period appointed of God, that this mourning - personal, separate mourning - takes place, there shall be a "fountain opened," always opened. Opened eternally in God's purpose, opened actually, when Jesus Christ died, but in the day of mourning; in the day of a penitent sinner's grief; in the day when he is lost in himself: "in that day" this fountain is opened to him. Ah, it then is as if there were only two in existence, if I may so express it - Jesus Christ crucified, and the sinner. What sweet fellowship they have. The forgiven sinner - the forgiving Saviour. A mutual embrace. Union formed and knitted - union granted. "A fountain," which means, the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. When conviction is deep, there often accompanies it, a temptation, namely - that the disease is even beyond the curing power of the Good Physician, or, in other words, that can such sins be forgiven. May such a sinner hope for forgiveness? And it is difficult for such a person to realise that his sins are finite, that the blood of Christ is infinite in its worth and its power, and its efficacy. There is an infiniteness in sin, as done against Jehovah, but the actions of sin are always, must be, the actions of a creature, therefore, finite. Do not, if you can help it, do not make your sins more

than the blood of Christ. I have known that temptation, and therefore can speak of it. It is a great temptation. It is just setting up briars and thorns against the Lord, and He says, "Who would" set them up? I do - you may do. He says, "I would go through them, I would burn them together." And let this objecting sinner - "take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Ah, there are wonders here. - Wonders of redeeming love; wonders of precious blood, wonders of overcoming grace; wonders of God's goodness, and all flowing into the soul through the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

"Opened," means manifested. It was, as I said, already opened, but it is manifested, and one great wonder is this, that the sinner says - 'I never saw this before.' He may often have sung that beautiful hymn of Cowper's - "There is a fountain filled with blood," 'but,' he says, 'I never saw it before.' He sees it now, in the light of divine manifestation. That makes all the difference between a general belief in it, and the particular application of it. Look for application - application! Application for sin, in the guilt of it. Guilt means that you must die. Guilt means that the sentence is only deferred, so far as you can see, and now says the Lord, 'There is a fountain for this - to remove this guilt.' The conscience, so disturbed, so perturbed, so distracted, so burdened, is eased, and a peace never expected, takes possession. "Opened --- for sin." Ah sinner, there wont be a speck left, when this comes to you. Not a stain; not a wrinkle indicating decay; no blemish: no spot. None can understand till it is felt, what this peace is. It is called "the peace of God." It "passeth all understanding." It keeps the heart and mind as in a garrison; enemies outside, shooting, but they do not shoot an arrow into the city. All the arrows fall short. It is God's peace! It may not last very long, but it is peace. I have known it. You, some of you, have known it. "The peace of God." ... There may be plenty of trouble around you, and in you naturally, but this peace is not disturbed. It is a powerful peace, keeping the heart and mind from fear. From fear of enemies; from fear of judgement; from fear of punishment: from fear of evil to come. O my brethren, you cannot understand it till you get it. No minister can make you believe it. No minister can describe it. I could not describe this peace, though I have known it, it is so amazing. Why me, why such a wretch?

This contains a promise. If God thus smiles on you, the smile contains a promise. It is pregnant with everlasting goodness. -

"Safety on earth, and, after death,
The plenitude of heaven."

It is God who does it, who gives it, and it may come in a moment when you are not expecting it. "For sin." Sin, that dreadful thing sin; God's enemy; our enemy; guilt consigning a sinner to perdition; standing alone, guilt rendering a person liable to sudden execution of the sentence of the law. It hangs over the spirit till the fountain comes and the streams flow down from heaven into the conscience, - very beautiful and strongly has the Spirit expressed it in the Hebrews, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:" qualify the Jew who had become disabled for the worship of God by having become defiled by some touch of death, - a dead bone or something, "If the blood of bulls and of goats," and so on, should again qualify that defiled Jew to enter public worship, "How much more" - who can properly, adequately, emphasise it, - "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" "For uncleanness." Pollution distinguishable from guilt, distinguished here by the Lord Himself. Inward pollution. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life, the unbelief of the heart issuing in some rebellion against God. Wishing that you were what you are not; that you were placed as you are not placed; that the cross had been of a different kind. Wishing many wrong things, casting your eyes - envious looks - upon this and upon that, perhaps a person, or some circumstance, and this "fountain", is opened for that.... How difficult some of you may find it to pray when this defilement is on you. What a bar it appears to be when you have become anew defiled, - polluted. What an advantage the enemy may have over you when this is the case with you. What arguments he may use against your approaching the majesty of God. O, but the fountain takes all away. When applied, it heals the sick, recovers health, gives liberty to the soul. Liberty to pray; liberty to call on God: to call Him your own by ties of blood. Gives you the spirit of a child; the liberty of a

child; the boldness of faith; the comfort of love and the fellowship of the Spirit: that is what this does! That is the sweet effect of this "fountain opened", - manifested - applied. It is Christ's coming. It is the apprehension by faith of His infinite merit. It is the sweet persuasion that no longer is God your enemy; no longer does He hold you at a distance; nor does He seem to put you off when you are coming to Him: rather He gives you boldness. O the sweetness of this powerful fountain opened for uncleanness. Do not envy people, professing people, their constant ability to pray, in the face of everything. If you have no sense of pollution, no sense of its separating power, you are to be pitied, but if your conscience is tender, you will feel the pollution of sin, and then you will feel defiled, and then may you pray. Yes! ... Says the gospel, "Let us ---- come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Who are these people? ... Who are these invited people? ... People who have been tried, - searched, - by the word of God. "Quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." People who are made conscious that there is no creature that can hide itself from the searching gaze of God. People in that condition are told, - the Spirit tells them, the Scriptures tell them - that they have a High Priest, who is able to have compassion on them, and therefore the boldness is thus encouraged, - "Come boldly unto the throne of grace."

O sinner, whatever sins you have been guilty of; whatever burden you feel of guilt; whatever trouble you may have, concerning your pollutions here, says God, 'I will open a fountain for this very trouble that you are experiencing, for sin and uncleanness.' And this has a very wonderful effect. "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land." 'Idols - we have none!' one may say, - 'Who has idols?' ... Probably the question proves, that the questioner has one idol at least. That is himself. You need not carry a poor little god in your waistcoat pocket to be an idolater, nor need you go into the church room to find out idolatry. If you are taught of God, you will know what idolatry is. ... Whatever takes the place of God. Whatever assumes a position which God alone is entitled to, That is to you, an idol. 'Now,' says God, 'the fountain will cut the

name of the idol out of the land. Cut it away from you.' Make you say -

"Self in myself I hate,
'tis matter of my moan."

Sick soul, poor troubled idolater, do not expect any cure but by the coming unto you of this fountain. Nothing will cleanse you from idolatry or the name of an idol, but the application of Christ to you. That will do it. O you will hate yourself then. You will hate all your idols. And God says, 'I will cut them off.' The very remembrance of them will be taken away and you will worship God. It is very wonderful to be brought to worship God. Worship, is the whole of true religion. If you really worship God, you are right with Him. Not the form, but the inward worship, adoration, admiration of God; prostration before Him; true humility of heart; the beautiful garment covering you: the garment of humility. God first. The Alpha of your religion. The Alpha of your hope. The Omega of your religion. The Omega of your hope. What a sweetness there is in worship, - true, spiritual worship. It is one of the sweetest things we have in this life - the spirit of worship. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," and perhaps you will wonder, as you gaze on a smashed idol; as you look on a crucified Saviour: and as all the affections of your soul are gathered up to, and fixed on Him, so that you can say honestly, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." ... When one has had some experience of the wandering and gadding and swift moving of the soul; the desultory hopping of the soul, from one branch to another: then, a little of this sweet concentration of spirit is valued.

"And also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." This was to be, when Jerusalem was restored. It is spiritually true, that the various voices in your hearts are turned out. You listen to pride, you listen to vanity, your mind is turned to covetousness of some sort. One thing and another may promise good to you, like a prophet saying, 'follow this and good will come.' Says God - 'I will turn out this. I will cause them to cease. They shall not trouble you, - the Canaanite shall not walk in the land.' And while this continues it is one of the privileges of the citizen, one of the sweet things that God gives to His children; that they are freed, for the time being, from these evils of

their nature: not from the being of them, but from their felt presence and activity. You are, as if they were not, for the time, because God is with you. I have lived to prove that the sweetest thing you can have, is to be gathered up from yourself, and the various things attaching to yourself, and your heart to be truly fixed on Christ crucified, - your soul experiencing the efficacy of His death, realising somewhat of the love that brought Him from the throne of grace. On wings of love you see Him flying from the throne to the cross. Love took Him there. Not the hands - the wicked hands of men, but love, took Him there. Not the spear took away His life, - love, laid it down. O my friends, I wish we were Christians, those of us who profess to be. I am not half a Christian, if a Christian is a person who has received the Lord Jesus and been brought to worship Him more and more. I am not half a Christian, - such a poor foolish carnally minded creature as myself. It seems sometimes as I meditate, as if it were presumption even to call oneself, or think oneself, a Christian, yet, a Christian is a sinner. A sinner is made a Christian. Made a Christian by Him who made the world and he is a Christian from time to time, as he, by the Spirit's power upon him, comes and falls at the cross and says, 'I enter just a little into Paul's feeling which he expressed by saying' - "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." You have entered into that a little, have you not, and sweet it is. O this will break all ties, remove all burdens, and fill the soul with the fear of God. The fear of God seems to include the whole of divine religion. It is good to feel it. Now mourners, - mourners over sin, mourners over the crucified Saviour, - look at this word. God set it upon your spirits, and before your eyes, in that day that you are sorry; in that time that you mourn over yourself and over Christ particularly, and get away now and again from everybody, and your occupations, and mourn sore like a dove. Listen, I say, to this. May your distractions not divert your attention from this text - "In that day." Do not disconnect what God has united, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." That is, - whatever separates you from God, - a fountain is opened to remove all that.

May this holy gospel come into our hearts with power, and you

communicants this evening at the Lord's table, to you, I would say, and may I say it to myself, may all other objects be banished, and Christ come and preside at His table and say to you and to me, "Eat O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." - "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, ----- buy wine and milk without money and without price." 'O but I am hard hearted.' - Come with that. 'I cannot pray, for my heart is hard.' Follow the good advice of a good man. - "Try what hard hearted prayers will do!"

"Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome and bare;
You can't come too filthy; come just as you are."

It may be that some in the congregation who are not to be communicants, wish that they might be. Well, you wait on God for that. Do not make haste. Wait on God. He can persuade the heart, when nobody else can, or ought. True persuasion comes from Him. Wait on God. Praying people always get what they ask for, if it be for their good, and if you pray to be obedient and God accepts your prayer, you will find He will give you a warm welcome when you sit at His table. What is the provision? The provision is this - "Take eat: this is My body, which is broken for you." All of you drink this cup. "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you," - for the remission of sins.

Now, I have poorly preached the gospel. It is such a good gospel. I love it, and I love to try to speak about it. One great part of its goodness, is its freeness. - 'I ask no price for all I give, but O remember Me.' May the Lord bless you each one, if it please Him, with this blessed gospel repentance. Gospel repentance is always joined to faith.

Amen.

* * * * *