

# God's Way Perfect

by **J. K. POPHAM** Preached At Galeed Chapel, Brighton,  
on Wednesday evening Oct. 1st 1919

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*"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried; He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him." (Psalm 18:30)*

The Psalmist had full proof of the imperfection of men both in himself and in others. He had proved what men could do or attempt in the person of his persecutor King Saul; what a professed friend was capable of in the case of Ahithophel; what a son can degenerate into and seek to accomplish; and what his own heart could lead him to commit. It was a sore thing to him and must ever be a sore thing to God's children to prove the capability of sin in themselves and in others. The infinite evil of sin is painfully understood and experienced by all regenerated people. So with this experience the Psalmist could say, "I have seen an end of all perfection," in himself and in others. He said in heart once that all men were liars. He lost faith in human nature, and I believe that everyone taught of God will also lose all faith in human nature as fallen. It is an evil piece, this nature of ours. The root of it, and the source of all its actions, God thus describes: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" And should there be Pharisees here let me say to them, if the Lord ever opens your eyes to see what you are and quickens your conscience to feel something of the infinite evil of sin, your pharisaism will be like a bit of tow in the fire. And while this distressing experience was with the Psalmist, so that he had now no ground to stand on with regard to himself or others, he came to find a wonderful truth, to find every good in God, and he here expresses it: "As for God, let man be what he is, fallen, and do what he can in sin and sinning, God whom I know, whose I am and whom I serve, His way is perfect." How could it be otherwise, since He himself is perfect? What but perfection can emanate from an infinitely perfect Being? Jehovah is God, therefore justice infinite, holiness perfect, wisdom divine, can but flow from Him and must be seen in all His works, and shall be seen. In His works He shall be admired in all them that believe and they shall say individually, "As for God, His way is perfect, because He is." There is a fullness in God which, as felt, makes men sober; a fullness in His brightness even where it is bearable in the Person of Jesus; a fullness in His justice where it shines; in His providence and in His dealings with the sons of men. But especially is the fullness of God in His perfections, His justice, His holiness, His omnipotence, His compassion, His mercy, and His love, seen in the Man Christ Jesus. And in Him all culminates on the cross and His way there is perfect.

And God is to be known. He is to be known, He will be known. But since none can by searching find Him out, how shall men know Him? By revelation. What revelation? The revelation of the Holy Scriptures and the application of that revelation to the hearts of men by the Spirit. Naturally He "dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto." He is Jehovah whom no man hath seen nor can see, and yet He has come forth in infinite mercy from this infinity to us in inexhaustible depths of eternal light and glory and revealed Himself in the Man Christ Jesus.

In creation God is seen to be perfect and His ways are perfect. Before sin brought thorns and thistles to the earth, disease and death to the bodies of men, and corruption and ruin and curse to their souls in a broken law, how perfect was God seen to be in creation! The Spirit by the Apostle Paul teaches that on creation there are indelible marks of His Godhead and power who made all things, and He is willfully blind who can look into creation work, look into the beauties and the majesty and the greatness of God's work in creation, and deny that his way is perfect, and particularly in man. Man has degenerated, not improved, let the evolutionist say what he will. If this Book is true, and it is, man has degenerated since God created him, for He created in His own image and after His own likeness; and I think it will be difficult for anyone to exceed the nobility of that work which God pronounced to be very good. O, how pleased was God with all His work in creation, but specially with His masterpiece, man, made out of the dust. And having had breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, he became a living soul capable of intercourse with his Maker in the terms of the law under which he was created and placed; capable of obeying the commandment of his Creator and Law-giver; capable of standing in that position of purity and uprightness in which he was made by God. To deny this is to deny the perfection of God. The sequence is inevitable. To say that God made man with any imperfection with respect to power or of understanding in the law under which he was created, is to deny that the way of God in creation was perfect. There was one thing wanting, one thing that God did not endow man with, and that was immutability. He left him free to obey or to disobey. But still His way in creation was a perfect way; but man sought out many inventions and these many inventions have taken him away from God. Just as when men began to multiply upon the face of the earth his movements were from the east to the west, so man fallen from God turned his back on the Lord, on the Sun, on the Source of all light and all goodness, and has ever since been wandering away from his Creator and disobeying his Law-giver. Those inventions have developed and have brought to light that solemn and terrible word of Paul's concerning man: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." How humiliating to our proud mind is this truth where felt and acknowledged by the Spirit's grace, how humiliating that man made as he was should have made himself what he is! Made pure by God, he has made himself, to use the language you have in the Book of Job-"abominable."

Here God has taken an advantage of this condition into which man has brought himself, an advantage that never could have entered into the mind of a fallen creature to imagine. As Adam was constituted the head of the first creation, God in eternity set up the second Man, the Lord from heaven, to be the Head of the new heaven and the new earth which should be created. This is Jesus Christ, the chief of God's ways; the chief of all His works, the Person of Jesus in the position in which God has eternally placed Him in His purpose. Parts of His ways are seen, but the chief of His ways is the Person of Jesus, and how perfect that Person is! He is first my friends, the First-born and the First-begotten from the dead, the Lord of life and peace, the Lord of glory. And may we be enabled a little to look at this way of God with respect to the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There was a perfection in Adam, only not an immutability in it, a perfection of life; and that perfection of life is seen today, for we descended from him. He is our father. God gave him seminally all men; he was, as Boston says, "Human nature in compendium." But look at Christ. All the life of the church is in Him and one thing is in Him, which was not in the first Adam, immutability. Now this is in Jesus Christ. Immutability, not only in respect of His Person, which could never degenerate, but in respect of what He possesses; a fullness which it has pleased the Father should dwell in Him, the fullness of love, the fullness

of justification, the fullness of sanctification, the fullness of wisdom and omnipotence and compassion and mercy and righteousness and salvation. A full Christ declares the perfection of God's way with regard to His Person. A full Christ suits empty sinners, suits men who have no righteousness of their own, who have no wisdom to steer aright their course, and no ability to do that which is right in the sight of God.

"As for God His way is perfect." His way of salvation in the Person of Jesus is perfect. The way of man with regard to God is imperfect. The way of man in profession is imperfect. The way of the Pharisee was imperfect, quite wholly imperfect. The way of God in Christ is saving sinners is a perfect way, and perfect in this particular among others, namely that He perfectly pleased His Father. And I would invite your very strict attention to this, for God sent Him to do a work, sent Him to teach a doctrine, sent Him to say words, which He had heard the Father speak, to do a work which He had seen His Father do. And men opposed Him, devils opposed Him, Herod sought to destroy Him, men brought against Him railing accusations, took away His judgment in His humiliation, said that He had a devil and was mad, that He was gone to be a guest with sinners, that He was a friend of sinners, of publicans and sinners, a gluttonous man and wine-bibber. They said all these evil things of this perfect Person, Almighty God and very Man, this perfect Person. But what was His way? Straight. "Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger that I sent, seeing many things but thou observest not" (Isa. 42:19). He said to His disciples, "Salute not any man as you go on;" be not distracted, that is, by the ordinary civilities which would take up your attention and distract you from your course. And He did not say this to His disciples without first of all exemplifying it in Himself. The law of God was in His heart: "I came to do, not Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And he never failed in all His troubles, there was no failure. When He was afflicted, He cried. He looked to his Father to fulfil the promise made to Him: "I will help Thee." In His distress He trusted in His Father, as you have it in the Hebrews: "I will put My trust in Him." And this Blessed One went all through His troubles, did the work given Him to do, and at last fulfilled the commandment laid upon Him which was to lay down His life. As for God, the God-Man Jesus, His way is perfect, and it is declared of Him by His Father that He was well-pleased with Him: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:17). And when the whole was done that He was sent to do, then He bowed His glorious head and gave up the ghost. God's way is perfect, in the Man Christ Jesus. It would be good for us if our hearts were directed to this great truth concerning Him, if we were led to see that "Almighty God sighed human breath," that the Man Christ Jesus was subject to His Father, came to do His will, to fulfil His law, that He received a promise of help from His Father, that He never swerved from doing that which He was sent to do. It were well for us to believe this, for it would show to us where to go in trouble, to whom to apply for help, to whom to run in hours of distress, even to Him in whom the Father is well-pleased.

And in the next place consider how perfect God's way is in His work of grace in the soul. In the new creation He is very wonderful: "I create a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13). Look at the beginning, the regeneration of a sinner. What a work this is! It is spoken of as a creation. Paul says to the children of God that they are "created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that created him" (Eph. 4:24). Everyone in this chapel born again has a perfect work within him, and has this attached to it which was not in Adam in his first creation, an immutability. Not an immutability in a falling, failing, poor, feeble creature, but an immutability in that gracious work, that new creation of which the Holy

Ghost will take such care that it never shall fail. The only thing that can cause death is corruption. Wherever you find purity, if that purity continues you find immortality. His hand, the work of grace in the soul, is a pure work. Says Peter of it: "Being born again not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). If sin could enter this new man as it entered the first Adam, then all would be lost. But it cannot, it is a pure seed; and "he that is born of God," says John, "sinneth not;" and that holy principle, that new divine life which Christ calls eternal life, is incorruptible. This never leads those who have it to sin. It humbles them when they realize it. It brings them to their knees; nay, they prostrate their hearts and souls before God who has done so marvellous a thing in them as to give them a life that is incorruptible.

Look at this work as it is carried on. We are sustained every day by food. The new man must be sustained, he must have his nourishment and he must have nourishment that will suit his new nature. What is it? The bread of God, and of this bread so precious, Jesus says: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). Whenever you receive something of Jesus Christ, receive Him in His word, in His gospel, in the forgiveness of sins, in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, in the fellowship of the Spirit, then you do eat the flesh of the Son of Man. When you receive the atonement by faith then you drink His blood, and this is the nourishment of the new man; and as its nature, so in its nourishment incorruptible. Jesus saw no corruption. Significantly, He made His grave with the rich. He was buried where no corruption had been and He left no corruption in that new tomb, and He rose from the dead incorruptible. He saw no corruption, according to the very words of His Father to Him: "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:31). And so when the child of God partakes of Christ's gospel, that is of Christ Himself, he receives and eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks His blood.

O what mercy it is to see this perfect way of God! He thus carries on the work in the soul. And again it is carried on by the operations of the Spirit, diversities of operations. The word of faith and the word of wisdom and the word of grace and the word of knowledge and the word of promise coming from the Spirit, you find to be immortal, an incorruptible principle. May our faith receive and hold this, that whatever the Holy Spirit brings to us is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. And you see this truth set in opposition to the corruptible and fading and dying of men, as in the prophet Isaiah it is declared: "The voice said Cry, and he said What shall I cry?" The answer is, "All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." "The grass withereth and the flower fadeth," and then in opposition to that corruptible, that death, this is said: "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24). And as Peter in quoting that passage says: "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." This is the word that endureth for ever, the holy gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, brought home by the power of the eternal Spirit. And as the word is incorruptible so must the soul in which it dwells be immortal.

As for God, His way in giving His word is perfect. And see what the word is sent to do. "He sent His word and healed them," healed the sick, healed the wounded, healed the people whom He Himself in chastisement had wounded, whom He had wounded by reproof and bringing them to their knees, conscious of and confessing their sins. He sent it, His gospel, and healed them,

would not let them always lie wounded and bleeding and dying. He healed them by the holy gospel. What a perfect way is this that God has with sinners! He sends His gospel to them. "He sent it," a word, "and it lighted upon Israel."

His way is perfect in chastisement. This has to be believed at times and not seen. Begun matters are matters of trial till they are finished, and when God begins to chasten His children for their good they generally feel little but pain; they are chastened sore, they cannot look to the end as the Lord their heavenly Father does. They see now this withering and that drying up. They feel their sinfulness as they are chastened for it and it is discovered to them. But they do not know always, and often indeed they do not see it at all, that God has a great end. It is one of His chief ends, not the ultimate end but one of His chief ends, that He may bring them back to Himself. "Return unto Me," He says, "for I have redeemed thee." So the prodigal came. One of the chief ends of the Father was to bring him to his senses, to bring him back with weeping and with supplication. The ultimate end was to have him at the table with Himself. One of God's ends you will find to be this then with you, to bring you to your senses, and what a perfect end it is! Because He has this before Him, that you shall come again to His table and be His dear child, entertained and nourished and comforted by Him who is your Father in heaven. And God's way is very good here. David found it so. He said in one place, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Again, in providence how perfect God's way is! Not as seen in parts. I suppose if we went to look at a watch in its various parts lying on a table on a bit of pure white paper, a bit here and a bit there, the perfection of the watch would not at all appear to us. But to the man who understands the whole thing it is as perfect as if all the pieces were adjusted and the watch was working. He does not need to see all of them together and working to understand the perfection of the thing. So with God and with us. If we look at His providential dealings in the different parts of them, no perfection will appear to us. If we look at Him by faith then we shall see, though we understand not, how that God will bring perfection to light; but He Himself sees all the perfection of His works: "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). He is wonderful in counsel as well as excellent in working. To David, how strange were the dealings of God for a time with him; so strange, so discouraging, so apparently in the wrong direction and with an end very near to him as he apprehended, contrary to God's promise for him. How strange was his course! Said he one day, "As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between me and death;" and so the conclusion he arrived at was apparently the best that he could think of: "Let me get out of the land, let me get away from Saul, my persecutor." O but what a foolish thing! Was it not in him the fruit of unbelief? How unwise David was at that point, for had he not on him the anointing oil, had he not the promise of God? Had he not had remarkable dealings with God, a deliverance here and another there? Did not the Lord more than once put Saul, his enemy, into his own hand, so that if David had desired to do it he could have cut off his enemy at once? Notwithstanding all this he said, "As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between me and death." All these things were indeed out of his mind and out of view at this time. All he probably saw was first the power of Saul, and then his own weakness. And when you look at your weakness and look at the powers that are against you, look at the strange providences that toss you about against which you have no power, look at this coming to distract you and that to distress, and a burden laid on you enough to crush you, and the strange dealings of God in His providence with respect to the words on which He has caused you to hope, you in

unbelief may be ready to say: "As the Lord liveth, I shall come to a sad end. The promises I had rested on I must have been deceived in." O but wait awhile, you will get to the throne one day, even as David got to his throne! And your throne first will be in the dust at the throne of God's grace; and then you will see a new heaven awaiting you; a deliverance here, a deliverance there, and a conquest in another place. You will see all. And when God puts things together for us which in themselves were disjointed and scattered, and we scattered in our feelings because they were so scattered, then we see His way perfect, nothing to be improved, nothing.

You think perhaps in certain states of mind, under certain trials in providence, that if you could only have done that, if you had been but led to take that course, things would have turned out differently and better. There was a man once just like you, and when he was taught better, when he was led into the sanctuary of God and understood things and was them in the light of divine teaching and grace, he said: "Lord, I am more brutish than any man, I am as a beast before Thee." He said it honestly. Why? The Lord opened his eyes. The Lord taught him. That is what we often need, a new teaching and fresh light to fall on our eyes which get weakened by darkness and distorted within us. We need the Lord to give us a new vision of Himself, and then we see His work to be perfect, without understanding how it can be. Providence, O how beautiful, the work of God! Providence in its permissions, providence in its active workings, is very perfect. "Known unto God are all His works." O but how can good come out of this?" You leave it with God. "Well, but He has taken away what I wanted and what seemed so necessary for me. How can that work well?" You leave it with Him. "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Commit all things to Him. You will one day see what now you see not: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

My dear friends, God designs to take His children from the hovel of sin to the mansion of heaven, and the way from the one to the other is a perfect way, a perfect redemption, a perfect Redeemer, a perfect nature given by the Holy Ghost, and a providence that is perfected in its parts when God brings them and puts them together, puts them together for us, and then how beautiful does His work appear to us!

"As for God, His way is perfect." Mine is imperfect, mine leads away from Him. My own way is a wrong way and leads to death and the issue must be evil; but God undoes it. He comes to a child of His and undoes his way, turns it upside-down. Then the man thinks, "Now I am wrong," until the Lord begins to work in him the work of faith with power and lets him see God can do no unwise thing, can make no mistake. If He should make an empty place in you, an empty place in your house, an emptiness in your circumstances, depend on it, if you belong to Him He has got something a great deal better to give you; He had got Himself. He will give you something from Himself and eventually you shall know what the comfort of love is and what the fellowship of His Spirit is. "Perfect." Then you are not to improve it. No. Not improve this providence? No. O but it is painful! Do you think Paul at one moment understood the way of God when he said there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, and evidently it was a very bitter thing to him because he went again and again to the Lord to get that thorn taken out of his flesh, whatever it was. He did not understand at that time. How could he without divine teaching, apostle though he was? But when Jesus kindly spoke to him, when Jesus said, "This pain and My grace together are better for you than the loss of the pain, the removal of the thorn, without My grace," Paul saw things then in the light of the dear Saviour's teaching and in

the power of His sustaining grace, and he said: "I glory in my infirmity; I prefer the thorn with the grace, I prefer the trouble with the mercy, rather than to lose the thorn and also miss the mercy."

Well beloved friends, we have got a good deal to learn, and the chief of all is this, that God can make no mistake. He made none when He sent His Son to die. He made none when Jesus offered Himself without spot to God on the cross. He made no mistake when He gave the gift of everlasting life to the soul, for that gift is without repentance. He made none when he spoke the promise to the sinner saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;" and He makes none in those tremendous movements in providence which shake some of us to pieces. He made none when He took that away which was so dear, more than gold and silver. He makes no mistakes, and the day is coming when every saint will see that God has dealt with him in infinite kindness, infinite wisdom, and infinite love. O but if we see a little here, what shall we see hereafter? O what will God cause us to see when He gives us a full and perfect sight of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, and of the four and twenty elders; a Lamb as it had been slain! We shall see then and know as we are known, and sing unto Him that is worthy alone to have all honour and power and blessing and might and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.