

151 X

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed
Chapel Brighton Sunday evening, 6 September 1925

TEXT: I Corinthians XI verses 28 and 29

"But let a man examine himself and so let him eat
of that bread and drink of that cup, for he that
eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh
damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"

There are two standing, binding ordinances in the
church of Christ, believer's baptism by immersion, and the
Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ Himself and repeated
by the Apostle by inspiration in this chapter. Believer's
baptism is administered but once for the Lord died but once.
He rose again from the billows and waves of divine wrath,
rolled over Him, but once. He rose again from the dead and
dieth no more but liveth after the power of an endless life,
and when the believer is baptised He follows in a symbol His
Lord and Master, and when he rises he rises as it were with
Him and proclaims himself separated from the world and
separated from the dominion and practice of sin, and is
henceforth to walk according to the everlasting gospel. The
ordinance of the Lord's Supper is to be observed as often as
it may be convenient and proper for a visible church in any
one place because the Lord will not be forgotten in a public
manner. He will be remembered.

The text is unspeakably solemn. It behoves every
member of this church and everyone who is to be a
transitional communicant of any kind this evening to observe
with all the grace and sincerity and wisdom God may give
him, this word "Let a man examine himself, and so let him
eat of that bread and drink of that cup, for whosoever shall
eat this bread and drink this cup that is observed by this
ordinance, unworthily, in an unbecoming spirit, eateth and
drinketh judgment (damnation is judgment) to himself, not
discerning the Lord's body, not discerning the ordinance

from an ordinary meal, for this would seem to be the primary intention of the Apostle when he was rebuking and correcting these people at Corinth for the irregularities which they introduced into their observance of the Lord's Supper. It is solemn for me to speak to you on this very important word. Mercifully I do not enter upon the subject with a light and trifling mind, and I would call your attention in the first place to the ordinance and in the second place to the manner of observing it, respecting which we are to examine ourselves, with this exceedingly solemn word attached to the case that if we eat and drink unworthily we may bring the most solemn chastisement and judgment upon us, as this church did, for says the Apostle, for this cause (they were eating and drinking unworthily or had been doing so) for this cause many are weak and sickly among you. Some think that an epidemic broke out in the city, and many were afflicted thereby, sick and weakly, and many died. We never can walk unworthily in any way, in any matter before God, and not bring some reproof and some chastisement upon ourselves, either of an inward kind, by the solemn operation and opposition and fighting of the Spirit against us, or, perhaps also, therewith some providential affliction. We have in the first place to notice the ordinance itself and there is a double intention in the ordinance. First the intention of the Lord, the dear Lover of His church. He wont be disregarded. He will be remembered. The operations of the Spirit may frequently in private and by means of the public ministry, bring the Lord Jesus to sinners, to His people. I hope many of you get such favour from God, that the Spirit does not leave you, but sets before your wondering eye of faith, a broken hearted Saviour. You see in Him the new and living way to God. You see how that by Him you are reconciled to God and get access to the Father. You see that by His blood you are cleansed from all your sin or, if you do not realise the cleansing, you desire to realise it. This may be a frequent experience with some of you. God grant it may be, for to miss these operations, to miss the instruction and the leading of the Spirit to the

cross, to the Lord Jesus, is to miss that which is life and peace and strength. In all your seeking, dear christian people, be this the chiefest, to seek the communications, by the Holy Ghost to your souls, of and from the Lord Jesus Christ, that will convey to you whatever will be for your good, that will strengthen your faith, confirm your souls, and enliven your affections, that will make your consciences tender, that will constrain you to seek to walk in a right way, that will enable you to continue, deny yourself take up your cross and follow the Redeemer. But the Lord intends in addition to such gracious, and as I would have for myself and for you as I have said, frequent operations of the Spirit, a more stated and public manner of observing and remembering His death. He cannot be forgotten who is a jealous Lover. If you forget Him days without number, like Israel of old, you will understand something of that word "What have I done unto thee O my people, wherein have I wearied thee O Israel, testify against Me". A piercing word when spoken to an unfaithful heart by an injured lover, an injured Saviour, and Lord. "Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness?" Has He been that to you? Then how it may pierce your soul sometimes with grief unutterable that you have treated Him so basely and this intention respects any and every gospel church, for irregularities may come and these are as if you had forgotten Him who instituted the ordinance. These Corinthians so gifted, so graced, so blessed, quickly as it would seem forgot their obligation to a reverent remembrance of Him whose ordinance had been brought to them and to observe which they had been brought, and they met as if in their houses for their ordinary meals, and because of the differences in their social positions, there came differences in this way of observing the ordinance. The rich took their sumptuous meals and the poor took little or nothing, and the rich regaled themselves and some were drunk, as the word is, and this was a grievous iniquity and contrary to and altogether different from the intention of their Lord that, in this simple observance of His death, which He had enjoined on

them, they should take on themselves a kind of social gathering, irregular indeed, and not kindly, from one part to another, being of the congregation of the church. The poor were ashamed and their poverty was brought before them in a vivid and painful manner by the sumptuous meal which the rich indulged in. Now says the Lord by His servant, I praise you not in this. When you come together it is not for the better, but for the worse. Have you not houses to eat in. The intention of the Lord is that there should be a reverent, a proper repeated, at stated times, observance of this His sacred ordinance.

The second intention is in the minds of the people. An intention is an act of the mind, a more or less determined act of the mind, with regard to an object, and when this intention is gracious in a person or in a church there is a fixedness as the Psalmist speaks in another case. Oh God my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed. What a mercy if we here this evening have that fixedness, a gracious intention of faith in our souls to look to, trust in and boast of Jesus Christ crucified; if we have the faith of God's elect drawn out into exercise upon Christ, so that we can say with the Apostle Paul, "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" Now brethren this brings me to the solemn exhortation "So let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" Clearly, to say this at once, the exhortation to self examination is not to keep a person away from the table, but if through grace he sincerely in his heart and spirit looks to this great matter of the Lord's Supper, then let him eat. Now all examinations proceed on and by the principle of a standard. If you are to examine a coin, you have got a standard for it. If a railway newly built is to be used it first must be tested and the test is by a standard. Every examination of every sort and kind is by a standard. Let us see if we understand this in measure and first of all examine ourselves with regard to ourselves, not if you are

good enough for the ordinance, but if you are bad enough, not if you are full enough in yourself, but if you are empty enough, if you are weak enough, if you really understand, painfully understand what it is to be a sinner, if you enter into the word lost in any measure, lost. "The Son of Man came to save that which was lost". If you understand experimentally a little of that awful word concerning yourselves, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it. Think of it. "The whole need not a physician but they that are sick," and if you be whole you have no right at the Lord's table. If you feel that you have no need of the physician there is no need to come to Him, and it would be improper to consult Him or to seek Him, but if you be bad enough, lost enough, weak enough, corrupt enough, not in practice, but painfully experienced. Examine yourselves, and if you can come to the conclusion, a sincere, painful, grievous conclusion that you are indeed a lost person, if the examination brings you into the dust and you can say of all whoever went or who shall go to the Lord's table, there never was one more needing His mercy, His love, His blood, His death, His resurrection, than myself, then eat and drink.

Secondly let him examine himself with respect of the Saviour. What are his thoughts, what his feelings about the Saviour, and here look at His Person, and this is wonderful. The Saviour of sinners. Incarnate deity, the very Son of God incarnate. The Holy Eternal Word dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, delighting in Him, and the Father delighting in the Son. This Person willingly, lovingly, coming from His Father's bosom and assuming our nature, taking it up as it was formed for Him in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost, taking it up into union with His glorious Person. Is He suitable? Do you believe in Him? Did you ever get a glimpse of Him, so passing perhaps as that you could hardly say you saw Him before He was gone, but such a glimpse has made you say O if I could but gaze on Him, spend my days in looking into the mystery which angels desire to look into,

but into which they can never look as a sinner can. If I might but see Him and find Him near to my soul. Examine your thoughts and feelings and affections and belief and conscience in respect of the Man Christ Jesus. You know something of God, something of His majesty, something of the intent of that word. There is one God, one God at whom you have trembled, from whose majesty you would often have fled many a time if you could. There is one God, and then one Mediator who takes away by His divine, His human nature, that unbearable terribleness of God's majesty. The divine nature in the human nature Christ Jesus who is a Mediator and who, being a Mediator, can bring those two, so infinitely dissimilar, and so infinitely removed, one from the other by sin, can bring them together. What do you think of this Mediator? Like a Mediator, and a Mediator, this Mediator is also a priest. A priest is a person between parties, parties between whom there are differences. A priest must have a sacrifice. This priest, this High Priest, called to be a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, O what a priest He is. Look at it. Examine yourselves with regard to this priesthood. Is His priesthood acceptable? Would you fain get near to God through Him? Does He hold a place in your conscience, in your understanding, in your affections? Come next to His offering. He offered Himself without spot to God; offered Himself. Active in His whole life, active on the cross, passively receiving the wrath of God in His soul, actively offering Himself to God as a sacrifice. Whenever the priest was engaged in the tabernacle, he was active, and our anti-type answers to this as to all other particulars in respect of the priesthood. He offered Himself on the cross. He offered Himself on the cross. He laboured, and suffered, and groaned and bled, and His precious life, His holy soul, He poured out. Brethren what do you think of this? Examine yourselves respecting His death for when the Saviour instituted this Supper He said to His favoured disciples giving them the broken bread "Take eat this is My body which is broken for you" He gave them the cup and said "Drink ye all of it" They drank of it.

"This cup is the new testament in My blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins" Does your heart long to see all the love of God? Would you often behold justice in all its bearable brightness? There is a brightness unbearable to sinners. Would you see holiness in that marvellous accessibility to it? Would you see a way made for the love of God into the heart of a worthless wretch? Would you see how the infinitely holy and just God could justify an ungodly person and sanctify a polluted person? Then you will have to go to the cross and the Spirit will take you there and there as He reveals the matter to you, there you will see justice and love, mercy and true righteousness and peace all in harmony, kissing each other and each delighting in the exhibition and manifestation of the other, and all coming into a sinner's soul. Does this please us? Sinner, in secret does it please you that you are enabled to see it? I am sure it does. Does it this evening attract you so that you can say now there is a fixedness in my soul.

Let all fruitless searches go
Which perplex and tease us
We determine nought to know
But a bleeding Jesus

The cross has never been adequately preached and it never will be for there is such divinity in it. Such infinite love, such infinite justice, such infinite holiness, as that no tongue can ever adequately express the same, but a little can be said and a little can be felt and what a mercy if God gives room in our straightened hearts to receive Jesus Christ. Let a man examine himself with respect to the Saviour. We have poor mean thoughts often, very poor mean thoughts of the Lord, often unworthy Him. If one may speak for a congregation one would say that we have poor mean thoughts of the Lord.

Again, think of the cross, who is there? Who is at the

cross? The Trinity. What is there? The law. And what is the law there for? To execute absolute satisfaction. What is the curse there for? To exhaust itself respecting the church and what is the Father there for? To smell the savour of His Son's sacrifice. Oh what a savour. In Ezekiel He says to those rebellious people over whom He had reigned with terror and fury poured out in the wilderness "I will accept you with your sweet savour" Whatever the sacrifice of the Lord is to us, it is to His Father a sweet savour. A savour of rest. In it the Father rests, with it He is delighted, with it His justice is so pleased that it will never ask anything, not one fraction of payment or merit from a sinner interested in it. The savour of rest. Now justice lies down if I may use such a word. Now justice smiles when a sinner escapes the wrath to come. Now angels in heaven rejoice over repenting sinners who come to God in this sacrifice. Now righteousness clothes the ungodly, and justifies the unjust.

Examine yourselves with regard to the Trinity. The Trinity at Calvary. The Holy Ghost had been with the Man Christ Jesus always without any measure. His gifts were in Him for the Lord put His Spirit upon Him as you read in Isaiah and great was that, and so here now you have the Father looking on His Son, and smiling. The sweetness of the infinite merit of the Son. You have the Father in His eternal love rejoicing in this new and living way in which sinners should come to Him and through which He would go to sinners and bless them, and you have the Holy Spirit, whose fire shall enter every elect person and salt him therewith. You have the Trinity. Now brethren, you who are to be communicants, examine yourselves and see what your thoughts are respecting this divine institution, this holy ordinance. Here is blood divine. Here is the purchase of that blood of God, the church of the living God.

Examine yourselves in respect of the company you would keep. A despised Saviour is no society for a Pharisee, no

company for a Pharisee. A Pharisee cannot say "O when wilt Thou come unto me" but a self condemned sinner, who looks with abhorrence on his nature, on his life, and on his practices, and yet faith says to the Lord "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" "Lord visit such a wretch, receive such a sinner and eat with him". Can you say that? Can we, as a little church to be at His table shortly, look to Him and say "Let my Beloved come into His garden". And with regard to an orderly observation of His ordinance can we hope that we answer to that "Like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing not one of them barren". This is beautiful in the eyes of the Lord, an orderly church walking in the ordinances of that Lord and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, will ever ravish the Lord Jesus. Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes with a chain of thy neck."

The ordinance may be observed in two ways. It may be observed by a person and by a church in two ways. The same person and the same church may observe it unworthily. The Corinthian church did so and very solemn was the consequence. They ate and they drank damnation to themselves. God is jealous; God is jealous, and irregularities in worship are not passed over by Him as if they were nothing and this makes, when realised by any person and any church, the worthiness very solemn. There is a certain awfulness about it. As you may say of some of your afflictions they are in your conscience and in your experience connected with disobedience, so perhaps the day may come when some of us will connect a judgment of God in providence with an irregularity in the observance of His Supper. Therefore it is very solemn for us this evening. I have had some feeling about it in secret. Am I fit, am I bad enough for it. Yes, do I mourn my wickedness? I believe I can say "Yes". Are you bad enough? You will say indeed we are. Are you sorry? Is repentance a sweet grace and welcome in you? Then too, have you got these? Do you get views of the dear Son of God, the precious blood of Christ, the great and gracious Emmanuel, God with us? If

not there is a grievous irregularity. But it may also be observed properly "Showing the Lord's death till He come" and this I apprehend is by faith, and with a holy reverence, with a hatred of self, and with a broken spirit, a sense of deep and abiding unworthiness, at the same time with a hope in the mercy of God, that mercy flowing through the Saviour's suffering and death; the only hope, the only peace, the only joy that the church of Christ can ever properly have, and feel. We do well therefore to follow, as enabled, this word. Let a man examine himself Here is the standard. Can you come to it? Not a standard of perfection in the flesh, not a certain standard of knowledge, not a standard of certain rich experience, good as that is. No, not a standard of strength, much as you would like to feel it, but this a sinner meeting the Saviour, a sinner trusting in His merit. A sinner looking to the person of Christ, a sinner hoping in the merit of the Saviour, looking to, desiring to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and faith in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Now if we poor people can look at these and humbly appeal to the dear heart searching Saviour, who walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks and says "I search the reins and try the hearts of the children of men"; if we can say looking at these things and then to Him and humbly hope that we may say "Let my beloved come into the garden", say "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee"; say "Lord we would have nothing of the flesh, trust not in the flesh, look not to ourselves but alone to Thyself, then I think this may be said, let him eat, let him drink. Does the Lord put any bar? No. Conscience may say you ought not to come, but it is not a well informed conscience if it speaks so when you have examined yourself. Conscience may act often ill advisedly. A well instructed conscience, though it will condemn you for your ways that are not good, will say "venture wholly, venture wholly, let no other trust intrude". It is not easy, you may say, some of you. It will be a venture this evening. Well, venture wholly. "Pity a helpless sinner

Lord". This is needful for us in our experience. We shall find it no easy matter to commune at times, and probably when we are best suited for it we shall be hindered a good deal in our feelings if not really actually by the tempter. He is a busy body in the church, a busy body in another man's matters, when he interferes with what is no business of his, for the business lies between the Saviour and the sinner and the enemy comes and intrudes himself into the matter, I say in which he has no business at all. May the Lord rebuke him if he is busy with any of you; may the Lord rebuke him. So let him eat. Hence the examination as I observed at the beginning is not to hinder a person from coming but to show him that he is just a suitable person when he can say reverently, humbly, and hopefully that his soul, his trust, his heart, his love, his little faith, his fervent desires, these centre in the Person and the work of Christ. So let him eat. When he can say he has no hope but in the blood of Christ, no hope of access to the Father but through His blood, no hope of purity in his conscience, no hope of warmth in his affections, no hope of any good in his experience apart from the blood of Christ. So let him drink. His Lord says "Come, I have killed my beasts, I have mingled my wine. Come O ye simple turn in here" Simple? Without a double mind, without some secret thing, some little bit of leaven which you would like to bring. Let him turn in here, and so let him eat and so let him drink.

Dear friends, it has pleased the Holy Ghost in His great love to quicken some of us into divine life and give us a revelation of His mercy in the Person of Christ, and to gather us together in His holy providence in this way, and so form us into a church and it is said to us, now examine yourselves O church of God in this place, look well to this. Ponder the path of your feet with regard to this holy ordinance instituted by the dear Saviour Himself, who said "Do this in remembrance of Me". Remember the sufferings of your Saviour, remember who poured wrath into His soul like a fire. Remember His willingness to receive it. Remember who

it was that took your death and sealed it up; who took the deserved hell and endured it so that you should go into an undeserved and freely given heaven. Remember Him. "This do in remembrance of Me" And it is at a stated time. "As often as ye do this" As often as ye do this at stated times, with us monthly, ye show the Lord's death till He come" As often as you do this not only to partake but to examine yourselves. What a favour then it is to be permitted to go to the Lord's table, to go in that way that He Himself has ordained. First of all publicly though, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. "And teach them to observe all things whatsoever I command you" So then here by His mercy, we are, and I trust it may have been for our profit to have this solemn matter brought before us that we, sitting here, and shortly to be at our Lord's table, may be found regular, not only in the external observance, but in our heart's affections. Regularly observing Him, meditating on Him, and with some sweetness too as the Psalmist said "My meditation of Him shall be sweet" "Let my beloved come into His garden" Let Him say now to poor sinners, fearing it may be, poor sinners wanting Him, unable to be happy without Him, let Him come and let Him say "Eat O friends and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved" There is no scant supply in Christ.

A fullness resides in Jesus our Head
And ever abides to answer our need

So may the Lord help us brethren to receive this exhortation, act upon the solemn injunction of the text, and so eat as having examined yourselves and so drink finding that you are wicked enough to need a Saviour, and that you have enough faith to believe in, enough love to admire, the Redeemer, the Lord, the Saviour, the King.