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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening 2 June 1929

1 CORINTHIANS 11 v 28

"But let a man examine himself and so let him  
eat of that bread and drink of that cup"

Everything connected with God is unspeakably solemn; everything connected with the Church of God, as she is for His glory, is also exceedingly solemn. Reverence becomes His house; thoughtlessness in public worship is sin. But there are some things connected with public worship intimately connected with the glory of God and the profit of the Church, and these things call for a believing attention. Though only the members of the Church, and those who are to communicate with us this evening, may be said to be truly in the text, yet I am disposed to say that I hope others may find themselves within the spirit of the text; that, though unable to partake this evening actually, they may, in their hearts, find themselves within the spirit of this searching word; it is a searching word. What God delivered to Paul as an ambassador, an apostle, that he delivered to the Church, and he praised the Corinthian Church for observing the ordinances as he gave them to that Church. And yet, the Corinthian Church is marked in Scripture by very great contraries. Blessed with great attainments, with communion with God, with a revelation of Christ, with spiritual understanding and utterance, yet very much marred and injured by grave irregularities. And among these irregularities was their manner of partaking of the Lord's Supper. The rich among them turned the Supper into an ordinary meal and took of their wealth, expended it on the luxuries which their carnal appetites called for, and in this they shamed the poor. And also, clearly, they so far, these rich people, forgot themselves and their profession, and their position, and the Lord's service and Table, as to indulge in gluttony and drunkenness; some of them were drunk. And the Lord resented this misbehaviour; inspired His servant to deal with it and to reprove them. He told them how he had received a revelation of the Ordinance from the Lord Himself, and that Christ bade His disciples, on the

evening of the institution of His Supper, to do it in remembrance of Himself; that they were not lightly to approach the Table. Not only were the irregularities to be abandoned, but that their behaviour should be becoming the solemnity of the Ordinance. And in order to this, he exhorts them to examine themselves. Let a man who is to come to the Lord's Table examine himself, and, according to the result of the examination, so he was to eat and drink; to take the bread and the wine and commemorate the sufferings of the Lord, and obey Him in that divine injunction: "This do in remembrance of Me"

And this evening, if enabled, I would approach this solemn word and call your attention to it in the following manner. First of all, an examination is to be by a standard. Everything that is examined is examined with relation to a standard. If you are to examine a coin of the realm, you do it according to the standard that is set by Government for that coin. So there is a standard for us, whereby we are to examine ourselves. And this solemn matter is thus put before us, that we are to look into our own cases, and see if we come up to the standard. What is it? As far as I have an understanding in this important matter, these things are to be attended to. Let a man examine himself with respect to hell, with respect to the hell of sin, for it is written "The Son of Man came to save that which was lost". "The whole", He declares, "need not a Physician; the sick need the Physician." The lost sheep on the mountain calls for the searching care of the Shepherd. If we, members of this Church, and members of other Churches who ask to be permitted to commune with us this evening, have not a sense, and have not had a sense, of the hell of sin; have not, that is to say, been convinced by the Holy Ghost, have not had the light of truth let into their hearts and consciences to show them that they are, by the fall and by their practices, utterly unfit for the presence of God; if the hell of sin has not been, in some measure, discovered to you, and to me; whatever profession of Christ we may make, it does not reach this: "The Son of Man came to save that which was lost". Light thoughts of sin do not fit a person for the Saviour. This, then, is a thing for us very seriously to look at. Can we put our hand on a spot, so to express it, in our conscience, our hearts, and say, here came a light; here I heard the voice of God, as I felt, telling me and showing me that I was lost in the Adam fall and by my own personal transgressions. Were we

ever stopped - are we being stopped - in any wrong courses by the light of God, the Spirit, showing us what we are?

Let a man examine Himself secondly with respect to the law of God. The law is a standard, a measure, a balance, a demand, a claim; a claim on man; God's claim on man. And if we have had that law brought home to us, it has weighed us, and has found us wanting; measured us, and found that we have come short of the glory of God. It has searched our hearts and brought to light hidden things. It has spoken of God and revealed to us that we are not worthy of His favour, but that we have deserved endless punishment in hell. The examination on this part of the matter is just this - Are we bad enough, are we lost enough, for the Lord Jesus? Naturally we should think that the examination should be - Are we good? No, are we bad? Are we righteous? some would say the examination would be. No, are you unrighteous? The righteous need no repentance and no Saviour. The unrighteous need repentance and a Saviour. What do you think of yourselves? What do you think of your hearts? What kind of thought have you? I have lived a long time in a profession of religion and have lived to learn that I am a lost person, and self examination in this particular leads me to say: "Woe is me; Woe is me for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips" And if this can be added, it is a wonder and a mercy - "for mine eyes have seen the Lord." Ah, conviction of our ruined state, conviction of sin, always comes from seeing God. The more you see into His nature, His law, His requirements, His holiness, His glory, the more you will feel that you are a sinner. Let a man then in the first place examine himself with respect to himself, whether he is bad enough, as I have said, wicked enough - not living in sin - whether his heart has been opened to him in such a manner and measure as to make him say: "Woe is me; woe is me." This divine discovery will not result in bitter, fruitless remorse, but it will issue in sincere confession of sin and hearty forsaking of it in desire. Probably a thief never yet was put in prison for theft who did not wish he had not stolen. The reason for the wish would be simply that he was in prison, not that he had done wrong. God's people feel, sooner or later in their course, that they are sorry for sin because it is sin, not because it is to be punished. That no doubt enters into the feeling of every convinced person, but the real thing is their sorrow for sin because it has been done

against God.

Let a man examine himself in the next place with regard to the Person of Christ. "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" Why is He Christ? What did He come to do? What did His Father do to Him? What did His Father lay on Him, impute to Him? What commandment did His Father give Him? What think ye of Christ? What think you of His Person, whose Son is He? The Scriptures and faith say, He is the eternal Son of God incarnate; that He was ever in the bosom of His Father; that He declares Him; He came to declare Him. He sang in the Church - He still sings in the Church - "Lo, I come". And everyone blessed with His Spirit and divine teaching says: "Come Lord Jesus into this heart of mine, unworthy though it is. The glory of Christ's Person will constitute a heaven, heaven below, whenever it is seen in the revealing light of the Spirit. It is no light thing to say - None but Jesus, none but Jesus. You must be taught it by the Spirit to really say it: "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good". Probably we all of us have sung these words with little or no feeling, but they are very penetrating really. What think ye of Christ? What do you think of the Father's dealing with Him? Take that solemn, profound Scripture, in the second epistle to the Corinthians: "He hath made Him to be sin for us". What do you think of that? The sight of the holy One of God with sin imputed to Him; the load of all, the load of the whole church; all her sins from Adam to the last vessel of mercy that shall be on the earth; all the sins of all these people imputed to Christ. What do you think of imputation? The imputation of sin to Christ has consequences wonderful; to Him terrible. The consequences of sin imputed to Him were, first, that His Father bruised Him, wounded Him, chastised Him, laid stripes on Him; that, in the next place, the Father required that the sins which were imputed to Him should be taken away. As they were removed from the Church and laid on Him they must be removed from Him by Himself. They were a burden; they were made a legal burden. Think of it, a legal burden. The Father required nothing of Christ that was illegal, as He laid no stripe on Him that was not right and just. What think you of the imputation of sin? Examine yourselves. What do you think of Christ under that burden, that shame, that ignominy, that pain? It is no fancy, it is no imagination; an awful truth. Jesus knew it; He came into it with His eyes open; He knew it. This divine God-Man knew

when He came, when He said to His Father, I come; when He willingly and lovingly became the Surety of His people.

And next, what do you think of the death of Christ? Examine yourselves as to what you think of the death of Christ. We speak of His death perpetually. How often do we believe it in such a way as to feel the efficacy of it? Sinner, look at this; church member, look at this; every God-fearing person in this congregation, let us come very close to ourselves, and solemnly, seriously, put the question to our consciences - What do we think of the death of Christ? Why must He die? Who gave Him a commandment to die? What was the nature of His death? O, beloved friends, the reason He must die is this, that you could not live if He did not die; that your sin would never be expiated, never could have been expiated, if He had not died. And, moreover, He died obediently; not of a physical necessity as we shall die, but obediently. He was obedient unto death. Now obedience has respect to a law, has respect to a commandment, and the commandment under which Christ - of a wondrous, a divine, an awful, a living commandment - died. He died because His Father commanded Him. "No man taketh My life from Me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father". Now let us just sit here for a moment and examine ourselves. What is the state of our heart? What are our thoughts? Which way does the faith we hope we possess go with respect to the death of Christ? Do you love Him for dying? Did you ever love Him for dying? Did His vicarious death, His voluntary death, His obedient death, ever appear in such beauty, such love, such light, such glory, as all but to swallow you up and make you feel, now that death is my life; the groans of the Saviour are the ground and cause of my joy; His pains healed my soul. Or, if we cannot go as far as that, can we say that is what we would fain know and believe and feel in our consciences.

What think ye, in the next place, of the resurrection of Christ? Examine yourselves. There are men today who say He did not, could not, rise from the dead. Some say He did not die; He only swooned. Now let us here, as a church, and every communicant, yea and everyone that fears God, ask himself what he thinks of the resurrection of Christ. "For if Christ be not risen your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins". Every preacher has preached a lie who has said Christ did

rise from the dead. Paul said, of himself and fellow apostles and all preachers of that day, we are false witnesses if Christ did not rise from the dead.

Now another word or two. First of all, look at the bread. "I am the bread of life. If any man eat of this bread he shall never die". Examine yourselves with regard to the bread. What is it? A token, a remembrance, He gave - this dear Lord Jesus - gave His disciples on that mournful night when the Supper was instituted to remain as long as a church remains on the earth. He took the bread and brake it and gave to His disciples and said "Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me." Examine your hearts, dear communicants, in this matter. The dear Saviour gave this bread and He said, now one Priest only; I have made an end of sin by My sacrifice of Myself. The sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ made an end of sin. And then, because He would have this remembered, even openly, and announced constantly, by His Church, He said do this; take this and eat it in remembrance of your dying Friend. As the Spirit says in this chapter: "Ye do show the Lord's death", that is you announce it, declare it, "till He come". There is, therefore, a singular sacredness attaching to this most significant thing, the broken bread. By eating this, we show the Lord's death till He come. What shall we say of the cup? Paul says, the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup which we drink is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And this is the blessing. He gave the cup to His disciples and said, all of you drink it. "Drink ye all of it". Take this cup, for it is the new testament in My blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Now dear friends, let us go back to what I said earlier. Examine yourselves with respect to sin, with respect to death, and see if you have got faith to say, that bread can bring eternal life to my soul; that blood can bring purity and peace to my conscience, and I take the symbols of that blessed bread and blood and eat and drink them in remembrance of my dying Friend; my dying Lord. And do not let the examination degenerate into this - have I got proper repentance? then I will go. Have I got a soft heart?; then I will go. Have I all purity? then I will go. If self-examination degenerates thus, you ought not to go. You cannot appreciate the Saviour when you appreciate yourself. You cannot value Him as you value your

repentance and your softness and all that kind of goodness. It must be a sinner; sinners can say; and to such the Lord says - "Beggars approach My royal board". O, see, dear friends, a spread Table; divine love spread it; divine goodness is the food in the Saviour. Therefore let a man eat; "So let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup". So let him; that is, having examined himself and having solemnly and seriously arrived at the conclusion that he is a suitable person and that he has obeyed the Lord with respect to the Ordinance of Believer's Baptism; "So let him eat of that bread". Why, says the devil perhaps to some: You ought not to go; what a hard heart you have got; what a cloud you have brought on your own self by your sin; to what a distance have you run from God in following some vanity; he may say all that to some here this evening and say you must not go to the Table. He would blind you, if he could, to the fact that the Table is for Christ's friends, and Christ's friends are sinners. Christ's friends are sensible sinners who have to drop many a tear in their spirit even if their faces are dry, over their sins and come trembling to the Scriptures sometimes, and trembling they go to the throne of grace, and trembling they take the Name of the Lord on their lips, and yet, with all that trembling, the Lord Jesus says, come. Come, eat the bread; My body was broken for sin and for sinners; eat the broken bread. Come, drink the wine; My blood was shed for sinners. I shed it and I sealed the covenant with it. Come, drink this freely given wine. Come to this Table without money and without price. Is He not loving; is He not wonderful? "Let a man examine himself"; let him enter on this serious, personal business. Let Him see if there is in him the requirements for this Table. And I venture to say, again, the requirement is not goodness; it is not goodness. No good tempers, no pleasing frames, nothing of that kind is permitted. The Pharisee went home worse than he went up into the temple and the publican went home better than he tremblingly and slowly and with painful steps, went up to the temple. He went down to his house justified.

Sinners are high in His esteem  
And sinners highly value Him

It is many years ago, more than 60 years ago, since that was a wonderful word to me; a revelation wonderful; it created an

amazement.

Sinners are high in His esteem

And I was a sinner trying to become better

And sinners highly value Him

and that is the thing. Come then, repenting sinner; come, sinner sick of self, sick of your own ways; come with that wonder, that trembling admiration that you have for the Lord Jesus, and that love that moves in you which, perhaps, you hardly dare to call by the name of love, but there it is; come with it. Thus may we come to the Lord's Table. Thus may we obey Him. "This do in remembrance of Me". "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup"

AMEN.