

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Friday evening 2 April 1926

1 CORINTHIANS 15 v 3 and 4

For I delivered unto you first of all that  
which I also received, how that Christ died for our  
sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was  
buried, and that He rose again the third day, according  
to the Scriptures.

It is a blessed thing to have a real hope that we shall one day be  
where Jesus is and that hope must be fixed on Jesus Christ and Him  
crucified. In the text this death of Jesus Christ is set forth;  
Jesus Christ died for our sins. Why did He die? The supreme, the  
first, moving cause of the death of Christ, is the love, the will, of  
God. There was, there is, no natural necessity in the Lord Jesus for  
dying, no necessity in His divine Person; you could not impose any  
external necessity on God; if you attempt it, you destroy His  
liberty. But His eternal love for His people, His will to save them,  
moved the Father to elect the Son, to elect the Son to be His servant  
and to come and die for all the election of grace. That is the first  
cause, the love and the will of God. And should it be revealed to us  
that that love, that will, did decree our salvation in the coming of  
the Son of God in our nature, we shall be, of all the people in the  
world, the most happy. O, did God love me? Did He will to save me?  
Did He elect His eternal Son to be incarnate to save me? That, every  
believing heart would be asking till satisfied and when satisfied by  
the Holy Ghost, then the sinner is supremely happy.

On such love my soul still ponder  
Love so great, so rich, so free;  
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,  
Why O Lord, such love to me?

Hold this fast dear friends, that the supreme, the first moving cause  
of the death of Christ was the love of God and the will of God. He was  
free; He need not by nature, it was not necessary for Him by nature,

that He should save a sinner. He owed us nothing but justice and death and condemnation. The more we are led to see this the greater will be in our eyes - as shed abroad in our hearts - the love of God to such worthless sinners. Remember that God did not owe salvation to us; He did not owe the gift of His dearly beloved Son to us; it was His own sovereign will out of which came the gift. Love and will gave the blessed gift of Jesus Christ; great is this gift.

And the second cause is this, namely that the Son of God did voluntarily give Himself, did voluntarily and lovingly put Himself into the place of His Church; did say to Justice, inflict every stroke that these people deserve on Me; pierce Me with the piercings they deserve. He put Himself there. O my friends, the belief and feeling of this is bliss, real bliss. It melts the hardest heart; it brings the poorest soul into the possession of everlasting riches. He said to His Father: "Lo I come". "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not", that is, they could give Him no satisfaction; they could only be types and ceremonies of what was coming. They could not give satisfaction to God; they were not intended to, because they had it not in their nature. They were ceremonies, they were types, clear, clean cut types. (Hebrews 10 v 7 and 8). "Thou wouldest not"; thus, said the Son to His Father. What then? "A body hast Thou prepared Me". This was the language of the Son, existing as such, eternally. "A body hast Thou prepared Me", and I am willing, I am willing to take it as a veil, that My glory which is equal with Thine, should not strike dead all who look on Me. I am willing to take that body into union with My Person, that therein I may suffer the penalty due to these, My people; this, My bride. This is why the Lord Jesus died; that His Father's love and will fixed on Him, and that His own love and will voluntarily gave Himself. Here may we fix and comfort take. Salvation arose in the heart of the God of all grace; it arose in the heart of "I AM THAT I AM". It arose, not of necessity, but the free love and will of God. In my view it does exalt the Lord to see that there is no claim on Him, no compulsion on Him, to save any sinner, but that it wholly, absolutely, came from God out of His eternal love.

In the next place, what does Christ's dying mean? What does it mean that Christ died for the ungodly? It means this, in the first

place, that the Son of God became a Substitute. A Substitute is a person who is placed under, and instead of, and above, all others. A Substitute is one who takes the position of a person with all the things that belong to that person; everything belonging to the sinner under a broken law, guilt, sin, separation from God; all these Jesus took on Himself when He became the Substitute for His Church, His people, His elect, His bride. He took that position, which meant death. It means that Jesus Christ became a Surety, a Surety for good to and for His people. A Surety means that a person makes himself responsible for another. If it be a debt, simply, the debt of the debtor becomes the debt of the Surety and in law the Surety must pay the debt. Whatever else attaches, belongs to, the sinner for whom Christ is a Surety, the Surety is responsible for, and if the Surety undertakes, as such, to bring into a certain position the person or persons for whom He is a Surety, the Surety is responsible for those persons; responsible to bring those persons into such and such a position He undertook to bring them in. You think of this; this is illustrated by Judah becoming surety for Benjamin. He said to Jacob, his father, "If I bring him not again, I will bear the blame for ever". He was responsible for Benjamin's safety, for Benjamin's safe return to his father. This, beloved friends, is the Suretyship of Jesus in a figure. O, blessed truth this. Did Jesus become a Surety for me, to pluck my soul and my body out of death and hell and to present me a person without blame before God's exceeding glory? Brethren, this gospel, in the power of it, is overwhelming, and our bodies could not bear much of the glory of it in their present state, nor could poor, weak souls, bear much of the glory. O, it melts the heart, it moves the affections, it draws out the soul to God, even for a moment, solidly to believe in the Suretyship of the Lord Jesus Christ for you.

Behold, a scene of matchless grace

'Tis Jesus in the sinner's place

Think of it; not in the place of a righteous person; none would die for a righteous man. Not in the place of a good person; somebody might be found able and willing to die for a good man, "But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly". Ungodly people in this chapel;

yes, the ungodly. This removes all conditions; this takes the meddling hand of man and puts it out altogether. This brings in the vilest of sinners, that God commends His love toward them in that while they were yet sinners, ungodly persons, Christ died for them.

Thirdly it means this, that the Substitute, the Surety, must be capable of receiving the imputation of sin. He must be capable of receiving sin. He did none; O, no, the eternal Son of God is holy, holy, holy. The Man Christ Jesus is that Holy thing begotten of the Holy Ghost, but He was capable, being a Man, of receiving the sins of men by the imputation of them to Him. I mentioned this a week or two ago to you; there is a beauty in it, there is a glory in it, there is an attraction in it to me and I trust to you. Think of it; the capability of Jesus Christ to receive the imputation of sin. No angel could receive the imputation to him of the sin of a man; a Man must receive the imputation of the sins of men. These things are involved in the death of Christ.

Now if we are enabled to consider and view and believe in Jesus Christ in these particulars in respect of dying, then the next consideration is this - Under what did He die? For what did He die? He died under this; He died under the law. He died under and by the commandment of His Father; His Father gave Him a commandment to do it. "I delight to do Thy will O My God", and He knew that will. Men tell us He was ignorant; He knew the will of God. They will be sorry - if they are capable of being sorry for sin in hell - they will be sorry that they ever blasphemed the Lord Jesus Christ as they do today. But He knew the will of God. I delight to do it; I delight to be spoken against; I delight to have the law; I delight to obey it; I delight to suffer its penalty. The death of Christ means, therefore, that when the hour had come the Lord Jesus should be that marvellous sacrifice, that all sufficient sacrifice, that God required. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" Ought He not? The undertaking made the "ought" necessary; the voluntary undertaking made it necessary, otherwise that word "ought" could never have been uttered about Him. "Ought not Christ", the covenanting Christ, the willing Christ, the obedient Christ, the sent Christ, ought He not to suffer the things He came to suffer? Ought He not to suffer the

things He undertook to suffer? He did, He ought to do. May we reverently bow before so wondrous a truth, He ought to suffer. He undertook to suffer. All the sacrifices of the old dispensation were the sacrifices of brute creatures ignorant of God's will. The sacrifice of Jesus was the sacrifice of the Person of the Son of God incarnate. Being impeccable, though in humiliation, He had a perfect will to live; a will that said to His Father - "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" A will that, submitting in love to His Father's will, said to Justice, Smite Me. A love that united with the will and made Him fly from, yet submit to, the cross. Christ poured out His soul - that is His life - unto death. The blood of the sacrifice, which was but a type, that blood was shed without a will on their part, involuntarily. The blood, that is the soul or life of Jesus, was poured out in perfect obedience to the law and love to God and to His neighbour - even more than love for Himself. So when He said "It is finished" and bowed His head and dismissed His spirit, then the sin of a land was removed, then the bride was redeemed, her debts were paid, her liabilities were met. Justice, on her part and for her sake, was satisfied and now the death of Christ becomes her life, her liberty, her holiness, her acceptance with and before God. No wonder then that the Apostle Paul, knowing so much as he did on this point, and being inspired to preach and write, should say to these people: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved if ye keep in memory" - or hold fast - "what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain," for I preached - that is, my preaching was this - "that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures". All the prophets, all the prophets, prophesied of this, told of this. "He was numbered with the transgressors". This "receiving", look at it for a moment, this "receiving". "Which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand" What is it to receive it? One says, O, I believe that Christ died for sinners and so he says he receives the gospel, but he may live in sin. That general reception is not a bit of good to anyone, never touches the conscience, never enters into the soul. Here "which also ye have received" means what you have in Thessalonians. He said "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance". There is an open heart; the Lord opened the heart of

Lydia to attend unto the things that were spoken; that is receiving it. It came, it came in, it got a place, the supreme place; it came in, it affected the heart, it affected the conscience, it affected the affections and the will and the understanding. It permeated; it was like light entering, the light of life, and the sinner looked with the eyes of his understanding and his affections and his will - he looked with those blessed, God-given eyes - and saw the truth of the death of Christ. "Which ye have received"; "Wherein ye stand". No standing when you are convinced of sin till you come here. Sinking only in mud and mire of sin and guilt; no standing in the law, only condemnation. But when you get a revelation of the Lord Jesus then you stand in His death. It is your life, it is your acceptance, it is your liberty, it is your acquittal; that is the standing of a child, of the people of God. "Wherein ye stand". Stand in hope, stand in prayer, stand in supplication. "Wherein ye stand". What a blessed thing it is to stand in the death of Christ. How can you plead for mercy without this death? How can you believe God can forgive you without this death manifested to you? How can you believe that God is your God apart from this death made known in your heart. "Wherein ye stand". There is liberty, there is prevailing with God, there is a sense of acceptance, there is a living hope. "If ye keep in memory"; "hold fast", the word is. "If ye hold fast what I have preached unto you". Well, may the Lord help us to hold fast "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture and that He was buried". "That He was buried". Well, if we were not informed by the Spirit of God in the Scripture that the death of Christ was part of the gospel which the Apostle Paul preached, we might not be able at all to enter into the burial of Jesus Christ. "He made His grave with the wicked". Why must the Holy One be buried? Because the law, which we have broken, condemns the entire person of a sinner to death. The whole of the sinner must die, body and soul and so the Suretyship of Jesus involved this, His burial. We are made, ever made, to say this, that the Suretyship of the Lord Jesus involved His burial. And the Apostle delivered this because he received it. Mind, it was not evolved out of Paul's brain; it was a revelation to him. "I received that which I preached unto you", and he tells us in the Galatians that he preached not by any wisdom of man, but he received it by revelation and here he says he received it; God taught it him. He knew the fact of it, as a Jew; he knew the meaning of it, the necessity of it, the blessedness

of it by revelation. "That He was buried". This is a ground, the ground of hope, for the people of God respecting their burial, that they shall rise again. Christ rose again and I may say here that the death of the Lord Jesus embalms the whole of the Church, every member of it, body and soul, and there is a sweetness of the whole person of a sinner to God in and through that. "And that He rose again the third day according to the Scripture". Christ's resurrection therefore becomes an objective, blessed truth for every living soul to gaze on. An objective reality is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and if our faith, being wrought by the Spirit in us, is at any moment directed to the resurrection of Christ, there we shall see the ground of our hope of a joyful resurrection. When Christ was in the grave He saw no corruption. He was laid there in a new grave; there had never been another body there; that is important. He was laid, so to speak, in mother earth that had not been contaminated, polluted by any dead body. If a living Jew touched a dead body he was polluted and therefore must go to the service of God in the ordained way; he must be cleansed from his pollution. Jesus had no connection in that way with death, with a dead body. He was put into a new grave and, as it is in the Psalms, and as it was in reality, He saw no corruption. Blessed be God that He saw no corruption.

Now brethren, this great truth, respecting our salvation is worthy of all attention; it is the grand object of faith. You say you want an internal religion; so do I. The only internal religion, that is a religion in the soul, that can do us good and save us is the religion that is, in the substance of it, seen on the cross. It is there; there is the Object, there is the great Object of faith. Greater than the sun, better and above all creation, is this Object of our living faith. Faith, blessed faith, in a more blessed Object, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Now I am sure as many of us as have received this and held it fast by faith will be able to enter into the Apostle's spirit when he said to these Corinthians who were divided into parties and factions in the Church: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified". Why, there is nothing else worth looking at, nothing else worth your attention, but His Person, this dying Saviour, this Surety, this Substitute. All goodness, all wisdom, all grace, all pardon, all holiness, all justice, you will find in Him and nowhere else, nowhere

else. If you could find some good affection in your self perhaps you say, then I could hope. You are on a wrong foundation. He died for the ungodly. Think of it; He died for the ungodly. This brings me in, it brings you in, and as we may be turned to destruction by the teaching of the Spirit then God will say "Return ye children of men". Return? Where to? The Lord Jesus. Where? On the cross. So said 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". Perhaps some of you have seen a beauty in that word - To be presented faultless and without blame before God - and if you have meditated on the word and seen some of its meaning, you may have said to yourselves, can we ever reach that? Can we, who are every day and every hour failing and falling, we who have nothing but blameworthiness attaching to us, can we hope ever to get to that, "blameless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing". No, says a poor unbelieving heart, never. O, but this will do it - and you are not to touch the work yourself, but to be a recipient of it - this will do it; "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". That will do it and when you receive this into your conscience by the Holy Ghost you will say, Ah that is it; it is done. "I'm clean, just God, I'm clean". O what a standing, what a standing. Our emptiness is a good place for the atonement; our guilt is a good subject for the atonement; our nakedness is a good subject for the righteousness of Jesus Christ and our weakness is a good place for His power, the power of His resurrection. So, my dear friends, this gospel is a good gospel; the sinners' gospel, the sinners' gospel.

"I delivered unto you". Paul had got it and as he freely received so he freely gave. He received it from heaven into his own heart; he received it from heaven that he might preach it. I delivered it to you. I got it from heaven and I have given it to you as a minister. A revelation received, a reception of Christ, is a passive thing. The feeling of Him is after that; the feeling comes after the reception, as being sealed is after believing.

"How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture". The whole of this Book is full of this death and full of the blessed consequences of it. Have you received it? Have you received it? Now let me name one or two things briefly that follow this blessed gospel



received. First of all, you are reconciled to God. Having received the word of reconciliation, having received the atonement that reconciles you. You wish you could give up your enmity, but there it is, it works in you. You wish you could give up reasoning, but the reasoning goes on. You wish all your hardness and hard thoughts were given up, but there they continue. What will take them away? What will take every stone, that your carnal heart would cast at God, away? What would empty your hand and your pocket of all the sins of enmity? The atonement, the atonement; that reconciles a sinner. O, he says, I am willing to be saved in God's way; I have come to God's terms; I am a lost sinner; I have come to His terms; I am willing to be a debtor to sovereign grace; I am willing to be nothing but a recipient of love and mercy and pardon and justification; I am willing to be plunged into debt deeper than any other sinner in the world. He is reconciled. Reconciliation to God means that, that you have no quarrel with Him; no quarrel with Him. O, is it not wonderful that a man, whose nature is quarrelling with God, should have no quarrel with Him? There is nothing to be compared with it. "Having received the atonement" as the word is, the word of reconciliation. God has reconciled you to Himself and you are told how "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself not imputing their trespasses unto them". What has become of them? "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". Dear friends, that is how men are reconciled, in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him".

Then this flows next, liberty, liberty. Conscience is liberated from the yoke of guilt. O that is wonderful; conscience is liberated from the yoke of guilt. If you can say, if you have said, "The yoke of my transgressions is wreathed and come up upon my neck" wreathed by His own hand and bound there; then to say that yoke is removed; the anointing has removed it, the atonement has taken it away, and I am at liberty from condemnation; what a happy person you are. Liberty, in the next place, to enter comfortably into God's presence. I say "comfortably", because a living, a bound, a condemned soul, goes before God; necessity and attraction bring him before God; he must go; He is a sinner, he must pray, he does pray: "God be merciful to me a sinner"; but also he is attracted; though he may not

feel it, he is attracted. The Father draws the sinner to Christ. Now with the yoke of guilt removed and destroyed, the sinner has liberty to go in comfortably. I have often named to you that blessed passage concerning king David when Nathan had spoken God's word to him and had promised to make him a house for a great while to come. We read "Then went king David in and sat before the Lord". O, what a passage; he sat before the Lord. He trembled before; he shook in himself; he feared, he trembled at the word that condemned him. Now, happy and consoled, reconciled and at liberty, he goes in and he sits before the Lord. The King has held out His sceptre; He has bidden His subject sit down. Christ sat down on the right hand of His Father when He had finished the work; now the sinner, having his salvation finished and his conscience happy, he sits down in the presence of the Lord. True liberty. You may sit at your table with your family, and be sat before the Lord in your spirit. You may be so happy that you can scarcely carry on the necessary conversation. When you are in this state of mind you are alone with God in a sweet sense. A comfortable sense of the presence of God; would the Lord graciously give it to us again and again; O we do need it so. We so often get away; I do; so often get out of His presence as it were, so often get away from the enjoyment of His love. But now the sinner says, here would I sit and stay in such a frame as this. You do not want to go into the world when you are here. You do not want to build your house when you are here, or plant your garden, or transact your business. You are happy here.

And in this liberty there is another thing carried on by the Holy Spirit very powerfully and graciously, namely, you lay a humble claim to Him, you are delighted with Him, you are delighted with Him. Says the soul: "I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste". And then the soul gets a singular boldness: "Let my beloved come into His garden". O, the freedom. The Lord is first familiar and then we are familiar. Joseph first falls on the neck and kisses his brethren and then they speak with him. Christ died for this; this is one effect of the death of Christ, one blessed, comfortable effect, that a sinner now lays a humble claim and says: "My beloved" He thought, perhaps for years, he should never dare to say that, and now he cannot say anything else; it is in him; it is not an effort made to do it, but he finds it welling up in his

heart, a living, sweet, comfortable assurance that moves him to say that. "Let my beloved come"

Liberty to plead promises, liberty to ask large things, liberty to pray the Lord to be with you to the end. Liberty to go before Him with every matter that you have got. The effect of the gospel in this world is very wonderful. The Corinthians had some among them very early who denied the resurrection. The Apostle sets it before them as an objective reality; their faith was to look at it. And now, as by His resurrection Jesus entered into heaven, so these, by His resurrection enter into the presence of God, and they are happy, they are satisfied, they are blessed indeed, and that takes place: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee and give thee peace". So let My Name be named upon Israel.

AMEN.