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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening
30th September 1928

Text: 1 John 2 verse 28

And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

Little children here are taken for believers, that is, all believers. Christ Himself, after He had washed His disciples feet called them little children, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you." (John 13 verse 33). They are born of the incorruptible seed of the word of God. And these believers are exhorted, to abide in the Lord, that when He shall appears the second time, without sin unto salvation, they may have confidence, and not be ashamed, being fully absolved from sin.

While through Thy blood absolved I am,
From Sin's tremendous curse and shame. (Gadsby's 103 verse 3)

But to abide in Christ, you must first of all know Him, and secondly be in Him. These two things are so important, in relation to abiding in Him, that it is necessary for us first of all to take a little notice of them.

First we must know Him, as there are two sources of the knowledge of God, both running into one, in the case of every little child. First the Holy Scriptures, we are begotten again by the word of truth, for "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." James 1 verse 18). And Christ in that remarkable prayer of His, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, said to His Father, "I have given them Thy word." (verse 14). The Spirit also said by Isaiah, "To the law and to the testimony:" (Isaiah 8 verse 20). Paul writes to Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (" Timothy 3 verses 15-18) Whoever may be ignorant of the Bible, whoever may contradict the Bible, denying its absolute inspiration is not a child of God. For no child of God will be left to commit those sins. If indeed he does so before being called by grace he will be given a true spirit of repentance for them. This book, this infallible book bears testimony of God, and it is the only inspired record of God.

The revelation of Him, of His nature, and of the Trinity, and of the substance of each Person in the Trinity. Each possessing the whole of the Divine essence, and the incommunicative properties as Persons in the Trinity. The Bible is the only inspired revelation of the purposes of Jehovah, and of His will, which cannot be opposed, of His love manifest in the gift of His only begotten Son, of the covenant of grace, of which Christ and His precious blood is the soul and substance, and of the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Church after Christ's resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and of the plan of salvation, all which is found in this only infallible record. Cherish it, read it, commit as much as you can to your memory, you do not know how much you will need of it in the future, for there is a day coming when there will be a famine. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." (Amos 8 verse 11 & 12). This precious book, alas we do not value as we should.

When Joshua was called to succeed Moses and lead Israel into the land of promise, God said to him of the Bible, (that was as much of it as was then written), "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein, for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." (Joshua 1 verse 8). And if on one occasion, when Joshua had forgotten this book, instead of being guided by it and sought the Lord's direction, he would not have made the huge and serious mistake which he did, when, by not consulting the Lord he made a covenant with the Gibeonites. (See Joshua 9 verse 15). You do not know what failings, what mistakes, what errors you may fall into if you become estranged from this book. God's holy blessed word is the source of all unction and true infallible knowledge of the Holy God.

The second source which runs into this and never contradicts it, but confirms and enlarges it, is the work of the Divine Person of the Holy Ghost. He is the unction from the Holy One who teacheth all things, the unction that abides in sinners hearts. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (1 John 2 verse 20). He is promised by Christ to lead into all truth, and to reveal and glorify Christ. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." (John 16 verse 13).

His love for the Church is the same as Christ's love, and of the Father's love also. His office is different, not in the nature of it, but in its peculiar operation, in that He comes to reveal Christ in the knowledge of Him into the souls of mankind. Christ is in heaven, His sacred glorified body is in heaven in an indissoluble union with His Divine Person, and being in heaven it is necessary that One who is able and capable of doing, and loving to do, should be a revealer of Him, and that One is the Holy Ghost. Dear friends we shall never know Jesus Christ savingly, unless we get the knowledge of Him, through and by the teaching of His good Spirit, the Holy Ghost. See then if you know anything about this second source of the knowledge of God, God in Christ. To know Him and the Father who sent Him is life eternal. "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ , whom Thou hast sent." (John 17 verse 3). None can say what wonderful sensations are produced in a believing heart, as the beams of light, and the touches of life by the coming of the Holy Ghost enter the soul, when the Lord Jesus Christ is seen.

This is different from the acquirement of natural knowledge, it is given, and imparted graciously, effectually and sweetly, and Christ is seen by the eye of faith. It is an intimate experience, such as is expressed by Paul writing to the Galatians, where he says, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." (chapter 3 verse 1). Simeon had seen this, "it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord' Christ." (Luke 2 verse 26. And when Jesus was born, and brought into the temple, "to do for Him after the custom of the law, Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2 verses 27-30). He saw that literally, and you if blessed with the teaching and the unction of the Holy One, will see the same Person, Jesus by the eye of faith. And the sight will be so distinct, so impressive, so penetrating, so persuasive, that you will say, "We have (I have) found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write of, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1 verse 45). Now it is vital to the text, to the entering into what is said, that this Lord Jesus Christ, the Almighty God should be known. Happily I do not speak to a congregation, where all the members are ignorant of this Saviour. Some of you know Him, you have had Him revealed to you, others want to know Him. Their wanting to know Him derives from a knowledge of Him, it may seem that this is a contradiction in terms, but only as He in some measure is known, is He desired. You may know Him at a distance, and say,

That Person is the Son of God incarnate, and I want to know Him. He may come near sometimes, near enough to give faith to touch, if not to embrace Him. And you may say, Oh that I could embrace Him, and He may yet give you faith to do so. Then you will say, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." (Genesis 32 verse 26). The Church held Him and said, "I held Him, and would not let Him go." (Song of Solomon 3 verse 4). A sweet feeling to one who is so blessed, it is most pleasing, and if one may use the word He becomes, 'the souls prisoner', you have got Him, and will retain Him for the time you are so enamoured of Him. You so love Him, and see His beauties, as to cleave to Him and them, and say, "I will not let Thee go". (Genesis 32 verse 26).

This leads me to speak a little about the word abide in Me, little children abide in Me. It is familiar of course to all of you, that the Lord said, "I am the true vine," (John 15 verse 1), I am the vine, ye are the branches: (verse 5). A branch is a part of the tree, and not something that has been mechanically attached to the trunk, and looks like a branch. It is an integral part of the tree, it derives its life from the tree, all its sap, all its fruitfulness, every thing that makes it a branch, a fruit bearing branch it derives from its union to the vine. And Christ has used this word for our instruction and encouragement, therefore, by the Holy Spirit, John says, "Abide in Me, and I in you." (John 15 verse 4). There is no real good without this.

Let us look then at this great matter, "little children abide in Me". First with regard to His Person, Jesus Christ is the way to God, the truth of God, and the love of God. The highest possible expression of the goodness, wisdom, love and power of God. The express image of His Father's Person, the very immediate Son of God incarnate. All that God is, is in Christ, all that God has given to the Church in His divine purpose He has given to Christ. All that He will do in a new creation, He will do by Christ, as He did in the old creation. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him." (John 3 verse 10). And this Person possessing all that is good, and all that God will do and give, is Jesus Christ, and in Him the saved sinner will be united, and in Him is to abide. To be united to Him is to have faith in Him, I speak of experience. There is a doctrine of union preceding this that has its rise in eternity, when God gave the Church to Him as His bride. She was then, in the purposes of God united with Him, as the bride is one with her husband. But when you come to experience, which I am to deal with a little this evening, then you have to say, that union known, felt and enjoyed is by faith, that looks on and lays hold of a revealed Saviour. This is a great point in true religion, a very important point, may the Lord help us very seriously to look at it.

Because if we have no union with Christ, we cannot be with Him, we cannot be like Him, and we cannot live to His praise and glory. This union is entered into by every saint of God, when the Holy Spirit sets the Saviour before their faith, and faith being the gift of God, and the work of God in the heart, seeing this revealed Person Jesus Christ, seeing Him in His singular suitableness, His exhaustless love, His infinite store of grace, His multiplied pardons, His absolute justification, His acceptance with the Father, and the sinner's acceptance with the Father in Him, faith, I say seeing this, lays hold upon Him. And this is called by the Holy Ghost, laying hold on eternal life whereunto we are also called. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called," (1 Timothy 6 verse 12). Here then we have the vital union with the Saviour brought about in experience. It is wonderful, it is amazing to the sinner who experiences it, to be joined to Christ, a member of Christ's body, and be made like Him. Having Christ imputed, and now in a measure imparted, he is one with Christ. "That they all may be one; as Thou Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." (John 17 verse 21).

This is a singular union, there is no union in nature exactly like it in all particulars, and nothing can sever it. The nearest to it in nature, is the union of the husband and the wife, and indeed the Lord uses this union to set forth the union between His Son and the Church. And so intimate is this union, that when the day of glorification of the saints comes, then it is referred to as the marriage supper of the Lamb. "And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Revelation 19 verse 9. This union is felt by the communication of life, grace and mercy, righteousness and peace, and these singular comforts flow in. The union with Christ is more or less distinctly realised, it takes away guilt, it removes distance, darkness and confusion, and enables a sinner to enter into that word, "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" Isaiah 45 verse 24). Now this makes way for me to say a little about this abiding, it is to rest, to be at home, so to speak. It is in the first place to abide and rest in the atonement of Christ, the reconciliation effected by Him on the cross, revealed in holy scripture, and brought by the Spirit to the conscience, this is the only solid comfort a sinner has in respect to his sins and their guilt. There is no solid comfort possible to a new-born sinner, in respect of his sins and their guilt, but in the atonement of the Lord Jesus.

Now my friends, this is a point for us to come to, do we know what it is to have faith, that occasionally draws our souls out to the Lord Jesus Christ ? As having put away sin, and made an atonement by being the propitiation for our sins ?

To feel that while we live the only comfort, the only strength, that we can have from God is derived from the atonement. "And now little children abide in Him." John says in another place, "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sin; and in Him is no sin." (1 John 3 verse 5). When you know that, when by sweet experience the truth of it comes into your heart. When you feel that the sins of which you have been convinced, the guilt of which lies heavy on your spirit, are all removed by the atonement, you will know a little of what it is to abide in the Lord Jesus. From here you must all your days seek to derive your peace and strength. From this, great, wonderful, and glorious work of the Lord Jesus in putting away sin.

"Abide in Him," in the next place with respect to His priesthood, He hath an unchangeable priesthood, a priesthood that can never be communicated or transferred to another person. We read of the Levitical dispensation, "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." (Hebrews 7 verses 23 & 24). The unchangeable priesthood, is a priesthood that can never be conveyed or transferred to another person. Jesus is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, and in this unchangeable priesthood of Christ, is to be considered His effectual sacrifice, contrasting this sacrifice with the sacrifices of the old dispensation Paul said, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which were offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." (Hebrews 10 verse 1). If they could have taken away sins, then would there have been no occasion for the priesthood of Christ and His offering.

Now concerning His priesthood and offering it is said in the scriptures, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews 7 verse 2). "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7 verse 25). And is not His intercession this, that He continually presents to His Father His one offering of Himself. This one sacrifice whereby He put away sin, was to honourably remove it, so that the law of which the sinner is a transgressor, can never have another word to say against the people whose sin Jesus put away. He cast it behind His back, cast it into the depths of the sea, never to be remembered. God said, "for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 8 verse 12). What further need is there for anything beside this, think of it, this intercession, this ever present sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is blessed.

His vicarious death, by which He intercedes, and by which we are to abide. When you seek God in faith, there is an abiding in His priesthood. There is a remembrance again made by you, when you mention the atoning work and sacrifice of Himself, and abiding in that, to go constantly before God to apply for acceptance and deliverance, is to go to this Great High Priest. Oh sinner this is your only way to succeed and prosper before God, this is your only way to live, this is the way of holiness, and the way to the peace of God. This is the way to strength to run "with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;" (Hebrews 12 verses 1 & 2). Little children abide in the Priesthood of Christ, "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews 5 verse 10). All your objections on the ground of your unworthiness, all your fears because of your failures, sins and falls, and the temptations of the devil, all the weakness and weariness, because you do not attain to that which you desire. All this will be met from day to day, as you are enabled to abide in the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. And wonderful it is, when by some truth spoken, some promise set on your heart with power, and some view of Him who "endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," (Hebrews 12 verse 3), a sight of His suffering as the Saviour, may be given to you, this will enable you to abide in Him, in the power of Christ.

Victories over sin, the devil, and the world are to be had, and if sin, Satan and the world have an undisputed authority and rule in your hearts and lives, you have no union to the Saviour. But if though they strive for the mastery, and you are enabled again and again to resist sin and Satan and flee from them and leave the world, it is by the strength of Christ imparted. The Apostle Paul, who was troubled much by the thorn in the flesh said, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He (Christ) said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 9 verse 8 & 9). He gloried in his infirmity, you too will be able to bear your cross, and be resigned to the will of God, to fall into His hands and leave the choice of your steps, life and conduct with Him, as His strength is imparted to you. Little children abide in the power of Christ. Abide in the next place in the love of Christ, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8 verses 35-37). Oh the love of Christ, He at such times, so to speak, flies to the relief of a sinner.

When Satan by his temptations attacks the sinner, the Saviour comes and by His Spirit says, "The Lord rebuke thee," (Jude 9), but Satan only removes himself for a season, and comes back again with redoubled energy and purpose to destroy us. But it is written, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Romans 8 verse 20). What a lover is Christ, it is at times, as if He cannot bear to see a saint distressed, and so He comes to his relief. He bids him, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16 verse 33). And you shall partake of My victory, it shall be imparted to you. "But God commendeth His love to-wards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5 verse 8). "For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," (Hebrews 13 verse 5), I will bring you honourably through your difficulties, and you will be brought safely home at last. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be:" (John 12 verse 26). Well it is wonderful to feel this precious love, to have it shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, even for a moment or two. How it warms, how it humbles, how it disappoints fear, and removes clouds of darkness and disputations. It reconciles to God and brings peace, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding." (Philippians 4 verse 7). Abide in Him, abide in His love.

The character of it is given in the scripture, it is called an everlasting love, "Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31 verse 3). And the day comes to every child of God, more or less distinctly I believe, when he is able to say, of his crosses, losses and afflictions, pains and disappointments, love ordered them all. Love was in the rebuke, in the chastisement, in the hiding of God's face, love is inscribed upon them all. And what a disappointment to the devil, who had tried to make you believe that your crosses were marks against you. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ?" But Paul says, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8 verses 38 & 39). It is a wonderful love, coming from a wonderful God, an eternity of love, in the Eternal Son of God. An eternity of goodness, by faith, as mighty streams flow from that river of love. Oh dear friends, the religion of Jesus Christ is emphatically a river of love, therefore says John in this Epistle, "We love Him because He first loved us." (1 John 4 verse 19).

One of the sweetest employments you can ever engage in is to meditate on the revealed love of Christ, and to feel it in your soul is passing all sweetness, and all words. "Abide in Him."

And now this must be my last point, abide in His Kingly authority and rule. Do not forget Christ's own word, which He said to His disciples just before He was to leave them. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28 verse 18), And you know in that beautiful chapter in the Revelation where you read of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and the Lamb as it had been slain approaching the Father, and taking that mysterious scroll out of His hands, and having authority to do so, and to loose the seals, and to open the book. (see Revelation chapter 5 verse 5). He has power over things small and great, even to the numbering of the hairs of our head. "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore for ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke 12 verse 7). All are in His hand and under His control, a sparrow cannot alight on the ground without His notice and permission. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear ? (hear what the enemy says against Him and His Church, and) "He that formed the eye, shall He not see ?" (Psalm 94 verse 9), (all that the gates of hell may be plotting is known to Him.) "He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not He correct ? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall He not know ?" (verse 10). This is our God, our King, He rules, but we are very apt through unbelief, to look at second causes when we are in trouble.

Some of you may have said, many times perhaps, if it had not been for so and so, or such and such circumstances, matters would have been very different with me from what they are. Well your eye is in the wrong place, your thoughts are on the wrong object, listen, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." (Micah 6 verse 9). Listen to what the rod says, listen not to what circumstances seem to say, but what the rod says. The rod may say, "My son give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways." (Proverbs 23 verse 26). And the ruler Jesus Christ who has all rule and authority in heaven and in earth, has your trials under His control, His direction and management. It is an admirable word in Isaiah, "The way of the just is uprightness: Thou most upright, dost weigh the path of the just." (Isaiah 26 verse 7). He knows just how much strength you shall have, and so He weighs out the trouble, and does not put, even an extra ounce that will be too much for you. Consider this, think of this and abide in this great doctrine, the control of the Lord Jesus Christ. "That when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

He will have two appearances, one He has already made, when He came in the flesh, when He was manifested to put away our sins, when He came as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that was an appearance, a poor man broken hearted, pierced with sorrow, grief was His companion, a man despised of the people, abashed by kings, yea and afflicted by His Father. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." (Isaiah 53 verse 10).

There is yet another appearance that He is to make, He will come again, "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9 verse 28). And this seems to be the appearance mentioned in the text, "that when He shall appear we may have confidence. Ah one may say, I can never think that will be my case, my shamed face, my shamed spirit sinks and faints at the thought of seeing God. Well, but what if you are washed from your sins, if you are justified. "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13 verse 3). Oh then you will lift up your face, and enter into this blessed truth. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3 verse 2). There will be no shame there.

It is good to be ashamed here, but then this is written, "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." (Isaiah 49 verse 23). This also is said, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5 verse 5). Oh sinner, new born sinner, what a day awaits you, as a washed sinner, a clothed and justified sinner, what a day awaits you. God has made the prospect of some people very good and bright, He has made mine very good and bright sometimes, that we may not be ashamed before Him. Some may still say, but He will be ashamed of me. listen to this if you can, "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Hebrews 2 verse 11). Who ? Why, the children whose condition was made right by justification.

Now may the Holy Ghost make this our experience, that we may, by His power, Abide in this dear Saviour and look forward to the day when He will come and appear to our joy.

Amen.