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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 6 June 1926

1 TIMOTHY 1 v 15 and 16

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world
to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this
cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ
might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to
them which should hereafter believe on Him to life
everlasting"

This is a glass in which, if the Holy Ghost should show it to us,
we may see the glorious character of God, His eternal love, His
eternal Son dying, His eternal Spirit quickening and causing sinners
to believe unto life everlasting. And His compassion in giving such a
pattern as the Apostle Paul's case is that in him He might shew forth
all longsuffering for a pattern to fearing, doubting, convinced,
weak and poor sinners, thinking often that they must be outside,
thinking that whoever has mercy, mercy cannot reach them. Says the
Spirit, now here is a pattern. Saul, an injurious person, consenting
to the martyrdom of Stephen. Moved with rage and armed with
authority, he goes here and there, enters synagogues where believers
are, persecutes them, tempts them to blaspheme the holy Name of Jesus
Christ, and goes to the extreme length of God's sufferance, that,
says the Apostle, the Lord might shew forth all longsuffering to
encourage sinners who are taught to believe unto life everlasting.
It is as if this text would go to the very gates of hell and snatch
sinners and bring them to Christ, and through Christ carry them up to
heaven. Wide as the stretch of human woe, deep as the deepest depths
of guilt, and high as the highest mountains of sin, this text comes
and says, God is greater than them all and so, should the Spirit open
and explain this word to us, it will, without doubt, take us in,
however black, wicked, unbelieving, murderous, lustful, and evil we
may feel ourselves to be. A gospel less full would not suit us. The
gospel is as full as the Trinity can fill it. There is nothing that
the love and wisdom of God could put into the gospel that is not in it,

and every question and doubt and fear and sin and all bondage and distance and ignorance that a child of God, or one who does not think he is a child of God and thinks he cannot be a child of God, all, all, this blessed gospel provides for. And if you search from Genesis to Revelation and see in this wonderful, this infallible Book, the glorious gospel of Christ, you will not find one hint of a condition, not a hint of a condition. There are qualifications but no conditions, and Hart has wonderfully well expressed it, this good gospel

The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here

and so the people of God are embraced in this wonderful text. I am neither worthy nor able to open it, but the Lord can use an unworthy instrument for good and may He do so.

The Apostle has just brought in his own case. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus". And now his soul expands, his faith rises, and the revelation is made to him and he expresses that revelation thus. "This is a faithful saying". Every word of God is faithful from Genesis to Revelation; not a sentence but what is faithful; not a letter but what is faithful. Anything God has said to you in and by His Word is faithful. Has He invited you to come to Him? Has He said: "Let him that is athirst come" Then He meant it. An earthly father is brought forward by the Lord Jesus in respect of God's goodness and kindness. He said: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit" - and in another place, "good things" - "to them that ask Him". If He has given you an appetite He has bread for it, and having the bread He has promised it and His promise is faithful; a word that cannot be broken, a saying of God that He will never withdraw and never disown; a word that certainly shall be made good. You wait for it and perhaps you think you are waiting in vain. You may ere long see that Scripture made good: "The Lord waiteth to be gracious". You think it

long to wait a little while for Him; He has waited from eternity for you and He is still waiting and watching for that day which He has Himself determined, and which He has prepared, for that day when you will have nothing to pray and no prayer to boast of and no faith to strut about with and no love to bring to Him as an offering, no consistency in your heart, no consistency in your life; nothing but sin and ruin from beginning to end. When that is the case, you will see He has been watching you, waiting to be gracious. The Lord sitteth as a Refiner and purifier of silver. He is not indifferent to the process. And this saying is a faithful saying. Heaven witnesses to it; myriads of spirits of just men made perfect would say it is faithful; many on earth can say it is faithful; Scriptures will say it is faithful. What is faithful? This truth, this saying that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance". And it is worthy of belief, worthy of all acceptation. You will never give God such credence as He is worthy of. You will never believe in Him more than He is worthy of belief; never. Never reach the worthiness of this saying - "Worthy of all acceptation".

Now a child of God does not reject when he cannot accept it. There is a distinction to be made here. One here may say, I cannot receive it, and I could say for that one in doubt that that is not a rejection of it. It arises from a misconception of your own case. A misconception of your own case is this, that you look at some things which are in you. They are very wicked. Nobody understanding the Word of God and human nature would contradict that. Wicked things in the heart. And seeing and feeling them, and seeing and feeling the Word of God to be against them and the law condemning them and the man who has done them and in whom they are, the misconception begins to work and you may be saying sometimes I believe those statements of the gospel, but they are not for me. I believe the gospel is full, but not for me. I believe it is true, but not for me. Now I have one word to say on this point, this, that there are only two voices that you are to listen to. One is the voice of Scripture, and you will never find one passage in the whole of this blessed Book that will say to you, a seeker, that the things you seek are not for you. You may search where you will, go from the beginning to the end of the Book, and you wont find one passage that will tell you the things you seek are not

for you. Listen to that voice. And the other voice is the voice of the Spirit and you will never find that that Holy Spirit who gives faith and prayer will move in you as if a voice were saying the things you seek are not for you. No. Poor doubter, hang about the cross, plead the blood of Christ, confess, as well as you can, your sinfulness, and you will find one day that God is higher than your sin; His blood deeper than your guilt; His righteousness more than your rags and condemnation, and He will say: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt". Worthy of all acceptance, all possible credence. Worthy of all the feeling of faith, the motions of faith, the desires of the soul. Worthy? Why, how could this possibly be more worthy than it is? It is worthy of God. God is in it. It is worthy of the Trinity. The Trinity is in it. If the lip of man were worthy and able to speak the gospel in its fulness, surely he would preach a good sermon about this text. O think of it, here is man, lying in wickedness; here are sinners sinning as much as they can sin against God, and God in heaven sees them, and He sees, lying in wickedness, numberless souls bought with the blood of Christ and He sends a word that is suitable to them and He shows that His eternal love has designed a remedy and that remedy is to come in the expression and manifestation of it in the incarnation of His eternal Son. He came into the world where sin is; came into the world where His enemies are; came into the world where His own are lying in death in trespasses and sins. He had a price to pay and He had the sweet will to pay it and the ability to pay it. He had a curse to endure and He had a heart to endure it and nothing turned Him away from this great work which He came to do - to save. To save? Why, it is a relative term; it relates to being lost. If we were half lost enough this would be more prized by us. To save means that there are some people that He has in His heart and in His eye, and He will think nothing of giving Himself for them. He endured the cross, despised the shame, the ignominy, the pain, the grief, the curse, the hiding of His Father's face. They were all told Him; He knew what He would have to do. This Man, Christ Jesus, He knew it all, and He stuck not at it. He withdrew not His cheek from the smiter nor His back from those who would scourge and wound Him. He came to do it. It expresses the mission His Father sent Him on. It expresses that determination of His to have His own with Him and He knew what it means to Him to have them with Him. He gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified, made

manifest, in due time. May the Lord help me to speak a little of this salvation. It is what I want; what I need for myself and what you need. Salvation! O, the joyful sound to malefactors doomed to die. There are several things in the sinner, in his heart, in his state, in his standing under the law, which must needs be removed from him if he is to be saved. It is good to look in the face the condition that we are in in the fall. Our condition in the fall and by our own sin is extremely bad. Let us try to look at it. It is this, that we are under the curse of God's holy and just and good law. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". Now we are there; we have not continued in the law, not continued in obedience to His Word. We broke away when Adam fell and we have never, never done our duty since then. That is true. There is no man living who has done his duty before God and toward God. Some of you may not believe this. May the Lord bring you to believe it. Your duty is to be perfect, perfect according to the terms of the law; love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and thy neighbour as thyself. Now when I mention this I mention a truth that the Scriptures do abundantly teach, and if we are ignorant of that it is a dreadful thing for us. Here is a creature, made perfect by God. God made man upright. That creature despised His Creator, broke the law, preferred himself before God, sold himself to work wickedness. Now one thing was not altered when man changed, and that was the law. When a man steals the law of England does not change; it arrests him and puts him in prison; the law remains. He has altered from an honest to a dishonest man. When one commits murder the law does not change. The man is changed and it arrests him and he has capital punishment. When we sinned the law was not changed. Our condition was changed; the law was the same. Now sinner, when you come to believe this, you will be convinced of sin and will be the subject of what is called, a law work. Then another condition came about in us, that is the whole of the faculty of man is sold. Spoken of as will and mind and understanding and heart and affections, the whole of the man was depraved and instead of being pure he became a mass of corruption. This is true. God's Word says it. The thoughts of man are only evil and that continually, and the imagination of the thought of his heart is only evil and that continually. O, if our hearts were opened to the gaze of our friends, they would fly from us in horror and if I

could see your hearts what a sight I should see; if you could see my heart. God has kept even from ourselves the fulness of the sight though some of us have had a sight enough to sicken us and bring us to self-despair. Now these two things, the fall and the law and the corruption of our nature you will find in the Scriptures are followed by a third thing, namely the curse of that law, and this means that God, the Law Giver, is against us; against us; and woe to that man of whom the Lord says, as in Deuteronomy it is: "I am against that man" O, my friends, if God is against any of us what will become of us? "I am against that man who says that it shall be well with him if he add drunkenness to thirst." Woe be to the sinner against whom the Lord is. Now you take these three things. Nobody can move them; no sinner can move them from himself; absolve himself, that is to say, from the law, cleanse himself from his corruptions, and put God in another relation to himself. Hence, our condition. What a condition. Is it not solemn? If we believe it, half believe it, we should more tremble at God than we do. But then comes the Lord. He comes forth from those infinite depths of inexhaustible light in which He naturally and eternally dwells and He says: "I am thy salvation". This is His word to His people. "I am thy salvation". But how can this be? for the law will not abate its demands; the law cannot let its curse go unsatisfied; it must bathe its sword in some creature, some heart. How can these things be, said Nicodemus to the Saviour who told him he must be born again. And if you look at your condition under the law, and you look at the law in its demands and its curse and look at your corruptions and see them in the light of God's teaching and grace, then you will say, how can salvation be. How can it consist with God's character? Now the Apostle Paul's word which I have read for a text answers the question: "This is a faithful saying"; God has said it. It is "worthy of all acceptation"; God has uttered the word; "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". And this word "save" means that the Lord God, the eternal Son of God, came and took on Him the nature of His children. "The children being partakers of flesh and blood He likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hence, that beautiful word: The Son of Man is come to save the lost; to save the lost. Poor, lost sinner, you are more in Christ's eye than He is in yours;

more in His heart than you can believe. O, to think of this. He came to save the lost. How He did it, the Scripture informs us. He did it by becoming a Surety, and being a Surety He had to meet all the liabilities for those for whom He became a Surety. He did it by becoming the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world and when He came into the world He had to meet that, even to die, and to die in His case was to lay down His life voluntarily. "I lay down My life". The good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep". And see this, my friends, this gospel was preached to Adam, a sinner, when Adam had only sin and shame. This gospel comes unto the Lord's people in the same condition, sinners. He gave Himself a ransom; offered Himself without spot to God, and God accepted that sacrifice. It is called the sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. O, just look at it; God show it to us. A sweet smelling savour. Life for life. The pure, blessed, glorious life of Jesus Christ offered willingly, lovingly, unto God. He gave it voluntarily, and it was a sweet savour, an acceptable sacrifice, a sufficient sacrifice, an all sufficient sacrifice, leaving nothing to be desired, nothing to be asked, nothing to be demanded.

Now, my friends, if I have quoted the Scriptures and spoken truly, then I have made good one word I uttered, namely that if you search from Genesis to Revelation, you wont find a condition to be performed by those who are saved. O, that we could believe it. How often some of us may have felt, if we had but a broken heart we might hope; if we had less sin, we might pray; if we were not such vile creatures we might look to the Lord. But here you find Jesus Christ saving the lost, savings sinners. It is a sinners' gospel, my friends, that the Bible reveals. It is a gospel for sinners that the Scripture declares and may I again quote Hart's word

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And every saint finds it throughout his pilgrimage and more at the end than at the beginning: he is lost and needs to be saved, fully and freely, entirely, eternally saved. Now, as Christ did this great work, and having done it, went to heaven, how is this salvation to come to any person? How is it to reach a person who does not want it; to be made desirable to a person who does not seek it? How is it to

come to one who says in his heart, and all the aspirations of his nature, unto God: Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways? How is this salvation to come to that person? Well, Jesus Christ told Nicodemus the way: "Ye must be born again". Nature, in its ignorance, spoke in Nicodemus, in the word I have quoted: "How can these things be?" All nature's power, all her wisdom, all her religion, all that she can think about being good, all, all will leave the person uninformed as to this mystery. "How can these things be?" But Jesus explained it. Born of the Spirit - that is the opening - born of the Spirit. I will, is the promise of the gospel, I will give you a heart of flesh and take away the heart of stone. I will write My law in your mind and in your heart will I put it. I will be to you a God and you shall be to Me a people and you shall no more teach every man his neighbour and his brother, saying know the Lord, for all shall know Me from the least to the greatest saith the Lord, for I will forgive their sin and remember their iniquity no more. That is how it can be, and that is how it is, in every case for when the appointed time has come the sinner's heart is opened, as Lydia's was, to attend to the things of God. In different manners and different measures God brings this ministry to pass in every child of His. He gives a new heart and a right spirit. There is real feeling after God, there is real knowledge of sin, there is a real apprehension of condemnation; There is a true looking into the nature of sin, not always at the beginning, or clearly at the beginning, but sin is perceived, it is felt, it is mourned, it is confessed. The leprosy is in the house, the leprosy is in the garment, the leprosy is in the person, and separation from God is the result. Separation from everything good is the result. Then how can a sinner in this condition come to God? He comes in two ways. He comes first in the merit is the Saviour. He has no plea but that, no ground to stand on but that, no Name but the Name of the Lord to look to, hope in. Secondly, he comes by the operation of the Holy Spirit. That divine Spirit moves on the face of the waters, where darkness and confusion reign and He comes with the light of the gospel. He says "Let there be light", and there is light. Yes, there is light, and this blessed, holy light, shows God in Christ reconciling the sinner unto Himself not imputing his trespasses unto him. This is how everyone that goes to God, goes to Him. There is no other way. The Scriptures reveal no other way. The Spirit speaks of no other way, but He brings sinners from every false

way and brings them into this way of life, this way of truth, brings into their hearts this salvation. So sinner, if you be a sinner in your own knowledge and conscience, and understanding in any measure, you will say, now I have nothing in myself, not a scrap of hope, not one bit of goodness. I am just cut off and left hopeless in myself, but it is a great thing to find there is. All do find, who despair of self, that gospel hope is very near self-despair. A full gospel comes to those who are empty of good and full of ill. O what a mercy it is to be brought to believe this.

Now look at the acceptation of it here. "Worthy of all acceptation". You feel the Law is worthy to be believed and you believe it. It condemns me, you say and I must believe it. And you will find the gospel is worthy of all acceptation for when it comes into your heart in the power of the Holy Ghost it just removes all that. He taketh away the old covenant and brings the new covenant and puts it in its place. He taketh away the old, and that which is old decays, wastes away and is removed entirely when the gospel is brought in in its sweet fulness. O happy John, I thought this morning as I read that chapter. He says, I John, saw and heard these things. Happy John, and happy sinner who hears that the Tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them. The Tabernacle of God is in His dear Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true Tabernacle and this is with men and the sinner not only sees, but he hears them in his heart and this inward hearing is the power of the Spirit, a real power, not something imagined, but something that is brought right in: forgiveness. Forgiveness, the joyful sound. Justification, the wondrous act of God on a sinner, passes upon him. Sanctification, standing without fault and blameless before the Almighty. And this, this is the salvation which Jesus effected on the cross and which the Spirit brings into the heart and the sinner, he finds himself believing it. Is it not wonderful. If a thousand men, good men, told the sinner that Christ had redeemed him, that he had evidence on evidence that it was so, he would not be able to believe it without God. But if a thousand men said to him you are a reprobate, and the Holy Ghost brought the gospel in, he would believe the Holy Ghost; he would believe all that the Spirit said; he would find it was worthy of all acceptation. Ask him a little about it. He says, I felt it, it came in the power of the Spirit into my own soul, and I felt it. It

became mine. The sinner is saved, he is on the Lord's side. All his murders, all his thefts, all his lusts, these, as to their dominion and their guilt and their pollution are removed and he is on the Lord's side. Would he speak against Christ now? Take the Apostle Paul. He made men blaspheme; he consented to the martyrdom of Stephen. O what a Christian he was afterwards. He said he was ready to lay down his life for Christ. He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Everything was dung and dross to him for the sake of Christ, and in measure it is so still. When the Lord comes and His Holy Word is received, when the acceptation of it is in the power of the Spirit, then he finds himself a changed creature. I love the Lord, he says, with mind and heart. He wants to be with Him, like the man out of whom the devils were cast. The man said, now let me be with Thee. The Lord said go home and tell what great things the Lord hath done for thee. But it is just the feeling of one who has received the Lord Jesus by revelation into his heart. He wants to be with Him. O, that he could never leave Him again, that he might never be separated from Him, that he might be like Him, and hear Him speak, and feel His power, and taste that He is gracious. This is a faithful saying. Now the Holy Ghost anticipates in the text objections, so He inspires Paul who was allowed to sin to such extremes, inspires Paul to bring in his own case. "Howbeit" - though I am the chief of sinners - "for this cause I obtained mercy". There was an end that God had in view when He allowed the Apostle Paul to sin in such an extreme manner. Have you ever seen it? There was an end in it. Christ had a great purpose in letting the Apostle Paul consent to the murder of Stephen and to go and hail to prison men and women and all whom he found in the way of Christ, and His end was this. He knew what sinners would feel when they were convinced; He knew what some here may be feeling this morning; He knew the objections they would raise against themselves; He knew that some might be saying, we believe all the minister says, but then this is the point, we are outside, we are extreme, we have no ground to stand on, no reason to hope, for we have sinned beyond all limits. O, but, says the Spirit, by Paul, in respect of Paul's own case, "For this cause I obtained mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering". He does not stop there; he does not stop there. He says "For a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting", as if he should say, now you who

are raising objections against yourselves, who are saying that you have gone beyond all hope, look at this pattern. Who - when Paul a young man, Saul of Tarsus, was consenting to the martyrdom of Stephen; when he was entering into synagogues and hailing men and women to prison; when he was tempting poor, tempted believers to blaspheme the Name of Jesus Christ; when He was promising liberty to them if they would but blaspheme that holy Name; - who, I say, following Paul in this course would have said, there is the pattern in the future of what God's lovingkindness, tender mercy, free grace, sovereign love, justifying righteousness and pardoning blood will accomplish? That in me He might shew a pattern of all His longsuffering. All His kindness and mercy, all the stretches of His wisdom and grace, to the praise of the glory of His grace, shall be seen in Paul, and for this reason I felt very much hesitancy even at the very thought of contradicting the Apostle Paul when he claims to be the chief of sinners, and you do well to feel the same, because if you say you are a bigger sinner than Paul, remember that you insofar destroy the pattern that the Lord Jesus has set before us. Let Paul, where he says he is - we are big enough in sin, we are enough in sin: God knows we are, and we know we are - but let Paul be the pattern, as the Lord said he would be; a pattern of longsuffering to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.

Now there are some people who believe and think they are not believers. This is faith, when the heart, sick of sin, does cordially approve of Jesus Christ, when there is a real reception in the affections of the Person and death of Christ. You may say, I do not know that I know Him, but if anyone should contradict Him, blaspheme Him, speak against Him, I believe I can tell one thing you would feel. You would feel very indignant and very grieved that any tongue should ever dare to utter a word against the Son of God incarnate. And what does He think of that? Faith. He says it is faith unto life everlasting, which shows that the goodness of the sinner's state is not dependent on its comfort. It is evidenced to himself when he is comfortably assured, but his good state through faith does not depend on his comfort. Grace, grace, grace, saves. Comfort comes in God's time and in God's measure. Now I must leave it. The Lord forgive the poverty of the preaching, and make the gospel a good gospel to you and bring it to your hearts and my heart, that we may find that our souls

have received it, and loved it, and still love it, and may hope in Him be strong.

AMEN.