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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 8 October 1922

2 CORINTHIANS 13 v 14

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of
God and the communion of the Holy Ghost
be with you all, Amen.

In this beautiful and full word God, by Paul, expresses Himself in terms of fellowship, of communion. He tells us, in effect, that He will communicate with sinners of Himself, that they shall partake of that which is communicable of Himself, and this has a peculiar glory in it and it brings sinners, favoured with it, into union with God. What greater thing can there be than this for us? What higher glory can a sinner be raised to than this? What sweeter, what more happy, more blessed condition can there be imagined than this? This communion of God in His Trinity of Persons is the fruit of that covenant of grace which was entered into by the eternal Three, that covenant that takes all who are in it, interested in it, out of their own covenant and their old stock, their dead head, Adam, and brings them into another state and standing altogether, and it puts upon them an image, and within them, a life, and about them, a protection, and brings them ultimately to be with the Lord and like Him. In this blessed verse there are Three Persons and these Three are One, One in nature; no distinction there; one in nature. May we be enabled to hold that fast. Dear friends, the doctrine of the Trinity is, as I remarked this morning, the foundation of worship. The distinctions in the Trinity are the foundation of salvation and the gracious outflowings from the Trinity are the life and the comfort and the joy of all the saints. Therefore, may we be enabled to believe this, to look at this great Word. It is an inspired petition uttered by the Apostle Paul at the close of this second Epistle. He wrote these two Epistles to a church that was marked very much by divisions and marred by sins and rebellion and by great disorders in their observance of the Lord's Supper. They brought upon them from the Lord, by His servant, very solemn and severe rebukes. Still, as in the seven churches in Asia, there was toward them the heart of God. He looked

upon His own and would not let them alone but sent reproofs and rebukes and instructions to them. Mark this, in passing, we are sinners, and if we belong to the Lord He will make that known by reproofing us. The professor who gets no reproof is in a perilous and desperate condition. The saint, who may in some ways be worse than the professor, and in his feelings certainly often he will be so, gets evidences of the Lord's love and care and by reflection, evidences of his sonship, his ineffable relationship to God. Look to this point; see if you get reproofs. I am sure you need them and if you are tender you wont dispute that. If you are hardened for the time by the deceitfulness of sin, you may retort and say I am legal and ought not to indulge in such remarks, but that wont matter at all. God will look on you as you belong to Him and in His own time administer those solemn reproofs which you greatly need. Now at the close of this Epistle the Apostle writes these words: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is God. This grace is His eternal purpose in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost, but as the distinction is here in the Trinity I rather take it to mean the following particulars. First of all, the grace of His incarnation. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor that ye, through His poverty, might be rich". That was grace, such grace as Paul celebrates in the Philippians when He writes to those people and says "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, but took on Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men." Now this was grace that emptied Himself; put off, so to speak, the bright rays of His own eternal glory as God, only occasionally letting forth those wondrous beams of divinity in His authority over the dead, quickening them; and over disease, healing all that were sick; and over that which He multiplied, a few loaves, to feed thousands by. Only occasionally did He let forth those bright, wondrous beams of Deity. He ordinarily appeared to be a Man, as He really was, and to all about Him except His few disciples, only a Man, a poor, weak Man. What grace this was, what wondrous grace that the eternal God took up His abode in our poor nature, without its

sin, and only to a few disciples did He convey the gracious knowledge that He was the eternal God and that He came forth from God. What grace that He should humble Himself, empty Himself, and make Himself of no reputation. Well, the Apostle says, this grace be with you, that is to say, if He became incarnate for us, may the grace of that incarnation flow in its wondrous efficacy into your hearts. And what is this grace but that Christ is a Brother born for adversity. The grace of that humiliation of Christ be with you. The grace of His substitutionary work. As a substitute He must be a Man. Only a Man could suffer for men and satisfy infinite justice and therefore He took upon Himself our nature, that therein He might be, and did become, the Surety, the suffering, smarting, sufficient Surety for His poor, sinful people. An adequate redemption must be effected or we must be lost. That is the truth, and if the grace of divine Suretyship comes into our hearts, then this prayer will be answered in us; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a wonderful thing. If ever you see by precious faith and believe by the witness of the Spirit for yourselves that Christ loved you and gave Himself for you, then you will say, O, it was grace indeed. A matchless scene of grace opens to the wondering eye of the sinner when He sees Jesus in his place, when he sees the sinless One bearing his sins in His own body on the tree. This is grace; the grace of the Lord Jesus. The grace of His active offering of Himself without spot to God be with you. What is this, but redemption. Redemption's glory is here, that it secures from punishment and hell and translates from the kingdom of darkness, death and hell, all for whom the Saviour died. He prayed in the days of His flesh with strong cries and tears and was heard in that He feared. And when the hour was approaching He must die, then willingly He took the cup which His Father had given Him to drink, saying, "Shall I not drink it". And when He was weak in His human nature, then in that garden where His agony had been such as to produce a bloody sweat, an angel was sent to minister to Him. But when He came to the cross there was that divine, that solemn and blessed offering of Himself, He being the Priest, and His sacred eternal Deity the altar, and His holy human nature the offering. And never was Christ in all His suffering days, in His praying nights, in His difficulties - not difficulties to Him though He was a Man - never was He more active in those things than when He was on the cross. And I would press this upon your attention that the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ on the

cross was that which effected salvation. He offered Himself; think of it; Christ offered Himself without spot, without a stain upon His nature, without a flaw in His obedience, without a twist in His will, without a killing of his affections, without an abatement of His willingness and determination to do the work His Father sent Him to do. He offered Himself. The spotlessness of Christ's offering lay, not only in the purity of His nature, but in His affections and in His will. Here He was - O how we shrink from suffering; how unwilling we are to suffer; how ready to escape any inconvenience - and here is the dear suffering Saviour, with all the willingness of a pure nature and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, with all the love of His heart and strength, by the Holy Spirit offering Himself unto His Father. Offering Himself unto the law which said - No blood, no pardon. He offered Himself without spot to God. This grace, said Paul, be with you. This grace which means redemption from sin, forgiveness of all iniquity, purifying by the blood of Christ, justifying in His righteousness; it means all that. This is grace. The grace of His resurrection be with you. His resurrection was full, full of grace, full of efficacious grace. It was as vicarious as His death. It had in it efficacy, even as His death had. The resurrection of Christ is like the keystone to the arch. "If Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins" Your faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we have lied in the Name of God by saying that He was raised from the dead. O, what did the resurrection of Christ effect? It said this - God was satisfied, that Christ owed nothing to the law, that He had completely done the will of God by dying, that He had magnified the law and made it honourable, that through the rent veil of His sacred humanity there was now opened a new and living way into the holy of holies, that He had become the way of escape from the wrath to come for every poor, divinely instructed sinner led by the Holy Ghost. It said that the Head was now in heaven and the body must be there too. The resurrection of Christ was the declaration of justice in all the satisfaction that had been received. The resurrection of Christ was that opened door through which God in His love should shine upon the church. The resurrection of Christ is that way of inter-communication between a living God and poor, afflicted sinners. This grace be with you. Christ in the grave, remaining there, would have meant the church also was in the grave; she would be without hope. But God showed Him the path of life as you have it in the Psalms.

"Thou wilt show Me the path of life". It was through the grave that that path of life was reached by Him. Through death He entered life, and He found then, at God's right-hand, pleasures for evermore. And the way to those pleasures for the people for whom they are designed was the resurrection of Christ. The grace of His intercession be with you. "He ever liveth to make intercession for all that come to God by Him", and therefore He is able to save unto the uttermost all of them. This is great, great for dumb souls that there is One in heaven to speak for them. Great for criminals that there is an Advocate for them with the Father. Great for those who are condemned in their consciences because there is One who shall purge their consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Great for those who are far off, because He, in heaven, will bring them near. The grace of His universal authority and power be with you. This is very great. He said ere He ascended into heaven "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth". Now this grace is exerted in two ways. First on behalf of the church so that she shall have no enemy to prevail against her, no devil to devour her, no evil to swallow her up. O what a defender is Christ. O, what a defence they all have who belong to Him. He is their defence. He rides upon the heaven in His excellency for them to save them from every foe, deliver them from all their fears, and from all their troubles. Then He exercises this power in their hearts. He did while here below, commanding legions of devils to come out of a man. Why, my friends, He has that same power now in glory to command the devil of unbelief and the world and all sin within you to come out of you as to the dominion thereof, and finally as to the very being. This grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. There is no deliverance from enemies, no escape from sin, except it be given by the Lord Jesus. So the Apostle Paul's prayer is a very comprehensive one inasmuch as we see that Christ has all this grace and we need it; all of you do. One word to this, namely that He has the grace, the possession, of the eternal Spirit. He was given to Him without measure and as the ointment that was upon Aaron's beard ran down to the skirts of his garment, so the Holy Ghost comes from Christ and fills the saints. That divine Spirit is that Spirit of promise because the Father promised Him to Christ and then Christ received Him on His resurrection and ascension into heaven and pours Him out upon the Church. This is the grace of Christ in a very few, feeble words.

Secondly, the love of God, first of all in the eternal actings of it. And what are some of those actings? First of all in setting up Christ to be the Head of the Church, the husband of His chosen bride. That was God's love, wonderful love, incomprehensible as to its eternity and its freeness and its greatness and its durability. From before the world this love set up Jesus Christ. "Behold My Servant, Mine Elect". He is the first-born of every creature; He is before the Church in this matter. She comes after Him in election, if one may speak of that coming after when everything is one wondrous act. He is the first-born, my friends, of God's decree to have creatures, to have a church. Jesus Christ is above them all, Head of all principality and power and dominion. This, received as a divine truth by faith has comfort in it. Then the love of God is next seen in the election of the Church. The mass of humanity lay before God and out of it, in His divine sovereignty, He chose this lump and that wherewith to make vessels of mercy. Or, to speak again as the Scripture speaks, to give to His dear Son a wife. Come, said the angel to John, and I will show you a wonderful vision. You shall see the Lamb's wife, the chosen bride of a chosen husband who shall be with Him through eternity. This was the love of God. Let who will dash themselves in anger against this eternal election of men; it will stand. Yes, may we be brought to know it for ourselves, the love of God in giving His only begotten Son. This is the testimony in the gospel of John "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life". That is a very particular text; stolen by the Arminians, but it belongs to the Church. Arminians make a great misuse of it and abuse it, but it belongs to the Church of the living God and no man will ever be able to prove it means everybody. Of course, it is well known by readers of the Bible, that the word "world" is used in various senses in the Scripture, and what it means ordinarily is to be found in its context - "God so loved" - and the stress is not on the word "world" there, but on the "so". "God so loved the world", so intensely, so mightily, so wonderfully, as that, rather than that loved world should perish, He would give, and did give, for it His only begotten Son. And "whosoever" is not universal; it is particular; a very particular and distinct word. "Whosoever", whatever poor, wretched mortal comes to feel His need, his lost state

by the teaching of the Spirit, shall come to know also that God did so love him as that he should be saved and his faith is an evidence of that. His faith will bring him liberty and peace. His faith will bring him union with Christ. His faith will bring salvation into his heart even as the faith of that poor woman who, after twelve years of suffering, and the loss of all her substance, and growing worse, touched the hem of His garment and was made whole. Every believer finds that spiritual, eternal virtue coming into his heart so as that he says, now I know I am whole. That woman felt that she was healed, felt in her body; she knew at once something was done, and so faith knows there is something done. "God so loved the world". And the love of God is known in the solemn sufferings of Christ. Who inflicted Christ's sorest pains? Who gave Him the sharpest agony? Why, His Father. His Father said: "Awake O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My fellow". This was the love of God. Justice strict, love eternal in the infliction of pain and shame and grief and death. Now how else is the love of God known? In its communications and sweet, blessed influences in the hearts of all to whom it is brought by the blessed Spirit. This love be with you, says Paul. And what will it do? Let us look a little, as helped, at what this love does when it is with a person, with a congregation, a church. What will it do? Well, if the poor sinner to whom it comes is like a stone, it will melt him. If he is like an iceberg, it will warm him, thaw him. If he is far off, it will bring him near. If he is full of doubt, it will assure him. If he is weak, it will strengthen him. If he feels, the moment before it comes, more like a devil than a saint, as Erskine speaks, he will change in his experience, and he will say, now I know what the influence of divine love in my soul is. It has changed me; my passions, temper, hardness, unbelief, cruelty, and every evil I found gone. They have no power, at present, over me. They have no influence in me. This is what the love of God will do. It will quell your lusts, scatter your darkness, dispel your fears, bring you near to God, give you true liberty, living hope, warm expectations. It will glorify the cross in your eyes and in your heart. It will make the blood of Christ everything to you. The love of God is just that mysterious, wonderous influence that, when felt, can only be wondered at and is wondered at. It makes dry eyes wet, proud sinners humble. It brings us into the very will of God and makes us straight with it. It brings submission to the will of God in

affliction and that is better than losing your affliction. You might lose your affliction and not lose any of your stiffness and pride and rebellion, but you, under God's blessed love, may have your affliction continued and yet lose it in a sweet manner by feeling able to say "The will of the Lord be done". This be given you. May the Lord write it across your troubles and afflictions, as Cowper says "..... to see love inscribed upon them all", all trials, "this is happiness to me". And yes, why, my brethren, every stroke of God's Fatherly rod is the effect of His love. I do not say you feel it always, but when you have this love with you, then you will. Says the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews, if ye are sons, God dealeth with you as with sons. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" If you belong to God He will tell you of your faults. No wise parent ever lets the faults of his children pass by unnoticed. He is sure to tell them of them and when the faults are gross, then the parent will put the child aside; no place at the table for a time; he will have his food sent to him in his room, but he wont be at the table. Now you may understand this, some of you. Your faults, O, how grievous have they been. Could you throw stones at that irregular church, at that wicked person who was to be put away by the church for the time? Could you throw stones at them and say I would not be among such a people as that; I would not recognise such a disorderly church as that. O, but what did the Lord do? Why, He sent Paul to them by letters, sent His word to them, and so, if you belong to God, your faults will be noticed by Him. This is not a little comfort sometimes to people when God lets them see that He noticed their faults, and so noticed them as to reprove them for them. Well, may we cherish the strokes, prize them as one says, we should highly prize the rod that is sent to purge our pride and make us more like Christ.

The love of God be with you in supplying all your needs. We have needs of two kinds; temporal and spiritual, and the Holy Ghost by this Apostle in another Epistle pledges the Lord to supply all needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. O, believer, what a God there is in heaven for you. What a fulness there is in Christ, what an endless supply, what abiding stores of grace and mercy and pardon and pity and compassion and what a gracious presence is sometimes granted.

And, thirdly, the communion of the Holy Ghost. The foundation of this is His indwelling. Mark it, my friends, the foundation of communion, the communion of the Holy Ghost, is His indwelling. Now may we test ourselves here. Said the Lord Jesus to His disciples, when having told them that the world knew not the Spirit: You know Him, for He shall be in you and dwell with you; you know Him. That is one of the most important parts of our holy, vital religion, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Do you know Him? Said Christ, you shall know Him. Is He with you? Said Christ, He shall be in you. Now here is a point, and I have no doubt you like points in religion, as I do; here is a point, what evidence is there given us in the Word of God that the Holy Ghost is in a person? What word is there on this point? for if we are not taught in the Scriptures about it, let us give it up. Well, this is the point; "He shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life". In the Galatians we are told that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit". That we know to be solemnly, painfully true in our cases. But if we be Christians, the Spirit of Christ is in us and that is true, namely "the Spirit against the flesh", and what is the consequence? "Ye cannot do the things that ye would". The evil that is in you, you cannot, ordinarily and with set purpose, walk in and practise. Just look at it, if the Holy Ghost is in you, the evils that are in you will be checked, baulked, hindered. Their triumph, if it ever is a triumph, will be short. Yes, for the Spirit is there, a well of water springing up; pure desires springing up; holy longings, fervent petitions, humble cries, presenting your case and yourself to the Lord in the Name of Jesus Christ. Here will be the springing in your heart, springing up into everlasting life, looking to God in Christ, to the cross for redemption; to the grave of Christ, to the resurrection of Christ, to the ascension of Christ, that, seeing Him, you may live by Him and live in Him. Springing up in love to God, saying sometimes, "I love Thy charming Name". Saying, sometimes, it is more than the sweetest music in my heart, and saying sometimes, I find an influence from the cross and the Name of Christ, soothing my sorrows, healing my wounds, leading me in the way of peace. The Spirit of God is in the child of God, springing up like a well of water. A pure river of water of life is in the soul by the Holy Ghost. Now if we believe this, then we have a foundation, and if we experience it we know we have the foundation, for this communion. And what is this communion? I wish I could more

enter into it from knowing it. The little I know is indeed very little, but out of it I hope that I may speak to you. This communion is some gracious gift, communication, operation, some inshining, some manifestation of the truth of Christ. It is the Spirit of grace and of supplications whereby the divine Spirit leads the soul. "I will bring them with weeping and with supplications will I lead them". It is not the rebuking of sin as to its root, but it is the cutting off of the fruit of it. It is not leading a sinner to make, to feel, himself good, but showing him that he is wicked. It is not a deadening of his conscience to sin's presence and power, but making him feel sin's presence and power. O, the distinction is very great between a person possessing sin and a person knowing that he possesses sin. Grace will make all in whom it is, want to be holy and the Holy Spirit will come, from time to time, in some blessed way and give of His powerful grace. This communion then has these things in it I have just named. Now let me name one or two in particular; one I have named, namely the Spirit of grace and of supplications. The next thing I would name is this, that He does give really some inklings, some gracious sounds, some believing views of the Lord Jesus Christ and, coming from Him, they do greatly affect the heart. You will find it so. An inshining from the Spirit will illuminate your heart and understanding in the knowledge of Christ. A speaking home of some Scripture to your heart by the Spirit will give you an entrance into the truth in that particular. A sweet feeling of Christ's suitableness and fulness and greatness of love, of His precious blood as to its efficacy, will raise your hope and fill you, for the time, with heavenly zeal to press after righteousness. "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness." And waiting here is a very pressing spirit. This communion is very powerful. We talk of power, and we are apt to think that if a thing does not come suddenly and with a very remarkable, perhaps overwhelming, power, there is no power at all. But that may be a very great error of spirit in us. If a thing sinks into your heart, if it is like rain soaking into the earth and touching the roots of things and making the tree and the flower bear, then you will find you will be obliged to say, there was power. Power is an influence; it is not a great sledge hammer always. It is the breathing, the influence of the Spirit. It is that that comes over the soul, influencing it. Not always a great and distinct sound in the ear, but an influence on the mind, the feeling, the conscience, the

affections, the will, and this is having communion with the Spirit in His grace. His grace is as the Father's and as the Son's; His love is as theirs; but in the covenant it is exercised in another manner. He is the Third Person and, so to speak, He brings up the rear. The Father is first in the election of the saint; the Son is second in the redemption of the saint, and the Spirit is third in the quickening and teaching and leading of the saint. The communion of the Holy Ghost. His communion sometimes is in a clear revelation of Christ whereby a sinner knows, not only that Christ is the Lord, but is his Lord. Not only that Christ is the Redeemer, but that He redeemed him, a poor, wretched slave of sin. This revelation brings certainty; it brings conformity, it brings liberty, it brings peace and joy. It brings certainty for, when you have had it, you say, I know He loved me and gave Himself for me. It brings certainty as to Scriptures, for you say that came to me and I heard it, I felt it, I knew it. It was from God to my soul. It brings conformity, conformity to Christ revealed, conformity to the truth that is spoken. Ah, if you get this, you will say, I know what the communion of the Holy Ghost is. It brings a divine quietness: "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him". It brings a blessed hope. "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith". (Galatians 5 v 5) The communion of the Holy Ghost.

And these three things the Apostle wishes that the people of God may have. "Be with you all". To be with you is to be in you. Not something about, but inside you. Not a beautiful picture to be admired, cold, dead, uninfluential, but a warm love, a living light, a sacred power; something that gets hold of you and you say, I am under its power. You feel it, you realise it. It is the answer to many prayers. "Be with you", be in you, claim you, humble you, bring you into true order, for those Corinthians had been indeed in great disorder. Now as if he should say, if you get this wonderful blessing you will come into true order. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ", the grace of His incarnation, the grace of His death and resurrection and ascension, be in your heart to do you good. "And the love of God" in all its freedom and greatness and certainty, be with you to do you good. "And the communion of the Holy Ghost" be with you to make you true Christians, to make you godly in spirit and godly in heart and affection and in walk. This blessing, dear friends, from the eternal

Trinity, be with you, and be with me. God is a speaking God, a communicating God, a glorious God, whose love will make Him, did make Him, and will make Him from time to time, communicate of His mercies, communicate of His fulness to all for whom He has designed those mercies, and that fulness. Now what a blessing it will be for us to receive this. What a godly church is made by this wonderful, three-fold blessing. What a godly individual is made by this. How it helps and strengthens and brings the soul into a right position; puts the affections on the right Object, the heart in the right place. Without this three-fold blessing, what are we but empty professors, if we make a profession. Nothing in us to please God. But if we have it, it is otherwise with us. So may the Lord give it to us individually and collectively. May this blessed communion with God be experienced by us. God speaks. If He speaks to us we shall hear. We shall know what He says, know His voice. May the Lord grant this great blessing to us.

AMEN.