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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 18 December 1927

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 speaking to you last Wednesday evening on this verse. I made some observations upon the Trinity and then remarked that I would take the word "grace" in its widest significance in everything that appertains to the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus. You will remember that I closed with observations upon the death of Christ and the grace of that death and I should like, if the Lord would help me this morning, to take that subject up, not merely to pass it by with a few remarks, but to take it up and see if He will show to us what the grace of the death of Christ is, what it really means, what it is to have that grace with us. "Grace" we sing "is a charming sound, harmonious to the ear". But what it means in its origin in the Trinity, in its manifestation in Christ's incarnation, in His absolute obedience, in His vicarious death, in His entrance into heaven with His own blood, very few people know comparatively, as Christ said: "Fear not little flock". The death of Christ has relation, in the first place, to divine vindicatory justice, not vindictive, but vindicatory justice. Justice is an attribute of Deity, a justice in God as Himself, but in respect of creatures it becomes vindicatory. He must vindicate His justice, and in the event of sin, He must vindicate it in punishment. This is a mighty attribute, justice, and I am going, by the help of God, to appeal to your consciences with respect to it. In the Scripture, conscience is mentioned and dwelt upon, conscience in man. A very weighty subject this. Conscience is that faculty in man which, when not seared with a hot iron, speaks. It speaks to you. It speaks to the godly. A conscience in the godly is both their friend and their tormentor, and it is the friend of God and the guardian in the soul of His honour and glory. Now we Gentiles have not the law in the form in which the Jews were favoured with it. To them the oracles of God were committed.

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They had great favour in that. But the Gentiles, says Paul to the Romans, have not the law in that form but they are not free from law. The law is written in our hearts, as Paul says. The Gentiles which have not the law had the works of the law. The works of the law are the works which the law commands and says Paul there in that Epistle to the Romans, the conscience of those Gentiles bears witness, blends with the law in their hearts, bears witness, their conscience meanwhile either accusing or else excusing one another. (Romans 2 verse 15). Now you people who are exercised about God and eternity, look at your consciences and listen to the voice of them. What do they say? What do they say to you if you are awake at night and thinking about God and eternity and about your own state? What do they say about your lives, about your thoughts, about your dispositions, about your words? What do your consciences say? God knows and you know. If I may, I will tell you what they say. I may be an interpreter. Your consciences say, God is right, we are wrong. God is just, we are unjust. God's Holy Word is right, we are against it by nature. God cannot do but what is right. Am I right in that interpretation of what your consciences say? One word more, if a remedy for your felt malady were brought before you, if it were propounded to you that a salvation that would dishonour God might be yours, would your consciences agree with it? If it were said to you that you might be pardoned at the expense of God's honour, would you wish to be pardoned so? Now that testimony of conscience, conscience enlightened, is a God honouring testimony. And yet further, you look at your exercises, you do not understand them often; your feelings, they are a mystery to you often; your wishes, they are so mixed that you dare not say they are pure desires, wishes. If you read a word like this in the Proverbs "The desire of the righteous is only good" would you be able to put your name under it and say now that belongs to me? No, you would be afraid of saying that. Now what is the real meaning of that work and language of your consciences? Is it not this, that you are, with all your fears and doubts and questions and misgivings, you are on God's side, that is to say, your consciences bear testimony to His righteousness, His justice, and one day you may be able to say, well it is a wonderful thing for me, an enemy of God, to be on His side. A wonderful thing for me, with my utter ruin and selfishness, to be on the side of divine justice. Now this is a great point; let us look at it. What relation can the atonement have to

conscience? And here, if I can, by God's mercy express it properly, we shall see that the atonement has a grace in it, a favour relative to the conscience, that the atonement fits into the conscience, and when applied does what the Apostle Paul says in the chapter I read just now, purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Dead works; you understand that I am sure. You understand what dead works are. Works done in nature's state, works done without faith. Vile thoughts, unbridled passions, unholy ambitions, rebellion, impatience. Dead works; O the loads of dead works that have been on my conscience and the consciences of some of you. You cannot get rid of that load can you? It goes to bed with you; it keeps you awake sometimes; rises with you, spoils your food, mingles, as it were, ashes with your meat and your drink, brings you to a kind of death. You realise what a poor, dead thing you are with all these works burdening you and threatening to sink you lower than the grave, even to hell. Now when faith is enlightened in the great matter of the atonement, it says in your hearts, here is divine justice illustriously honoured by the death of the Lord Jesus. This is an eternal principle. It will be part of your song in heaven all of you who get there, and of mine, if I get there. We shall celebrate it in glory, that a just God is our Saviour, that a just God smiled on a sinner, blessed a sinner, comforted a sinner, put a crooked creature straight, a wicked person made good and godly, and all through the atonement of the Lord Jesus. His precious blood - the grace that is in that, the comforting grace, the teaching, the strengthening grace, the God honouring grace, the sinner magnifying grace, the sinner justifying grace, be with us in this atonement. It has relation to God; the atonement. My dear friends, we shall never get to heaven if we have not a religion that has a relation to God and brings us to deal with Him through His dealing with us. This atonement has relation to God. Look at that Scripture: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Look at His gracious word where Jesus said: "I do always those things that please Him". And what was the thing, of all others, that pleased the Father that the Saviour did. This; " He was obedient unto death even the death of the cross". This was His obedience. I lay down My life because My Father commanded Me to do it. Now here is the relationship that the atonement has to a just God. His every claim on man was met by Christ on the cross for the church. For every elect person, the justice of

God was satisfied gloriously and eternally when Christ said "It is finished" and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. So satisfied was divine justice at this moment, and for ever and ever, as that all the rebellions, revoltings, departures, sins of thought, of imagination, idolatries, adulteries, and every kind of sin that man commits, these were all washed away and God, the just God, is a Saviour. It would, I believe, gladden some of our hearts, if the Lord should show to us this morning the relationship of the atonement of Christ to His justice, for He has made His character dear to us, has He not? Could not some of you, even tremblingly, say to the Lord: Thou hast made, as I hope, Thy justice dear to our hearts. We want Him to be honoured. The feeblest saint more or less distinctly can come in here. He wants God in His infinite justice to be honoured. Who could worship an unjust God? Who would love an unjust God? Who would worship a God whose justice was tarnished by an act of mercy? Justice and mercy must unite and they do unite in an infinite and eternal embrace in the atonement of the Lord Jesus.

In the next place, the atonement has relation to the conscience. Turn again to that beautiful word: "How much more shall the blood of Christ who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God". Now some of you might have to say this, I was angry one day with something and somebody when I had no right to be. Conscience may say you were deceitful in that matter. You did not speak the truth, or you did not act the truth. It may say, if you spoke what could not, in the letter of it, be contradicted, in your heart you were not honest. It may say, you know you stole something the other day when you coveted, for coveting is stealing. Yea, it may say, you committed murder recently when you hated so and so. And if you have got these accusations in this conscience, do not try to put them away; do not try to smother them; listen to them. They will make you miserable, they will make you afraid of God, they will make you tremble, they will make you doubt whether you have ever had a right conviction, whether you have ever had a right feeling or whether you ever prayed a proper prayer. They will bring you into a great strait, but O, do not brow beat them. Ah this is the conscience that is fitted for the blood of Christ. This is the conscience that has no excuse. This is the conscience that God will regard graciously. But you say, I have

got nothing straight. Well, do not you try to make things straight. Who can make straight that which is crooked? If you have got crooked things in your nature, crooked things in your religion, crooked things when in prayer, crooked things when reading the Bible, crooked things in respect to your things in providence; if you have got crooked things, never try to straighten them. Self despair is, I think, a good friend to a man. There is the beginning of gospel hope, there is room for the Saviour's precious blood, and this will bring out, as you one day will feel, the relationship, the sweet, the everlasting relationship, of the blood of Christ to your conscience. The grace of the atonement be with you dear friends. Ah you will lie down one day with the blood of Christ, if the blood of Christ comes into your conscience, and say, I have peace. I have peace with the stones of the field, I have peace with the boulders against which I have been stumbling. I have peace with the friends and I have peace with my circumstances. I have peace, and I lie down and sweetly sleep for the Lord alone sustains me. My brethren, Jesus Christ died definitely and His atonement is a definite atonement and when a man is definitely condemned, he must be definitely pardoned. When you are really accused and you cannot close the mouth of the accusing conscience, then the blood of Jesus Christ can answer every accusation; everything. You say you are confused. I know you are; I know what confusion is. Weigh your religion and you will find it wanting. Weigh your thoughts and you will find them wanting; you will find them polluted. Weigh everything you have done and said to men and you will find all wanting; wanting, lacking. Well, some may say, what a preacher to tell us these things. Yes, I will insist on them but bless God I have a remedy to tell you about. That is a great word in the Scriptures, uttered by the Lord Jesus. "All manner of sin and blasphemy against the Son of Man shall be forgiven." You get that spoken on your heart you will be straight, you will be pure, you will be a pardoned, a happy child of God. So this is in the grace of our Lord Jesus, the favour to a poor sinner, the sweet, melting favour, humbling favour, the favour that cleanses from all sin, the favour that brings the distant near, that makes a friend of an enemy, that brings the alienated one in close relationship to God. Ah, says one, I cannot reach it. Well, the Lord Jesus never tells you to reach it. He does not put that upon anybody. If you try to go into heaven to bring it down you wont effect your purpose. The word does not say go

over the sea to bring it, or up into heaven to bring it or into the depth to fetch it up. What saith it? It is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart. No, you cannot reach it, but it can be brought to you and that is the mercy, that the Holy Ghost brings the mercy, the atonement, and He sprinkles it. The type tells us this, the ashes of the burnt heifer mixed with running clean water. The water of separation, cleansing from all separation, was not sprinkled on the man by himself, but it was sprinkled on him by the priest. O then, this grace be with you and with me. It must be the lasting song of all who reach heaven: "Unto Him that washed us from our sins in His own blood". Our sins, not some of them, but all of them, all of them, in His own blood. Ah you will like to sing that one day, and you will begin to sing it here. Oh, but I am so far off. It does not matter to this. It matters to you but it makes no difference to this precious atonement for that will bring you nigh: "And you that were sometimes far off hath He made nigh by the blood of Christ." Hart has a nice word about it. He says:

The blood of Christ, a precious blood
Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not
And reconciles the soul to God
From every folly, every fault

Therefore may we be enabled to regard the justice of God and the atonement in relation to that, then regard our own bad, poor, crooked state, our wicked ways, our abominable condition by the fall and by practice, and see - yea, may the Holy Ghost bring it to us - that the atonement has a relation to our consciences, to straighten the crooked, remove the load of dead works, purify the soul, as it is written in the Hebrews. Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Now poor sinner, what do you say to it? What does your conscience say, what do you say, to the character of God that is so illustriously honoured? What do you say to your state? Willing to be saved this way. We sing sometimes - "Willing to be saved by grace". Ah, some say, we are quite willing, but God is not. You do not know that. You do not know that, and when you say you are quite willing, perhaps you do not half know yourselves. Perhaps you never yet have been brought to God's terms: "When thou art nothing in thyself". But this will do it all, this

blessed atonement of Jesus Christ will do it all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And in the next place the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in respect to His presence in heaven in the atonement. The patterns of heavenly things were sanctified by carnal ordinances and divers washings. The literal defilement of a Jew was removed by the application to him of the ashes of a red heifer in running water. These were patterns. The separation is the pattern of a sinner separated in his conscience and feelings and the cleansing must answer to that. Heavenly things must cleanse him. Now it is written, He entered heaven with His own blood. There lies the efficacy of the intercession of Christ. There and there only can a sinner hope that his sin stained prayers, his chattering, his wanderings, can be cleansed and the real thing accepted in the golden censer with much incense. If God rejects some of our prayers, and He does, it is our mercy. If He answered all your prayers what would become of you? But if He answers the prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner", washing away everything that surrounded it, washing away the earth that seemed to cover and hide the little bit of gold, if He washes away all that and just says, here is an answer, that is the prevalence of Christ's intercession. The grace of His intercession be with you. But I have fallen. O yes; I have met, or heard, the other day of the remark of a good man with respect to Peter's fall. This was the remark. Peter fell onto Christ's prayer. And if we, in our falls, shameful, sinful, wretched falls, if we fall onto that intercession then we shall rise again in the power of God. He intercedes. "I have prayed for thee". "Founded on right" Toplady beautifully writes: "Founded on right, Thy prayer avails". Founded on the infinite justice of God in salvation through the death of Jesus the prayer avails. "I will Father that these be with Me where I am". O the grace of Christ's intercession. Here is a poor sinner, ever falling, stumbling, going wrong, weeping tears of contrition, drying them up sometimes with good resolutions, trying to get better, trying to put himself straight, and he is always failing, coming short. He lives to prove that the Lord Jesus prayed for him. What will be one proof? What would be a good proof to you that Christ's intercession is for you? I believe this would be, the giving to you of His Holy Spirit. He does give His Spirit, and He says this, that the people to

whom He gives it shall know it. The great gift is known. How? "He shall dwell with you and shall be in you". How is He in a person? As the Spirit of Christ. How is that known? "He shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life". What is that springing up? The springing up of faith, faith in the bleeding Lamb. The springing up of lively hope; good hope through grace. The springing up of living petitions:

The Christian's heart his prayer indites
He speaks as prompted from within

This, as Paul says in the Romans, is the Spirit making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now my friends, look at your prayers, look at your desires. Ah some say we can hardly dare to look at them, they are so crooked or short. Short weight, short measure, mixed, often very carnal. Perhaps when you are on your knees you are the worst. What then? Why, says one, I see a golden censer and much incense in it and there were the prayers of the saints. You will never breathe one prayer which alone, and unmixed with incense, the incense of Christ's merit, would be acceptable to God. Every prayer that is accepted of God is mixed and sweetened and purified with the much incense. You pray to be brought nigh. You will get the answer one day. You pray to be put straight. The Holy Spirit being the inditer of that prayer, you will be put straight. Christ shall conquer. He conquers in His intercession. He conquered the devil in Peter. He conquered Peter's cowardice; He conquered Peter's bravery founded upon his own resolutions, and He brought Peter to say "Thou knowest that I love Thee". Poor Peter, better than all his brethren. Whatever wickedness they might do, he would not do it. Now at last he is brought to this: "Thou knowest all things". I dare not say that I love Thee better than these, my friends. "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee". The intercession of the Lord Jesus must take you to heaven if you get there. More than once I have said this to you. That word in the Hebrews appears to make salvation hang and depend on Christ's intercession. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And here I might, for a moment, revert to conscience again. When you realise the shortness of your religion, I say religion because you are walking I hope uprightly among men, when

you realise the shortness of your prayers, of your reading the Scriptures, the sin that mixes with everything that you do and say, when you, thus convicted, come to be a leper altogether, what does conscience say? Wash this away and get rid of that? No! The conscience sinks under its burden; it is distressed by the accusations that go on within. It has no excuse, and now the only hope, the only hope is that the Holy Ghost points out when He reveals Jesus Christ and says, as it were, this is the ground, this is the way, this is the plea, this is the hope, the Person and the atonement of the Lord Jesus. O to reach the Intercessor, O to reach the Intercessor when you are dumb and ask Him in your sighs to open His mouth for you, according to that in the Proverbs: "Open Thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction". Open Thy mouth, plead the cause of the poor and the needy. I was going to say what my own experience would contradict. Do not be afraid of poverty and do not be afraid of dumbness. Yet my poverty makes me afraid and I am dumb indeed when I look at myself and I am afraid. But a poor sinner and a dumb sinner is a suitable person for the Lord Jesus. O, the general cry is, Christ is a suitable Saviour. That is true. Come with Bunyan to this question; come right into this chapel and then come to yourselves with this question. Where will you find a sinner suitable for the Saviour? A searching question, a very penetrating question. Would Christ find many suitable sinners here? It is written - it is a beautiful word; I will draw your attention to it - it is written "This Man receiveth sinners". You will never put too much emphasis on that "receiveth sinners and eateth with them" Sinners, my friends,

Sinners are high in His esteem
And sinners highly value Him

O bless God if we are sinners. Not if we are living in sin, but if we are a sacred thing, if the Holy Ghost has convinced us of sin.

A sinner is a sacred thing

blessed of God with grace. The grace of the Lord Jesus in His intercession be with you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in His omnipotence be with you. Omnipotence? Why, says one, if I were touched with omnipotence I should be shivered to pieces, broken beyond remedy. If it were just a naked omnipotence only, that would be so, but if it be omnipotence clothed in your nature, omnipotence sweetened and mollified with the blood of the everlasting covenant, that would do you good. Ah, being sustained by the power of God is being sustained by the Saviour who is the strength of God, the strength of Israel, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Have you got one good desire in your heart? Christ who gave it must sustain it. Have you taken one step in the way of life? Christ must confirm you in it. Have you laid hold by precious faith of any blessed truth in the gospel? Christ must keep it for you. Have you had a melting heart? He must give you it again and again and again. Are you in danger? Who is not? Are you in danger? Then Christ must hold you up. And the weak man shall be holden up for God is able to make him stand; holden up in his troubles. You think you could stand if you got out of your troubles. You will stand in them if Christ sustains you. We are very foolish when we think we could stand well if we got rid of this trouble or if we got rid of that propensity, or if we got rid of that iniquity in our nature, then we could stand. We could not; something else would come and give us a snap and a trip. This, this is the standing. He shall be holden up for God is able to make him stand. May the grace of omnipotence be with us. "Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not". "Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe". You may come into Peter's experience. "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest". (John 21 v 18) That was pleasant. We all like to go where we will, gird ourselves. But He said "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not". Were you ever willing to be carried where your nature would not like to go? Were you ever willing to be Christ's slave and servant, stretching forth the hands of a humble obedience and dependence on Him and praying that He would guide and sustain and bring you forth. The grace of Christ's omnipotence be with you, and with me. Then we shall come well through them, we shall have victory through the Lamb and His blood and then we shall sing the song that will never end: "Worthy is the Lamb". Immortal honours rest on Him. May the Lord graciously own us in this, and give us to perceive that

underneath us are the everlasting arms.