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Sermon preached by Mr. J. K. Popham  
on Wednesday evening, 28th. Dec. 1927

Text: 2nd. Corinthians 13. v. 14.  
(Last clause)

"And the communion of the Holy Ghost,  
be with you all, Amen."

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The Holy Ghost, I need not say to you here, is a Person in the Godhead. One in the Divine nature with the Father and the Son. Neither before nor after. Equal, equal, equal is each Person with the other in the position of the Deity; the whole of Godhead, the distinction of Persons. We have this given to us in Holy Scripture, but first of all, there is one God. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; these three are one." Now may we, as a people, have no doubt of that in our hearts. If there be doubt at any time, may that Holy Spirit so shine into our hearts that we may see by faith in His own light and teaching that He is one with the Father and the Son, and as He is one in the Godhead with the Father and the Son, so He is one with them in salvation's plan. With them in their love; their decrees; with the Father in sending the Son, - as the Son said by Isaiah, "and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent Me." And I pray that you may be enabled and that I also may be enabled more and more to observe what Holy Scripture teaches respecting the Person of the Holy Ghost, and that we may be the subjects of His grace; that we may be under His kind teaching; His gracious leading; His reproofs; His revelations of doctrine; His sealing of doctrine, and His being the earnest of the inheritance in the heart. If such favour come to us, we shall be indeed good Trinitarians.

A good Trinitarian, made so by the Spirit, is sure to be in heaven one day. There may be, doubtless there are, many who acknowledge the Trinity in word, but to know, feel, have communion with each Person, - not all at one moment perhaps, but now and again, - with each Person in the Godhead, is a high attainment, a great privilege, and makes a good Christian. A Christian is a miracle. A Christian is one who has been baptised into Christ; in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells; who is led by the Spirit; is a son of God. A Christian drinks into the Spirit of Christ. Think of it! O to be a Christian. When I was young and was brought away from errors, I would not think of speaking of Christians. I had so much to do with them, that getting away from them in God's mercy was wonderful and it was long, before I could bring myself to speak of Christians. But as I see the matter now, I see it is one of the most wonderful things that can come to a sinner, to be made really a Christian. Hart has it well, when he learned that He who made the world, alone was able to make a Christian. Now it is a great thing if we are favoured to realise what that means. The Spirit of Christ baptises every member of Christ into the body. Eternal union with Christ in the decree of God is brought into existence as each child of God is born again, and by the Spirit, is baptised into Christ. He is led by the Spirit. He is indwelt

by the Spirit. He is taught by the Spirit. By the Spirit he believes, but he prays, he confesses his sins; he is convinced of them; he is led to Christ; he receives Christ; he runs into the name of Christ and finds safety there.

What an amazing thing it is, thus to be baptised into Christ. It means that your soul is united to Christ. The body has many members. We are "members in particular," says the Apostle Paul to all the people of God. Members of His body "in particular." We are not all the same size; have not the Spirit in the same measure; do not walk exactly in the same way, but this is to be said with all the differences of administration and operations: they are by the same Spirit and "it is the same God which worketh all in all" and that same "Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." You may not be wise often. I have not been wise in this, when you measure yourself by another. When perhaps you say - if I had such and such a person's experience I should not mind, I should not doubt. Now the un-wisdom of that is manifest in your own experience. The thing is this - to be led by the Spirit, to have that holy anointing from the Lord Jesus that "teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." The Holy One there, is Christ. The unction there, is the Holy Ghost and He teaches of all things, and, says the Apostle - "the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you:" - the vital things that are necessary to salvation - for God teaches by His good Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit to the Church is Christ's last gift. He said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." There is something more to your advantage in my departing, than there would be in my remaining with you. If I go away, the Comforter will come, therefore it is expedient for you that I go away. It is for your advantage; for your growth in grace; for your being led into a knowledge of the Lord Jesus, whose Spirit He is and to reveal whom, He is sent. Therefore dear friends, just at this point I would say to you, seek that religion that comes by the immediate operations of the Holy Ghost. If your convictions of sin deepen so that you can scarcely look at yourself for shame and can hardly look back on your life without the deepest distress and dismay, by moments, - do not say one thing; do not say the devil tells you you are so-and-so. If you get these humbling views of yourself; these painful back-looks on your lives; these inward convictions that sin is mixed with all you do and think and say, and if those deepening convictions bring a moving of your soul by faith after Christ: all these things come from the Holy Ghost. The devil will never lead you to hate yourself; he will never lead you to confess with shame and contrition, your sins. He will never lead you to look back on your life and on God's dealings with you, and on your dealings with God so as with regard to the one you are thankful, and with regard to the other you are unspeakably ashamed and confounded. Oh; it is the Spirit's work. We may thoughtlessly attribute to Satan, what the Lord Himself does. I believe that with those back-looks there may be much legality and the enemy may take advantage to press us toward despair and into despair. Hart has

it well -

"To cause despair's the scope  
Of Satan and his powers;  
Against hope to believe in hope,  
My brethren, must be ours."

Look to the Holy Ghost. No form is of use without the Spirit. The word by which we may, we should abide; by which we should be guided; into which we should look constantly: must receive its energy, its penetration, its authority, its distressing effects, its comforting effects, all from the Holy Ghost. He is the Author of all right reading and right reception of the Word of God.

Prayer. That is a great thing. It makes up a good part of a Christian's life whenever he is healthy; whenever he is walking in a right path; then, prayer is in him, more or less lively. Prayer has a point and an edge from several things. It has a point and an edge from our conviction of sin; from our sense of weakness; inability to stand, and many fears within. Also from our pressing necessities, our things in providence and especially our things in grace. By these things we are of necessity driven, and of choice drawn, and by the Spirit led to the throne of God's heavenly grace. And the Spirit is the Author of all such movements in the soul. Take notice of them my brethren. When we meet here for public worship, what can make our meeting profitable? What can make our hearts steady? What can keep our eyes and our thoughts? The operations of the Holy Ghost. O, my own knowledge of what can take place in the mind in a public service! What I have suffered in this pulpit from the motions of sin; from the unutterable infidelity of a depraved nature, make me say this - that you can sit here and sin terribly. You can build your houses; plant your gardens; do your business; cast up your accounts; make up your ledgers; look at your investments: - anything and everything but God and godliness you can be engaged in, while you are here. Now, who can remedy this? Who can save us from this evil but the Holy Ghost? We are dependent on Him for everything. His baptism; His life; His strength; His grace. His baptism of a sinner gives that sinner union with the Lord Jesus. Baptised into one body, - joined to Christ.

The beginning of union with the Lord Jesus, is in the moment of regeneration. Then, the likeness of God in Christ is formed in the soul. The beginning of holiness in the sinner, that pleases God, is in the moment of regeneration. When the conscience is enlightened, quickened, and God is seen in His character more or less distinctly, then, holiness is at work by the Holy Spirit. The beginning of faith is in the moment of regeneration, for when a sinner is born again, instantly he believes in God, not comfortably, - O it may be with terror, great terror, - but he believes in God, and the beginning of all true, spiritual, God-honouring separation from the world, begins there. Is there! It just starts when a man is born again. Then he sees the Kingdom of God. Then he begins to "strive to enter in at the strait gate." Then the Spirit of judgement and of burning comes down upon him. Then he sees how he deserves hell, and fears greatly that he will sink into that place; then

he is favoured, more or less, sooner or later, to see the forgiveness of sins and to press after the experience of forgiveness - and all this is by the Holy Spirit. We shall never be able to pay the debt we owe to Him, but I believe that, as we grow older, we shall prove that the Person and the grace of the Holy Spirit are not inferior to the Person and love of the Father, to the Person and grace of the Son, but that as they are one in nature, so they are one in salvation, and that we owe to the Holy Ghost the praises of our lives even as we owe these praises to the Son and to the Father. May we have a Holy Ghost religion. A fleshly religion may make a man big in his own eyes, the Holy Ghost religion makes him nothing - God everything!

Now the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle Paul to write this, which is called the Benediction and which we always close our services with and would have the communion of the Holy Ghost to be given to each child of God. The communion of the Holy Ghost seems to mean the participation of that Holy Spirit's grace, love, wisdom, mercy and power. He comes from Christ, and His office is to teach the people of God, and three or four particular things are ascribed to Him - I am of course, as you will perceive, assuming all through, that we believe in His Person, - three or four particular things are ascribed to Him. First, conviction of sin. "He shall convince the world of sin." This is very solemn, very necessary. The measure of it we are not to prescribe. It is with Him. It is with Him; but I think it is safe to say that whether sudden or otherwise, one conclusion is reached by every person under the saving grace of the Holy Ghost, - this, namely, that each one comes to say - God is just, I deserve hell. You might put a world of feeling into these terms; you may put years of experience into them; but just that, will be the conclusion. However long you may be, at arriving at it, or you may arrive at it in a few minutes, just as the Spirit will, you will find that - God is just, I deserve hell. That wont die as you get older. It wont be killed by a revelation of Christ. It will abide as a truth, but you will know when you receive the Lord Jesus that you are not going to hell. You will never feel you do not deserve it, but you will know you are not going there, which is indeed a wonder of the Spirit's grace that is ascribed to Him. "He shall convince." Who else could convince? Who could bring a light of his own or anyone else, to bear upon your conscience, and your words, and your deeds, and convince you that every thought and every word and every deed of your whole life was nothing but sin? What an offence it would be if a man were to come and speak so to any of us. "What", said a man, to whom the prophet had foretold his wicked doing - "is thy servant a dog that he should do this...?" And you would say the same - am I a dog that you should address me thus. O but when the Spirit comes, when He lets the light that you cannot understand, cannot keep out, penetrating as it does to your very conscience, in the depths of it; in the motions of it; into your heart; into the secrets of it; when He thus comes, you are convinced of sin, really convinced of it! You do not think you are a sinner simply, you are convinced that you are a sinner. It may be with a word. It may be without a word. It may be so gradual in a person, as that he can perhaps never put his finger on a time when it started, but he will come to say this, - one thing I

know that whereas I used to be blind to my state, now I see it. Whereas once I did not know the character of God, now I realise that He is just, holy and glorious. May we thank the Holy Ghost to-night, as many of us as have been, and as are still being, convinced of sin. It is a great gift of the Spirit to give a knowledge of sin. That is His work. Faith attends it. Faith believes it. Faith believes in God; in His character; in His justice; in His greatness and it is this faith that separates and distinguishes between a Christian and the world. It draws the line of separation, of demarkation. It sets a mark on a man. It sets a mark on his spirit, on his heart, on his life and on his words. Ye shall be set as signs and wonders. This is the secret of men hating Christians. "If they have kept My saying, they will keep your's also," and if you talk to them about sin and they wont believe you, and speak to them of what you know of your own sin and they wont believe you, it is because the Spirit of Christ has done the great business.

The second thing I would speak of in respect of the Holy Ghost, is this, that whenever He has given faith, He also gives prayer. He is spoken of as "the Spirit of grace and of supplications" and as being poured out in that particular respect "upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Upon all spiritual Israelites He is poured out as "the Spirit of grace and of supplications" and this distinguishes living prayer from the form. Living prayer wells up in the heart. The Holy Ghost is said to be in the heart "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Springing up into spiritual exercises; spiritual mindedness; minding the things of the Spirit. The things of the Spirit are the things of Christ. "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you," and unless you feel it, you can never conceive what the desires, pantings, hungerings, thirstings, longings after God, that a new-born person from time to time experiences. This pouring out of the Spirit into the heart is a great thing, one of Christ's blessed gifts. "I will send Him unto you," He said. I wont leave you orphans. He shall come to you and teach you and guide you. The guiding, is to a certain place - to a Person, namely Shiloh "shall the gathering of the people be." Now, your heart gathers, however you are engaged, whenever this Holy Spirit comes. The setting of the truth on the heart with power; the begetting of unutterable petitions; groanings which cannot be uttered. Asking the Lord to come, to tell you, you are His; that He is yours: that you may say - "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul;" mourning after Him as a dove - "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" - "Hide Thy face from my sins" - "For-sake me not," - "Thou hast been my help." - "My wounds stink and are corrupt." - "All my desire is before Thee." These things, which I name, you have, as praying people, written in your hearts; breathed into your spirits: whereby you move after God. It is not spasmodic, though perhaps you, some of you at least, may often have feared that your religion is a very spasmodic thing, because sometimes you lie as it were, dead and then you spring up into new exercises, but these uprisings of the Spirit within, as from a living well, they are living things; living desires, and they answer to that word in the Proverbs - "The desire of the righteous is only good." Now you take yourself, a poor creature with a body of sin and death, plagued by sin, and put that word by your side. Measure some of your things by it; weigh them by it; look at them in the light of it; well, you will say, I am no

Christian. I could not say my desires are only good. But when you come to this, that there are moments when you are, as it were, carried beyond yourself; away from yourself; from your deathly state; your hardness; your unbelief, and God is before you and you can say, and do say, to Him in faith - 'Lord, I would be Thine. I would resign my will to Thy will, I would be Thine alone. O, take me.' Yea, perhaps you quote these words - "Fill all my soul, and all my powers by Thine control." Now there is the Spirit there - there is the Spirit there! "The Spirit of grace and of supplications."

This also, in the next place is attributed to the Spirit, namely, the revelation of Christ in various degrees, at different times. You may again and again get what might almost seem but a flash into your heart and understanding and into your affections, some word or thought concerning the Lord Jesus. It comes suddenly; unthought of at the moment; it comes and you find, no matter what you are engaged in, your whole soul is carried away into heavenly things and it is very beautiful for the moment; the beauty you see in Christ. The loveliness, the suitableness, the fulness, the full supply of grace that He possesses. Union with His Person, justification in His righteousness, sanctification by His grace and blood; these things, together with the spirituality of mind that you long for, come in that sudden way and perhaps they pass away as suddenly, but they leave something, they leave an influence you want to be full of. Well, when the sieve is put into the water and held in it, then it is full. Take it out and it is seen empty, but there is even then something left; there is a dampness, a wet condition and you will find that if things do not abide with you as you want, there is an influence left behind and you want more of that sweetness, more of that inshining, more of that grace. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them, opens them, discovers them, to the soul. It is not a picture that He hangs before the admirer, or face called an immobile. It is not that. It is a living Christ revealed to a living faith. It draws; it influences deeply; it penetrates; it shows you the beauty of being with Him: one with Him. It shows you the safety, the sacred place where safety is. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

He is given in yet another respect. He is "the earnest of our inheritance." The Lord's people are said by Paul to the Ephesians to have "obtained an inheritance" in Christ, "an inheritance," says Peter, "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This inheritance, O believer, faith alone makes thine own, safe and sure for ever. But now, though that is the case, how are we to know that it does really belong to us and that we are going to enjoy it one day? Why, by having an earnest of it. The earnest of the inheritance seems to me to be that which the Holy Ghost brings to a sinner, out of, or concerning the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus. Whatever concerns Him, or belongs to Him, - which indeed the people of God do see to be the case from time to time, as the Spirit brings a little now, and a little then, - there is the earnest. It is not something different from the inheritance, it is a part of it. Little it may be, but a part of it. A crumb of a loaf is a part of the loaf and has the whole constituent of a loaf in it, and

so the inheritance is a whole inheritance and a little part brought by the Spirit has the whole of it as to nature, and what a thing! Do you get a promise from Christ? Then, there is an earnest. Do you get the love of God shed abroad in your heart? That is the very love wherewith the Lord loves His Son as the Head of the Church and loves the Church with "the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." Does God tabernacle with you? The tabernacle of God is with men. Then there is in that tabernacle for the time, an earnest of that everlasting presence that you are to go to and bask in for ever and ever. The Holy Spirit comes as "the earnest of our inheritance," whispers in the heart, you are going one day to be with the Lord.

Again, for I am only giving hints, this Holy Spirit was given to the Lord Jesus as God speaks by Isaiah, as the Spirit of wisdom and of council and of might and made Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and the connection shows the necessity of that - "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, a Branch shall grow out of his roots." The Person of Christ. A weak Man who said, "I speak not of myself:" "As my Father hath taught Me, I speak these things." Of Him it is said - He received not the Spirit by measure. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." Now what was said of Christ is true, "God was with Him." He "went about doing good, ..... for God was with Him." In this connection, let me name to you one wonderful thing. After Christ's baptism, immediately after Christ heard that word - "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Are you baptised into Christ? Have you had a testimony in your soul? Have you walked before the Lord and with Him in the ordinances of His house, and do you in that case expect to walk with joy to heaven with few or with no rubs, difficulties, or temptations? No, you cannot think so, but then if you are led into temptation, who leads you? The Spirit led the Saviour, and He may lead you. When Christ said, "Pray, that ye enter not into temptation," pray - "Lead us not into temptation," it would seem that He meant something there, of a different kind. Here, the Spirit led Him, and if you are to be conformed to the image of Christ, in some ways you will find you will be led in a way of sore difficulty and trouble and temptation from the devil. You want to be conformed to Him - this may be one of the ways. "If so be that we suffer with Him." Suffering with Him may be this for a time - being tempted of the devil, and another word I would say here. We should not be surprised, though we are I think most, if not all of us, if some of our best times are quickly succeeded by some of our worst times, as in the case of Christ, I have just named. He was led of the Spirit immediately to be tempted, and you may be led into some wilderness of temptation after some of your best times. Very few probably, go long with the joy of the Lord prevailing, without any temptation, without any trouble.

Well dear friends these few general remarks about the Spirit I must leave with you. What I would say in conclusion is this, - out of this communion that the Apostle desires us to have, is a participation in the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, that our souls may receive Him and receive from

Him, the benefits He has to confir on the Church of Christ, and individual members of the body of Christ and a great thing it is. How else are we to attain to what Paul speaks about in the Romans - minding the things of the Spirit. How are you to walk at liberty if the Spirit of liberty is not in you. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me," says Paul, "free from the law of sin and death." By Him we enter into "this grace wherein we stand." By Him we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God and not only so," by the same Spirit, "we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: 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." What an amazing thing that a man should have the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Is it not wonderful to you, in whom He dwells, even to think it is possible that He is with you, that this dear, holy, condescending Spirit, the Spirit of Christ should dwell, as we were just now singing, in such unworthy hearts. "Unworthy dwelling!" Well may we sing that.

"Unworthy dwelling! glorious guest!  
Favour astonishing, divine!"

Now here it is I would stand. I would conclude this by saying, every hint that drops into our hearts - not our brains - into our hearts, concerning the nature of God; every hint that drops into our hearts concerning the Person of Christ; concerning the work of Christ; the perfection of that work; concerning the righteousness of Christ and the Hiding-place and safe Hiding-place that Christ is: every hint we get of heaven; every attracting glimpse we get of the throne of God's heavenly grace; every sweet sensation of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God that we have: all these things come from this Divine Spirit, this Holy Teacher - the Holy Ghost. How safe is that individual who has the Spirit in him. How safe is that Church which has the Holy Ghost. How profitable, in measure at least, must be that ministry where the Holy Ghost is and how profitable must be the hearings where the Holy Ghost is. Even though I speak this about the ministry, I speak with great diffidence, yet because the Lord has condescended to say of a minister - "as of the ability which God giveth," I venture to say it. He does give ability to the man He sends. If it is one talent, the man who has it, has to use it and I would fain, by His grace, use my one talent and speak well of this blessed God.

Think of the Trinity in the text, perhaps I have laboured too much about, and spoken too little of, really. We have the Trinity. The Lord Jesus is put first here. Sometimes God the Father is first. Sometimes God the Holy Ghost is first, as you find in one of the Epistles where the Apostle desires that God would make known the Lord Jesus and the Father. The Trinity is here. Neither Person afore, nor either after, as in the Athanasian creed. I wish you had all that creed and had it in your heart, as it is in my heart. It is a wonderful thing. Neither Person is afore either nor after. One God. One glorious God and I hope as long as I am enabled to speak, I may



more and more, be led to speak to you of this Being, this great Being. Your religion will be healthy, your souls will be healthy, your faith vigorous, your prayers penetrating, your hope lively, your humility genuine if you know this blessed God. The Church must be right, where the Trinity dwells. Do you desire Him? I desire Him for you, that He knows. Night and day is my labour for you, as well as for myself, that this Divine Being, this glorious God in some measure of revelation, in some gracious operation, may be in our hearts, in our midst, and the grace of this communion; the humbling grace; the conforming grace; the transforming grace; the sustaining grace; the sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost in this communion: this participation of His benefits, His teachings, His mercies. I wish every member of the Church and congregation were here now, that though I speak very feebly about the matter, each one might hear of this great God. My comfort is, that the Holy Ghost can go to the absentees and speak to them and bring this mercy into their hearts. Thus shall we be united to Christ. Do not forget how you are to be united to Him. Baptised into His body. Baptism of the Holy Spirit, not doing away with ordinances, not at all depreciating the ordinance of believers baptism; that best, that abiding, that marvelous baptism, not of fire, of which the Lord Himself speaks. It is this baptism that has brought us, any of us, into the body of Christ and from Him, the Head. We have thus in measure, received nourishment and strength and revivings and helps, and hope to do, yea, we shall do, to the very end.

Now may the Lord help us seriously to pray for this blessing that the holy Trinity, as in the text set forth, may be known in our hearts. Amen.

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