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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 12 July 1933

2 Thessalonians 3 v 5

And the Lord direct your hearts into
the love of God and into the patient
waiting for Christ

The love of God is the spring and root, beginning and end, of salvation, and of all the teaching and grace of the Holy Ghost in the soul. Much of God's way with His people has not the appearance of love, but love is in all His dealings with His people, and the time comes when that is really understood, entered into, and the harsh judgment of our fallen nature, the rebellion that we may have frequently felt when things have been contrary, when providence has been adverse, God causes us to reverse entirely and say, love was inscribed on every cross, on every adverse circumstance, but it is not easy to come to this.

By these two letters to the Church of the Thessalonians, it would seem that this Church was in a good, healthy condition. There are no reproofs in the epistles to the Church as such. God kept this Church clearly, for the time, in a gracious condition. There were some members of it not gracious. Some were disposed to be lazy and the Apostle says what would be good to be applied to many today - If they will not work they shall not eat. Some are unruly; individual members were unruly and these were to be dealt with by a proper discipline. But, on the whole, the Church of the Thessalonians was in a gracious condition. There were some perplexities, particularly about the coming of Christ, the second coming. There had been among them men who had said that His coming was very near and the Apostle exhorts this Church not to be moved by anything of that kind as from himself for, before that wonderful event, many many providences, many changes must take place. Ordinarily the providences of God, His movements in the world, are slow. Always sure, often slow, and before Christ's second coming without sin unto salvation much had to be done in that day and still much has to be done. When He comes it will be

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wonderful, not personal reign on the earth, but to gather all to Himself whom He purchased with His blood and to present the Church to Himself spotless, blameless, and glorious.

He asks these christian Thessalonians to pray for him and for his fellow labourers, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it was with them. As if he should say, now the gospel came to you not in word only but in power and you turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. Now pray that we who speak in the Name of the Lord may find that still it is a running word, it has free course, and it is to be glorified. I wish it might be so here. O if God would give His word this evening free course into our hearts and into the hearts of some who do not fear Him, that it might be glorified, and God glorified in them. And that not only the word might have free course and be glorified but that the ministers, Paul and his friends, his brethren in the ministry, might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, for all men have not faith. Do not expect the world to be your friends if you fear God. No. Christ's prayer was this, that while His disciples were in the world they might be kept from the evil of it. What communion hath light with darkness? What union is there between Christ and Belial? Be separate. And the Apostle then tells them that God is faithful. All the changes that may come to them, the pains they may feel, the difficulties that may confront them, the temptations that may befall them, all these shall have no effect in respect of God's faithfulness. He will bring them to the end honourably. We have this confidence in the Lord touching you. Not confidence in you; that would have been misplaced. Not confidence in your steadfastness, though even the Apostle had confidence that that would be manifested. But confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

And then the text - "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ" or, as the marginal reading is "into the patience of Christ".

The love of God. I am, if enabled, to speak of it in an experimental way. The Lord, the first Person in the text, is the Holy Ghost. He is to direct, give a straight course, to the love of God

into these people's hearts. Direct, give a straight course. We cannot get it my friends. We can only, as enabled, pray for it. We cannot get it. God must give it. The Lord direct it to you. Deeply humbling is this consideration and truth that, though we may be vessels of mercy, the Holy Ghost must continually be supplying us with what we need. It is His work. The promise of Christ is that the Holy Ghost shall glorify Him and so what we have before us is the operation of this divine Spirit, one Person in the adorable Trinity, and it is observable that He is put first here. The Lord the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. By the breath of God's mouth, that is His Spirit, the worlds were framed. By the Spirit of God the sacred humanity of God came into being. His incarnation was the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. He descended in mighty operation upon the virgin Mary and the Holy thing that was born of her was by the operation of the Holy Ghost. A mightier work than creation this, a work that had a very wonderful aim and has a very remarkable operation and also accomplishment. It was no mere birth; it was a birth with a wonderful aim and end, even this, that, being made of a woman, Christ was made under the law that He might bear the sins that were committed by men under the law. This love is sent straight into the hearts of sinners by the Holy Ghost, who are convinced that they are undeserving of it. Every convinced sinner confesses that what he deserves is endless punishment. A vessel of wrath he deserves to be. There is nothing in him to give the Creator delight, everything to provoke God. But the Spirit of God here is invoked by the Apostle thus. May He come and send straight into your hearts, without conditions, preparations or anything of that kind that would lead a person to say, I was in a state for it, in some way I promoted it. No! Each one will say, I deserved it not. I was feeling I should never know it but it came straight, in many cases not expected. O the wonderful sensations that these Thessalonians must have had when first the gospel came to them. The Apostle speaks of it. He says "You turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." So now, they having had it brought to them, he desires that it may be done again. Some here have had it, you could not deny that, but you may say this evening, we are very dried up, very cold, distant, hungry, thirsty, but we cannot reach what we want. We would if we could, and you would boast then. But here we are emptied, emptied,

emptied. Now the prayer is, the Holy Ghost send into your hearts directly, straight, the love of God. In different ways, different circumstances, we may say the Spirit does this. He does it to satisfy a hungry soul. "He filleth the hungry with good things". And this is a good thing is it not, when the Lord lets you know, persuades you that He loved you with an everlasting love, and that hunger and thirst of your soul He gave in order that He might send an answer, and such an answer as will astonish you, did astonish you, and will do again, namely a sweet, powerful, very gracious sensation of His love to you, and you sing

On such love my soul still ponder
Love so great, so rich, so free
Say whilst lost in holy wonder
Why O Lord such love to me?

He sends His Spirit, His love to an afflicted person. "Whom the Lord loveth He correcteth". This is a matter deserving much observation for affliction does not come of the dust. God sends it. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten". When affliction comes, the devil often comes. Rebellion rises, and the enemy whispers about the thing. If God loved you, would this come? Would He allow this to take place? But He says I love you, therefore I correct you. The enemy says, this is punishment, and you may begin to think and feel, I deserve punishment. Correction is intended by chastisement. Punishment has no hope in it. Punishment is not for correction strictly regarded as Scripture sets it forth. But correction, O is God correcting any of you? Is He saying by some providence, the way you have been walking is not pleasing to Him? The things you have been indulging in your heart, I abhor. You have been living after the flesh; now I am correcting you. This chastisement is correction. Think of it. It is a great point in experimental religion that God does send correction, correction of two kinds, one by providence and the other by solemn, pointed rebukes in your conscience. Both of them may be working at the same time, or one only. A providence, and you look at it. Why has this come? The enemy may point to a second cause in order to divert your attention from the first cause - God. If he can fix your

mind on something that will divert your attention from God, he will do it, and if he is permitted, for a time, to do it, then the evil consequences you feel. You fret, you rebel; prayer is shut up, you are not seeking God. You are just looking at this evil thing and wishing a way out of it. If you could possibly find a way you would. But then, when the Spirit comes and deals with your conscience (I speak as to wise men; judge what I say), when your conscience says, you did such and such a thing at such and such a time, when it says, in union with your memory, you turned away from God on that occasion, then you fall before Him, convicted, condemned in your conscience. Now what does the Scripture say about this? "If we would judge ourselves we are chastened of the Lord" Is not that a mercy? You sit in judgment on yourself. You say we have not walked worthy of God, we have walked contrary to Him; now He has walked contrary to us. It is many years ago since I got the first lesson in that matter. I had walked contrary to God, not outwardly but in my heart. Then He began to walk contrary to me in a most terrible providence. At first I wondered, then I pitied myself, then conscience was made to speak and I pitied the Lord's Name. He said "I had pity on my Holy Name". Then I judged myself; then I learned what self-judgment means. It means you are chastened of the Lord, that is to say, it is His work in your conscience that brings you in guilty and you say, O fool that I have been, O ignorant creature that I am. Now, well it is a great thing this. What does God do sooner or later? He sends, a beam, sweet wonderful beam of love and light into your heart and you say, He loved me, and therefore He chastened me. He would not let me destroy myself as I should certainly have done if He had left me. O may the Lord help us to thank Him for the love that corrected us, thank Him that ever we saw what one writes, love inscribed upon the cross, the cross on which the devil tried to write one word - "hatred". O I was glad of that word once particularly "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him". You cannot tell the heart of God by any dealing of His hand, but when the Holy Ghost comes and sends that sweet wonderful beam into your heart, then you understand. This is love; this is the Father's love; this is the Son's love; this is the Spirit's love. Well, may the Lord do this. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God".

In another way, when for a time He deserts you, leaves you to two

enemies, your own nature, fallen, perverse, wicked nature, and the enemy of your souls, the roaring lion, or the deceiving serpent. It is said in the Psalms that the Lord will deliver His people from deceit and violence. Did you ever pray to be delivered from both those evils? I have often asked that He would deliver me from deceit and violence, the deceit of the devil, the violence of the roaring lion, and the deceit of my own heart. If the Lord loves you what are you going to do? Perhaps you said many and many a day, Lord what will become of me? What shall I do, helpless, ignorant, fearful, tossed about in a stormy wind? He raiseth the stormy wind. He raiseth the stormy wind on the sea and then the waves thereof roar. The poor people are afraid of His tokens, tokens of power in raising the stormy wind; tokens of power in leaving the little vessel apparently without compass, rudder or any guidance, tossed about. God has left you, not in anger, but it is felt to be in anger at times. Now what quiets this? "He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still". The waves of doubt, the waves of heavy fear, the tossing of my soul, the waves of violent temptation. "He maketh the storm a calm". "He sitteth upon the flood, He sitteth King for ever". And the calm has this in it, the direct love of God darting sweetly, unexpectedly into the soul. You say, I never thought this had love in it. Why, the Lord has reigned all the time and I did not know it. The Lord direct your heart, O tempted sinner. There is a good day coming, a sweet moment may be near to you when, to your great surprise, this will come - "I have loved thee; I have rebuked thee; I have left thee to thy weakness and to the power of the enemy, but all the while I have been watching you, all the while I have had the waters in the hollow of My hand and the wind in My fist. Nothing has happened but what I have directed and I now let you know it by shedding abroad in your heart My love." It is the Spirit's work; a great work it is. "Direct your hearts", bring this to you, that there shall be a poor, distraught, weak, tried soul, and the Lord, seeing his strength gone, that there is nothing left and no helper left for him, says, "I will help thee; I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness". "I will keep thee every moment". Perhaps some of you have blessed God for a momentarily promise.

The Lord direct into your hearts the love of God in a time of peculiar affliction, perhaps of body or of circumstances. You are

face to face with a sore affliction, nay it is on you. Job was afflicted, and if any affliction that is recorded in the Scriptures, or in any way whatever, deserves to be called severe or extreme, surely it was Job's affliction. Stripped of his possessions, of his children, his wife turned a foolish woman in advising him to sin against God. Poor Job, health gone, loathsome disease taking its place, irritated by misunderstanding friends. He was left, O but what love was in it, and what love ended it. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job", how God came to him, how He defended him, how He spake well of him, saying of his three friends "Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right as My servant Job hath" And now the Lord turned his captivity. "When the Lord turned our captivity" said Zion "we were like them that dreamed". And surely when this Holy Spirit turns the captivity of an afflicted person he is like them that dream. He had not expected this beautiful change, he had not looked for it, but now God has made it. "We were like them that dreamed; then was our mouth filled with laughter". Dear friends, it is a religion of love that God gives to His people. Love melts the heart, informs the mind, satisfies the hunger of the soul. It is strength to faith; it is beauty to hope; it illuminates the mind, the understanding. Everything that is good is wrought and accomplished in the heart by a sensation of the love of God. Direct your hearts into this. You may think about it, I do. We may meditate upon it - "Love divine all love excelling". You may say, O if I had it but in my heart, but you cannot get it there. The heart is locked up against it perhaps in unbelief for a time. Your powers fail with respect to it; you cannot think such a vessel as you are can ever have this treasure of divine love in it. It is good to think badly of yourself. O how I have wished sometimes I could trample this monster self under my feet in the pulpit and everywhere else; this monster, self. But God is not hindered by it. The time of love will come, does come, when again and again and again the Spirit of God comes and says, the Lord loves you. "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely". Such a word as this comes and it is a direction, a direction much needed, an instruction much needed. It is as if the Spirit says, you have been misjudging God. We do misjudge Him and we bring much hurt to our consciences and feelings when we misjudge Him, but we do misjudge Him. We judge Him by feeble sense; we judge Him by our own limitations. A father says, I would not have my child suffer if I

could prevent it, but there is a heavenly Father who could prevent evil touching him, yet He sends evil to him, or, to speak as the Scripture does, a child of God is as a precious jewel, a golden vessel, but it is covered more or less with earth and dross. And the Lord says, I have a crucible, and he puts that vessel into it. Love orders it. The Lord direct your hearts to this and teach you how to say love has done this. My love, the Spirit may say, has ordered this. Love has sent this. So, when we are directed into the love of God we are directed in an experimental way. There has been the eternal ocean, limitless, ordained to flow in one channel even in the person of Christ by His death, but ordained also to flow into vessels and these vessels, the children of God, come under the instruction of the Spirit, who says, judge not the Lord by yourself, judge Him not by His dealings with you. If he straitens you as He straitens the waters, judge not that He intends destruction. All these changes in His people make room for this work of the Holy Ghost to direct each soul into divine love, wise love, sweet love, love that is tender, love that devises good for its objects, love that cannot do too much for those who are its objects, love that makes a bed in affliction, even the good will of God. Rutherford somewhere says, "the will of God is a bed to lie down on in a fire", and love makes the bed, love takes away the nature of the fire. May the Lord give us more love.

Next "and into the patient waiting for Christ", for Christ's coming. I will mention three comings of Christ, first His incarnation. Love sent Him, love brought Him. While here He was to pains inured. He was patient. They contradicted Him, they blasphemed Him, they threatened His life over and over again, but He was patient. Think of it, the holy, harmless Jesus, suffering indignities, insults, and all kinds of evil, and rejected of those to whom He came. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not".

The second coming is when He comes to His people in their souls and this is a mystery which God hid from ages and from generations which now He manifests to His people which is "Christ in you the hope of glory". What does this bring when Christ comes to you to dwell in you? It means, not only a heavenly eternal blessing, but it means trouble. Men generally are not offended at the Name of God considered as a divine being, though even that is losing very much, but when you

come to Christ, the seed of the woman, then you will find all the enmity and craft and malice of the devil moved against Him. He was hardly in heaven before heresies came into the Church with respect to His Person. Nothing was said against the Father, nothing was said against the Holy Spirit, but heresy came respecting the Person of Christ. It has gone on ever since and will go on to the end. You cannot be the friend of Christ and escape trouble in some form. He comes, yes He comes now in exhortations. If ye suffer as christians rejoice for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you. Think of it. When you suffer temptation concerning Christ you need patience. It is a glory to you to be tempted concerning Him though you may not be able to think that. O how glad I have been that I need never breathe one word respecting what I have suffered in this pulpit when trying to exalt Him. The devil is the sworn enemy of Jesus Christ, and when you are tempted because He is in you the Lord give you patience, direct you to this patient waiting. The patience of Christ. My brethren the best blessing we can get and receive from God in this life is Christ in us the hope of glory, and that will be the greatest provocation the devil can have respecting us. What, you have this Christ in you as you speak? He tempts you either to blaspheme or disbelieve, to doubt His Deity, to doubt His humanity, to doubt the wonders of His Person, to doubt His atonement, His precious righteousness. These things come to believers, not to unbelievers, and we need patience. The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ, the patient waiting. What do you wait for? One thing particularly is named. "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". O what a prospect! He is too much for you but not for God. God shall bruise him. The power of Christ shall bruise him. The word of Christ shall bruise him. The Spirit of Christ shall bruise him. And while you are enduring patiently some of the temptations of the enemy because you are a believer, Christ is at the right-hand of the Father from henceforth expecting until His enemies, and your enemies, be made His footstool. (Hebrews 19 v 13). Yes, and He will establish you according to the gospel, according to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Now when this is done, what is written by Isaiah is accomplished in measure. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem. Cry unto her that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received of the Lord double for all her sins". What is the double? The forgiveness of sins and the love of God preserving you unto the end

when you shall receive the kingdom which is prepared for you and for which you are kept by the power of God.

"Into the patient waiting for Christ". He will come a third time. We have to wait for this. He will come and take each member of His body to Himself. This He is doing. How much He has done of this among us lately. He is doing it but what a wonder for these people to be taken to heaven. You think what is awaiting our dear brother and deacon Mr Farncombe who lingers, but of whose recovery as far as can be seen, there is no hope. But what is awaiting him? Christ will come, take his precious soul, redeemed, quickened and justified and sanctified, to Himself. He comes to believers. O what patience they sometimes need to wait for Him. How His chariot tarries, how a soul under His anointing and in much physical affliction and suffering may say, O when will He come, when will He come and take me home? Patience. "Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing". Waiting on the will of God, waiting for the day when there shall be no more sorrow, because no more sin. "The inhabitants of the land shall no more say I am sick". Why? For the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity. Did you ever feel attracted to heaven on that point, for that reason - no more sin? You may be able to appeal to the Lord and say, Lord Thou knowest as far as I know my own heart that I can say, heaven is attractive to me because I shall then have no sin, never never depart from Thee again. Patience, brethren, patience. Wait His time, wait His time. Many people are looking for a personal reign of Christ. They will never see it. I mean on earth. They will never see it. When He comes in the glory of His Father and with myriads of holy angels, it will be to say to the sea give up your dead and to open the graves of the saints, and these shall all rise and meet the Lord in the air. That is a coming that is not yet, no not yet. The present dispensation is ending, but that does not mean the coming of Christ a second time without sin unto salvation. There yet is to be a thousand years of wondrous glory in the earth when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, but we are to patiently wait our time. Said the Lord to Daniel, thou shalt stand in the latter day, stand in thy place. So every saint shall stand until his day comes when he shall fall into the grave and his precious, blood-bought, Spirit quickened and taught soul shall be absent from the body,

present with the Lord. Now brethren cannot you pray this prayer again, the Apostle's prayer, Lord direct our hearts into the changeless, the powerful, the melting, the sweet love of God in our varying circumstances, in our different trials, direct us to this, let us see love inscribed on our all. Let us see love and in our poor hearts that are so cold and often so hard, let us feel it. Shed it abroad that we may dissolve into sweet repentance and rise in humble gratitude. The Lord help us and do us good.

AMEN.