

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
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EPHESIANS 6 v 24

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord
Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

The Holy Ghost has written in the Scriptures two remarkable words respecting love. One is respecting the absence of it, and the other respecting the presence and acting of it. The first is this, listen you careless ones who think more of your bodies than your souls, listen - "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha" that is let him be accursed. (1 Corinthians 16 v 22) If you felt that as being applicable to yourselves, what a shake it would give to your vanity. O how it would shake it out of you. How it would bring you to your knees. O how it would bring God and eternity, and hell, and your sin, and your wickedness, before you, and then what concern you would come into. If any man, any sinner, love not the Lord Jesus in sincerity, let him be Anathema Maranatha, let him be accursed. You love yourselves, but says, Isaiah - Tremble ye careless ones (Isaiah 32 v 11). You love yourselves, you love your bodies, you love your vanity, you love the world, you love your own ways, but Christ is not in all your thoughts. What a weariness religion is to you; what a weariness it is to you to be here at times, and yet there it is before you - let him be accursed. May the Lord make you listen to it. And the other word is in the text which takes a most merciful and gracious, tender notice of every one whose heart is toward the Lord God. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity". Let every one whose heart smokes with desire, in whom are loving ashes of desire, to whom the very Name of Jesus sometimes is a sweet Name, who feel at times if they could give a world - supposing they possessed one - to be assured of His love to them, and of their love to Him, they would gladly give it. To such people, who may be afraid of hypocrisy, and feel it in their nature; afraid of dissembling, and feel that Scripture - "Let love be without dissimulation"; let everyone who, notwithstanding, feels, O if I were but found in Christ; O, if I only knew Him and could but cleave

to Him with all my heart - says the Apostle by the Holy Ghost, grace be with each person of that kind. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Naturally the text falls, so to speak, into three parts, which let me name to you

- First - The Object of love, our Lord Jesus Christ
- Second - Love itself - "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ
- Third - The character of that love; it is sincere, it is incorruptible. Who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption, as your margins will show you. Grace be with such

First of all we have the Person who is the Object of this love, our Lord Jesus Christ. None is more worthy, none higher, none so high, so glorious, so desirable, so beautiful. O what a sin it is in those of us who have any little knowledge of Him, to be gadding in our spirits, and hearts, as we often are, after other lovers, and objects. Here is One set before us who is better, and greater than heaven and earth; He is the Maker of them. One who is more wonderful in His love than all creatures. He loves as God, being God. His love to man passeth knowledge (Ephesians 3 v 19); His graciously quickened people feel it but they cannot fully comprehend it. It is a love testifying to its divine origin, as Paul proves to the Romans, But God commendeth His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. "Sinners are high in His esteem". He loves them and such is His love to them, such was it in eternity, that He came down in love to redeem His enemies, to quicken them by His Spirit, to justify them in His righteousness, to sanctify them in His holiness. This is the Object of love, and I will bring before you, as enabled, once more some particulars respecting this Person. We have to do with the Person of Christ, and we shall have to do with Him throughout eternity, either basking in the sunshine of His eternal favour, or howling in the dark abyss of everlasting woe. The Person of Christ is true Almighty God. You may say, we do not doubt it, and why be telling us of it always. Well you might say the same, make the same

objection, when you read in the Bible time after time the declarations of Christ's divinity. We are always to be reminded of that, and never was the necessity of being reminded of that, greater than today. True Almighty God, mysteriously begotten eternally of the Father, possessing the whole of Deity, equal in glory, and power with the Father and the Holy Ghost. This is Jesus Christ, that is to say, incarnate Deity. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very God. Omniscient therefore, as in the Revelation He says "All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts", that tries them, looks into them, tests them (Revelations 2 v 23) This church, among all others, shall know that. Omniscient. Not a thought in our hearts, not a wish in our minds, not a motion of vanity, not an act of vanity, but what His eye fully sees, looks into. Omnipresent. Surrounding us, wherever we are, wherever we seek to go. "Whither" said one, realising this omnipresence "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" You know those wonderful passages in the 139 Psalm. Ah you cannot get from the presence of this God. O sinner, you will never get away from Him. He sees you; He sees you now; He looks now upon you; looks upon your actions, the actions of your mind; He sees you. The thoughts that are with you at this moment, the welling up of some affection, either of the affection of bitterness, or the affection of love; either desire or despising, He sees all because He is about you, near you. Says the Apostle in the Acts, "He is not far from every one of us for in Him we live, and move and have our being." And He weighs us tonight, weighs us now. Just as if one should take up something in his hand and put it into a scale; as if one should take an object and put it under a microscope and examine it thoroughly and see into it; so, and much more intimately and truly, does Christ weigh, and search, and examine, and see us through and through. This is God omnipresent, omnipotent, the Creator and Preserver of the whole of creation, heaven and earth. Omnipotent to save us if He will; Omnipotent to consign us to perdition if we die in our sins. Able to kill the body and after that to destroy the soul in perdition. May you think of it. May these truths sober you and bring eternity before you and bring you to feel, O what an atom I am, what a vain sinner, what a wicked person. What a terrible thing is my enmity to God against whom, if I lift up my hand, I can do nothing. Glorious is this God. Also He is love. "God is love." The Lord Jesus Christ is love. Love brought Him

from heaven to earth. Love took Him to the cross. Love took Him to the grave. Love brought Him out of the grave. Love carried Him to heaven. Love is with Him now, He is love there. And love sends the Spirit and love sends providence. Love sends a new nature and imparts it to some. O the love of God is about His people. This Jesus is the God of love. What a mercy it is to know that, really to believe and feel that God is love and nothing but love to His dear children.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in the second place is Man and His sacred Manhood, the work of the Eternal Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is united to His sacred Person, the Person of God. His Name is therefore Emmanuel God with us. In all points He was made like unto His brethren, without sin. And should the Spirit reveal it it will greatly encourage our faith and draw us out after Himself. Nothing, and I draw your strict attention to this for a purpose, nothing but absolute perfection can dwell with God, and if we, men and women, are not absolutely perfect, we shall never see God with joy. Think of it. Think of your own imperfections, O people of God, and think of what it would be if you had to, so to speak, stand before Almighty God with those imperfections; imperfect faith, imperfect love, imperfect hope, all imperfection; the best about us has imperfection, the very best. Now I mention this for this purpose, to show you how that the Lord Jesus Christ in His Manhood was absolutely perfect and that therefore if He had love for it, and He had, He was most suitable to represent His people and stand in their place. He did not take up the position of Substitute having any imperfection which He was to do away with, but He stood there to begin with in an absolutely perfect condition. Like unto His brethren it was necessary He should be with that one mighty exception, sin. He had no sin, He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth and yet He must be like unto His brethren. As He conquered death by suffering the Law's penalty due to them, He was glorified in them - as He said, John 17 v 10 'I am glorified in them', that is His brethren - and so they must be glorified too; thereby He clearly fulfilled the truth of which John wrote in his first epistle: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4 v 9/10) And this is a great mercy, a very great

mercy for us. And when on earth He was a poor Man and weak and was crucified through weakness - not a sinful, unbelieving weakness, but that of which He testified to Paul: My strength is made perfect in weakness. When on earth He had faith, and He had hope, and He had love, and these, not as His children have them, but in perfection. If you read in Isaiah you will see this. He said "I know that I shall not be ashamed". "The Lord God will help Me". "He is near that justifieth Me". I know that I shall not be condemned. (Isaiah 50) All this is the language of One great and wondrous, yet poor, broken-hearted Man, with devils against Him, with Herods seeking His precious life, and with the wrath of God hanging over Him, and yet He says, My God will help Me. I shall not be ashamed. I have set My face like a flint. I have come to do a work and the Lord God who has sent Me will help Me to do it. The Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me, and therefore I shall not be ashamed in that which God has given Me to do and which I have come to do. This is our Lord Jesus Christ. Substitution is a necessity if a sinner, as such, is to be accepted of God, and he shall be accepted of God in that work which will remove sin from Him and He will be accepted as a beloved son, in holiness, and blamelessness, but only on this ground, that the Lord Jesus Christ took precisely His place under the law, and had imputed to Him while under the law, the sins that were committed under the law, that He might put them away by the sacrifice of Himself, as in the Hebrews: But now once in the end of the world hath He - God's only begotten Son - appeared, manifest in the flesh, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (9 v 26). It is a beautiful thing; as seen in the light of the Spirit it is felt to be beautiful, that this great One should humble Himself to death, even the death of the cross; should despise the shame. It is very beautiful to the eye of faith that the Holy One and the Just should become the Surety and smart with infinite pain for that Suretyship, and in it. It is very beautiful to see divine love here, and divine justice, and divine goodness. On the cross all this took place. There was a great transaction on the cross, the greatest that ever was. When God said "Let us make man" it was a great counsel, but when God said, let Jesus Christ, incarnate Deity go to the cross and we will there deal with Him, and we will there exhaust the anger due to the church, and there open a channel for infinite mercy, and there make known and open and reveal the ocean of divine love, the illimitable ocean of infinite merit, and there we will make an end of sin, there was the

Father, there was the Son, and there was the Holy Ghost
The Father sent the Son to die
The willing Son obeyed

and the Holy Ghost ever witnessed to Christ's Person; He dwelt in Him without measure; He was with the Man Christ Jesus through all His work, and all His toil, and all His pains, and all His tears, and all His bloody sweat, and all His humiliation, and all His dumbness before His accusers. The Trinity was interested in this great work of redemption. And this is our Lord Jesus Christ. On the cross, O how infinitely active was our Lord Jesus Christ. What beauty appears in His dying love. What glory there is in the death of Christ. What loveliness there is in the sorrow of Christ, and what infinite sweetness there is in the compassion of Christ on the cross. See Him buried. He made His grave with the rich and in a new grave. There had been no corruption there and there was none while He was there. He saw no corruption. I do not know how to express it; I can only say that to myself there is a beauty inexpressible in our Lord Jesus Christ in these particulars that I am feebly naming to you. Inexpressible, ineffable beauty in the very burial of Jesus Christ, in His remaining in the tomb and yet seeing no corruption. Then in the fullness of time, according to God's prediction, on the third day He rose again from the dead, and I wish the Holy Ghost would give in our hearts a place for that word in the 1 Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 15, where the Apostle Paul says that he delivered to the Corinthians that which also he had received "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" He says that this which he delivered to them was able to save them if they kept it in mind. And if you keep this in mind by faith, it being delivered to you, and hold it in love, and look to it in hope, you will find salvation. Now this blessed One is in heaven. Let me say this and then leave this point, our Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven. You say of course we believe it, but dear friends, vital faith is not a matter of course; it is a divine gift, and every act of it, every glance it throws to this blessed Person, every view it gets of Him, the Holy Ghost is the Author of. He is in heaven, invested there with universal authority; clothed there with glory. O what a Christ He is.

Now the Apostle in the text says, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." And some of you may say it would not have been proper for me to begin to talk about love before I had spoken of the only proper Object of it. If I have set Him forth according to the Scriptures of truth, He is worthy of attention, and now I will turn to this love. It is a grace; it is a great grace. It is the greatest of the three graces which are named by Paul in the Corinthians - Faith, hope, charity. Love, tis the greatest of the three, for when faith is not required, when hope loses itself in a blessed fruition, or realisation, then love will still remain. Hart has a beautiful word on this

No other change shall that sustain
Save only to increase

Now it may be a great question with some of us, whether we have this love. We may not be able easily to conclude that we have it, and after the closest scrutiny and examination of ourselves, we may not be able to say, "I love the Lord". May the Lord enable me to help such, if there be such here; and I may put a question or two to you. First, you who may doubt whether you love Him, let me ask you this, would you be willing, if it were put to you, would you be willing to have our Lord Jesus Christ blotted out of the Scripture and blotted out of your own view, and removed from the throne of grace? Would it affect you? O, some may say, indeed, earth and all things here below would lose all interest, and beauty, and life would be intolerable, and death would be intolerable, and eternity would be intolerable in the very thought if He were not what He is; if He were not where He is. What do you do then, you who doubt whether you love Him? What do you do? Pray, O cannot help it, must pray. To whom? To God. For whose sake? For Christ's sake. What Name do you name in prayer at times? Ask in My Name, says Christ. Is that the Name you ask in? His merit, is that what you plead before God? His righteousness, is that ever before you as the ground of all acceptance, and the ground of your desire for acceptance? His blood, is that what you plead, asking that it may be applied to your consciences? And His love, do you want to feel that in your hearts? Some may be ready to say, well we must own that you have expressed our feeling and our experience and the way we walk.

Well I believe, I soberly believe it, that the Holy Ghost has penned this text for such people as you are, for He knows better than you know, and better than I know, what love is, but I do believe that beneath all these desires, and prayers, and all the concern, and all the fear which I have named, there is love. Why should you not be indifferent to Him? And there is a passage in the Scriptures like this, which may be of some encouragement to some of us - He that is not against us is for us. He is with us, he belongs to us. He that does not fight against My Person, he that does not quarrel with My righteousness, that does not turn away from My merit, My fountain; he who would fain come to the throne of grace but has no courage sometimes to do so; he that is not against Me is with Me, is for Me, is on My side. May the Lord help us to look at this point. Take away the Person of Christ and what is left? Justification is wonderful, redemption is wonderful, but let me repeat what I have said before, the Person of Christ is antecedent to them. But for that Person, no justification would have been possible, no fountain would have been opened for sin and uncleanness, and therefore it is that, believing this, I do try to lay all proper stress on the point, the Person of Christ. Coming here this evening I found myself saying - I hope it was prayer -

O could we but with clearer eyes
His excellencies trace
Could we His Person learn to prize
We more should prize His grace

Ah it is a wonderful thing to see the Person of Christ. All goodness is here. The fullness of the Godhead, the fullness of love, the fullness of life, we have here. And if you love Him, says Paul, O grace be with you. Grace be with you, more grace be with you who love this blessed Person. And I would say, go to Him as you are, hang about Him, with all your sinfulness, and fear, and weakness, and all your doubt, and questioning; hang about this Person. God gave Him, God sent Him; He came; the Spirit reveals Him, has revealed Him in the Scripture; reveals Him in the heart to faith and it is a great matter to be enabled to look on Him with longing eyes though both should seem to fail. Love is a very entwining grace, a very tender grace. One might say this of natural love, but much more of spiritual love. And

love must always have an Object, and that Object, blessed be God, that Object is Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the next place look at this, His precious blood, the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. This is wonderful, a fountain of merit opened, opened by Christ, opened for sinners and for sin; opened that the polluted, and the guilty, and the dead, may be cleansed and live; may be cleansed and live in the sight of God. And do you love this merit? Is there anything in this merit that meets your case, O sinner? Is there anything, I say, that meets your case?

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

Every fault. O think of that, that precious blood of Christ. It is a great thing to feel guilt; a great thing it is to feel guilt. If there is no sense of guilt there will be no application of the atoning blood of Christ. Poor sinner, it is far worse not to feel guilt than to feel depressed and distressed about it. It is far worse to be indifferent to your state than to be concerned so as to keep you awake at night and wondering what will become of you. O it is a great thing to be concerned about the blood of Jesus Christ. Now when a man sees this precious blood and longs to have it on his conscience, he has got love, he has got real love in his soul. If any man love the Lord Jesus, grace be with him. "Jesus" one says, "I love Thy charming Name", and sometimes he can say, the blood of Christ, the mention of it, is sweeter to him than he is able to express

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.

And so of His righteousness you may speak. There is a love felt to that. It is a robe so beautiful, so complete, as that the soul says, Q if I might have that blood on my conscience, and that righteousness on

my soul, I should want nothing else; all would be well in my experience. And this is an evidence of love to Christ. I might mention His intercession. He ever lives to make intercession for all them that come unto God by Him. The Pharisee does not want this; he speaks for himself. "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are". But the sinner says: "God be merciful to me a sinner". And more than that, he says, I do not know how to pray; I do not know what to pray for. Then he wants an Intercessor, one who opens His mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Do you love Christ? Do you love His intercession? precious, blessed intercession. He speaks for sinners. It is said to Him: "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 needy. You will love Him sometimes in His Word, when you see Him here, and it is wonderful how the Holy Ghost causes people to see Christ in the Bible. Wonderful to find that now and again it will be as if Christ were looking at you and letting you look at Him through the lattices, flourishing Himself in some perfection, in some beauty, in some glory belonging to Him. Ah the Word of God is very beautiful and sometimes it is a little opened by the Spirit of God.

And now look at the character of this love. If any man love the Lord Jesus Christ, says the Apostle, grace be with him. Yea, all they that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, in incorruption, a pure affection felt for this blessed Saviour of sinners. Hart says, and this is a test,

On Christ thy affections then fixed
What conjugal truth didst thou vow?
With Him was there anything mixed?
Then what wouldst thou mix with Him now? (220)

Any human merit? O, says a lover of Christ

But as to man's merit, 'tis hateful to me!
The gospel - I love it; 'tis perfectly free! (52)

Can you say it? Every admixture of error in the doctrine of Christ is a hateful thing to an affectionate soul. No error is little. Every

error concerning Christ is like a darkening of the gospel. It comes to another gospel sooner or later and you know how Paul speaks about another gospel and the preachers of another gospel. If an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1 v 8) People may think and doubtless do, in this day of universal charity, it is a very uncharitable and improper thing to speak about doctrine and the severe doctrine of the gospel that admits of no kind of error whatsoever. But then the Scripture is here - any other gospel, any mixture of Moses with Christ, any Judaising in the teaching, well, let the man, the angel, who mixes and Judaizes, let him be accursed. I say, every affectionate soul, gazing on the dear Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all grace and glory will say Amen to it. I am sure every affectionate heart will say, Amen. Give me Christ, O give me Christ; a whole Christ, an entire gospel, a full gospel, for less wont do. "In sincerity", in incorruption. Christ speaks of a single eye. If the eye be single the body is full of light; and so an affectionate believer says, my eye is for the moment fixed on Christ. The Psalmist expresses it thus - "My heart is fixed, O God my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise." Now says Paul, where this sincere love is, may grace be, that is more grace; God increasing grace. "He giveth more grace" says the Spirit by the Apostle James. "He giveth more grace". Grace for grace, that is grace on grace. Today one measure, and tomorrow another. Remember this brethren, that the living water from the smitten rock accompanied Israel through the desert and it has been beautifully said that the atonement accompanies the Lord's people and where this is, it comes from time to time in fresh streams and new applications, so that there is more grace given. The grace of faith grows, and the grace of hope brightens, and the grace of love is strengthened by fresh communications from the Holy Ghost. Thus the word is fulfilled - "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity".

And in conclusion let me say that grace once received can never be lost. It is glory in the bud, and when time shall be no more then grace will never know recession, but it will be one continuous stream of life, and peace, and satisfaction, and glory. O may we live to reach the place where God unveils His blissful face, and looks and loves and smiles, and where Jesus, Son of Man and God, triumphant from

His wars, walks in rich garments dipped in blood, and shows His
glorious scars. (A mixture of hymns 18 and 850)

AMEN.