

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening, 26 March 1919

Text: John 15 v 26 and 27

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

The Person of the Holy Ghost, who is equal with the Father and the Son in the Godhead - one with them in nature, in glory, wisdom and power, every child of God, sooner or later, comes to know. If we never receive the Holy Ghost, we shall never know Jesus Christ; we shall never have access to the Father. And, if we receive Him, that divine Spirit, we shall know both the Father and the Son. And if that Spirit comes, then we shall be attracted to God, for He will take of the things of the Man Christ Jesus, of Almighty God in our nature and show them to us, and we, thereby, shall enter into that gracious word - "I drew thee with the cords of love, with the bands of a man." Therefore, one of the greatest gifts that God can bestow upon a fallen sinner is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Much is spoken about Christ and never too much, but little is mentioned of the Holy Ghost, and yet He has taken the place of Christ, as to His presence, in the Church. To Him is committed the care of the church. He is the teacher of the election of grace. It is by His unction alone that men are preserved from deception, for, if it were possible, so many are the deceptions in the world, and so subtle are the teachers of them, that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. But the unction which they all receive, preserves them from that. Christ makes this great promise several times, in this and other chapters close to it in this gospel - the promise of the Spirit. He says in the 14th chapter, that He will pray the Father, and the Father will send to the disciples, so sorrowful in the near

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prospect of losing their Master, that Spirit who should abide with them, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him. But He says to them - "Ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Every spring of faith, every feeling of love, every ray of hope, every feeling of moving to Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost is the gracious and immediate, efficient author of - "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" What hope hast thou that thou didst not receive? What light, what life, what comfort, what prayer didst thou ever breathe to God, that thou didst not receive and receive from the blessed Spirit of Christ. The mystery of the Trinity is so profound, it is nowhere propounded as an object for our reason to grasp, but for faith to lay hold of. It is nowhere set forth to be comprehended, but to be apprehended by faith. And the third Person (for the Spirit of God is so placed in the scriptures - "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost" - the Spirit), I say, the third Person, takes of the things of God and reveals them. The things of Christ, He receives and shows them to his saints. And, when Christ would comfort the sorrowing disciples, whose hearts were filled with sorrow at the prospect of losing Christ's presence, He comforts them by promising them another Comforter, another Person, a Person who should take His place; a Person who should speak in His Name, who should receive of His things in the covenant of grace and show them to the believing eyes of all in whom faith is created. Therefore, my dear friends, the great, the one great test of our religion as to its nature, is this - whether or not we have received the Holy Ghost. If we have not, then whatever religion we have is natural and will die with nature. If we have, we may fear, we may often sink, we may feel to be a sink of sin, we may have to our sense, hearts as hard as stone, and eyes without light, and be all but hopeless. We may be driven of fierce winds of temptation and tossed on the boisterous waves of trouble, yet we have that, that will carry us through, that will often revive us, draw, attract, sustain and comfort us. O it is a great blessing to receive the Holy Ghost. The disciples had had Christ with them. He had been three years their Teacher, their Master. They had been His happy disciples. It had been their privilege to see Him work miracles, raise the dead, open

blind eyes, and make dumb people speak. They had seen lepers healed; they had seen wonders wrought; a storm made a calm. But now He was to leave them. Oh sorrowful tidings that was to them - I am going away. They little knew the nature of Christ's kingdom at this time, and so sorrow filled their hearts. We may little know God's dispensations with us. We have Him not with us perhaps, certainly not as often and as long as we would have Him. We may not understand why trouble comes, particularly some trouble. Why we are tossed on the main of temptation and why in our circumstances we have no rest. We may not know why certain sorrows befall us, but the day will come when the Divine Spirit will make us see what the Psalmist was made to see, namely, it is good for us to be afflicted. "It is good for me," he said, "that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes." Time things must lose their attractions. Divine things must become more and more attractive. Men and friends and comforts, and temporal peace, more or less have to go from us, that He, in whom the Godhead is, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, in whom the Father was pleased that all fulness should dwell, that He, Jesus Christ, may become more and more attractive to us, and more and more our hope, our only hope, our only life, our only strength. He carries on a blessed work in the soul. He may begin it gradually, so gradually as that the beginning will always be more or less obscure to us. Convictions may have grown almost imperceptibly, but they are there. Scriptures have not perhaps been spoken to some of us remarkably, suddenly, but some scriptures have been in our hearts and affecting us, and this will be like the path of the just that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The men with the blessed Spirit in them shall see that the Holy Comforter was in them, in them as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The Spirit comes in different ways or in different operations. He comes as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and that makes the men in whom He is, so mind the things of the Spirit, and it is a great thing to see this dear friends. We all know too well, God's people know, what it is to mind the things of time, what it is to be asking that question - What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? O it is a daily question with us. How we shall get this and how shall we do

that, but, we do know, some of us at times, what it is to mind the things of the Spirit; to be saying - Are we the Lord's? May we pray? Will He help us? Will He bring us through? Does Christ love us? Did He give Himself for us? Is the hope we have divinely wrought in us? Is the faith we feel sometimes, the faith of God's elect, of God's operation? We find we mind the things of the Spirit when we hang about the scriptures and see, it may be, a beauty in some of them, not to be uttered by us but felt. We hang about the throne of grace with many a cry - Lord help me. Bring me through this trouble; sanctify to me this dispensation. May I be better for the cross; may I be helped to bear the cross. Such things as these do live in people in whom the Spirit is, and they are a part of the minding of the things of the Spirit. Do you not sometimes find yourself minding the Priesthood of Christ, that wondrous Priesthood, whereby poor sinners come to God. Do you not find yourself minding the atonement sometimes, caring for it, wishing with all your hearts that you knew Christ made it for you. And do you not find yourself minding Christ's righteousness sometimes. O if I might but be clothed in that robe. So minding the things of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's Spirit coming as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, whereby we are made free from the law of sin and death. A law is that that reigns and commands and regulates. A statute is that that limits our movements, and the law and statute of sin limits the movements of a sinner to the earth; won't let him go anywhere else. And the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus is also a limitation to the motions of the heart, whereby the heart is kept Godward, held to the things of God, held to the throne of Grace, and to the gospel and by occasions, it is so. And this is one of the most gracious operations of the Spirit of Christ. He comes to do these things in His people. "I will send Him to you from the Father" is Christ's promise here. "I will send that Comforter to you". And it is a comfort, a comfort that is so great, and, I will say, so legitimate, when given thus, that you may well thank God for it; a comfort to find your mind set on God. Perhaps when you wake in the morning you feel as dull as the earth, inert, cannot move Godward at all and sometimes it is just the other way, earth cannot hold you, you find your heart lifting up, perhaps hardly

realising who is doing it. Sometimes wishing the Comforter would come to you, lift up your heart to heaven, and this is the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. And sometimes the Holy Spirit comes very distinctly from Christ as the Spirit of grace and of supplication. It is a distinct operation, and it may be in you with such distinctness at times as that you can think of nothing else at the moment; nothing else is done in you. O, but it is a great all to be led of the Spirit to the throne of grace, to be led out in prayer, to feel, wonder of wonders to a sinner, to feel that there is no bar between you and God; that, though you cannot claim God for your portion as you desire, you can say that there is no bar; like as if an open door is set before you and your heart is freely poured out before the Lord in humble, sincere confession of sin, in fervent entreaty for pardon, in longings for a manifestation of Jesus, in petitions that the Lord would sanctify to you all you are passing through; that He would lead you more into the mystery of Christ, into the mystery of union with Him. This may last a little time, it may go on for a day or more, but whenever it comes it is one of the most gracious manifestations of the Spirit that is given to every man of God to profit withal. The whole world, all the trouble in the world, and all the persuasion of the world and the conviction of your conscience, and all the things that you might have pressing you into a feeling that you needed somebody to help you, could not produce what I have just spoken about. Nothing in nature can produce prayer of a spiritual kind. But, on the other hand, when this Spirit of supplications comes, nothing can stop prayer; nothing can block it, keep it away from God; nothing can keep your heart away from Him. There is a strange, sweetly singular softness of mind, a movement, a tenderness toward God, a longing to be with Him, near Him, to hear Him, to feel Him, to know His love. It is a singular grace that is bestowed on a sinner when this Spirit of grace and of supplications is given, and one thing accompanies it according to the scripture - "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced". And another thing follows - "and they shall mourn". Now people are all for what they call a cheerful religion; bright and short services; lovely things and lovely meetings and all that kind of thing in religion, but it is all death. It is all a stench in God's nostrils, as He speaks.

It won't stand my friends. This will stand when you come, in the Spirit of grace and of supplications, to believe on Jesus Christ crucified; when you have given you a sight of what He suffered, though you may not be persuaded that He suffered all for you, yet the sight of Him suffering will produce mourning, mourning of a two-fold kind, first over Him and then over yourself, and you sometimes sing this

Dear Lord may I a mourner be
Over my sins and after Thee

and this comes from the Spirit, and let me say it again, it is a most singular grace that is bestowed when this Spirit of grace and of supplications is bestowed on a sinner. It is intercourse with heaven; it is the heart speaking to God; it is the laying of a bad case before the eye of God, an entreating of mercy, a praying to the Majesty of heaven to regard your case in all its aspects, this trouble, that care, this sorrow, that tossing, that temptation, all the things that you have; your desires for time, to come honourably through your troubles; for eternity, to be found in Christ, and when you die, to sleep in Him. All these things the Spirit of grace and of supplication leads you into, leads you to express in prayer before the God of heaven. O blessed prayer, O blessed supplication. Winged by the grace of the Spirit, it reaches the throne of grace.

The Lord Jesus here speaks of the Holy Ghost in a particular way. He speaks of Him as the Comforter. In another place He calls Him another Comforter. He Himself had been their Comforter; He was to leave them, now He would give them another. One who should come by their side and help them; one who should come alongside of them and teach them. So the word is and sets forth that strange and sweet operation of the Spirit of God, such as the Psalmist got when he speaks thus to himself - "Why art thou cast down O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me, hope thou in God". He had been looking at his troubles as who does not when they have troubles. He had been intently looking upon his condition - "O my God my soul is cast down within me." Now, as if there had come to his side one who spoke to him, who

pointed out God to him and Christ, and the throne of grace, he says - "Why art thou cast down O my soul?" If anybody were to come and say that to you, you would look at your trouble and say, look at this, have not I reason to be cast down? But if the Spirit comes and points out God to you, with all His sufficiency, all His love, all His promises, and goodness, then you would not point to your troubles, you would say to your soul - "Why art thou cast down? Why all this ado about trouble? Why all this ado about these painful changes I am passing through? Hope thou in God, my helper in days past, my hope for years to come, my friend, as I hope. Hope thou in Him who has never failed a coming sinner, who has never cast out a leper, who has never said nay to an importunate beggar, who has never sent an empty sinner empty away, who filleth the hungry and poor with good things. Hope thou in Him; hope in His promise; hope in His power; hope in His love; hope in His faithfulness; hope in His fulness, for I shall yet praise Him. Now this was the operation of the Comforter. David got an operation of a kind that was wonderful on one occasion when he looked on Ziklag burnt to the ground, and missed his wives and the wives of all the men with him. And though the men with him were so disheartened, so to put it, so discouraged that they spoke even of stoning their captain, David, what did he do? He did not turn round on these men; No, he did not say to them you ought not so to speak and so to act. What did he do? He encouraged himself in the Lord his God, and that is one of the operations of the Holy Ghost. He presents to a sinner's faith more reason in God for hope, for encouragement, for comfort, than can be found in all creatures for discouragement and pain, and seeing all that in God, in the light of the Spirit, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. This was an operation of the Comforter. The Comforter pointed out a full Christ, an Almighty God, to a poor, distraught sinner. The Comforter said in his heart "There is plenty in God for you, cry to Him". And he did say "Bring hither the Ephod, let me enquire of God and he enquired - "Shall I pursue this troop?" "Thou shalt, and without fail recover all." The Spirit told him all that my friends. That is, wrought faith in his heart, turned him to God. And so he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

Take an extreme case of the Spirit's work. Take rebellious and blood-stained Manasseh, idolatrous Manasseh caught in the thorns. Who would think that that man, his hands dyed with the blood of people and his whole heart and life polluted with idolatry and idolatrous practices, could now be caught in the thorns. The Spirit comes and Manasseh prays. He prayed unto God, and God heard him. That is a proof that it was the Spirit's work. And God heard him and delivered him and saved him, and his idolatries were all given up. O the mercy of having the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Christ within you and a Comforter too. O He won't let sinners despair no matter how poor, how dead, how worthless they feel. He won't let them despair. He turns them to Christ, the ground, the object of hope. He turns them, as it is here said - "He shall testify of Me." This shall be His work. You shall be looking at yourself; you shall be testifying against yourself; you shall be saying - "We have reason for dismay and even for despair; you shall be looking at your weakness, at your ignorance, at your follies, at your troubles, and be saying there is no reason, no ground for comfort at all." And the Spirit won't contradict you as to that conclusion respecting yourself and other things. What He will do will be as the Hymn expresses it -

"Turn your eyes another way
To Jesus and His blood"

and that is the way He brings the gospel forth. He turns their eyes another way, to Jesus and His blood. And then there is ground for hope; then there comes in a ray and beam of God's goodness and then the sinner rises. He says in the Spirit "I will go to this God against whom I have sinned." "I will go to this God whom I have disbelieved." "I will go to Him with my troubles, my temporal troubles, my soul troubles; all my troubles I will go to Him with." That is the Spirit's work. He testifies of Christ. He, as it were, says He is enough for you; He has sufficient for you; there is nothing you can need that He cannot give you, no temporal deliverance that He cannot command for you, no soul deliverance he cannot bless you with; no purifying of your conscience that is beyond His precious blood

and Spirit. He, the Spirit, shall testify of Him and show these things and my friends, let me interject a remark here (what a capable witness the Spirit is of Christ). We listen to witnesses when we believe that they are capable witnesses; when we know as it were that they have seen the very things they talk about. We listen to them. Hearsay evidence is not reliable, but the evidence of the eye, the evidence of the ear, we listen to. And what of the Spirit? Was He with Christ ever? Ah Christ never was without the Spirit. He anointed Him as I spoke last Lord's Day morning. He anointed the Lord Jesus. He was with Him and therefore He is a capable witness and when He bears His testimony we believe it. You may question what your friends say to you about your evidences of godliness, about the things they have heard from your lips. You may question all their conclusions and say - I thought this and I thought that, but I fear I was deceived. But when the Spirit comes you won't question His testimony. He won't tell you you have been good. He will tell you that Christ has holiness enough to sanctify you. He won't tell you that you have been just, but He will tell you that Christ can justify you. He shall testify of the ability of Christ, of the grace of Christ, of the love of Christ, of the suitableness of Christ, of the goodness of Christ, let you feel in your very soul that you can commit the keeping of your soul to Him in the well doing of faith. I will send this Comforter to you. Another operation of this Comforter is this, that He will speak some precious part of the gospel to you. We call it applying the scriptures, or speaking home on the heart some scriptures. He applies; He explains; He applies the blessed word of God so it becomes the property of the sinner. It becomes the property of the sinner. The promise is his; the blank cheque belongs to him and as it were his faith begins to fill it in. O one says

Thou art coming to a King
Large petitions with thee bring,
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

The work of the Spirit is very great in this, that He speaks home

certain scriptures, scriptures which perhaps you thought belonged to the Jews, and did so, but which now belong to you, because He has made them over to you. O it is great to have the Word of God in your heart, spoken home by the blessed Spirit, and moreover this is one of His operations that He brings things back to your memory. He shall bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you. That is another and a distinct operation of the Spirit. You can fetch the things up into your memory perhaps. Friends to whom you spoke of them, it may be years ago, may remind you of them, but neither the one nor the other, neither your own internal act, nor the remembrance of a friend, can invest those scriptures with new life, nor bring them again to you with new persuasion. But the Spirit both can and does. O it is as if you have not received the word before; it is new to you; new with life; replete with fresh meaning or fulness to your present case, so that it is like a word that Christ multiplies in the fulfilment of it. And this, I say, is another operation of the Eternal Spirit, and it is a comfort too, a great comfort. Why some of you may have forgotten words which were made spirit and life in you years ago, and they are brought back to you after years of forgetfulness by the Holy Spirit, and they are, as I have said, full of life and again full of sweetness. I have liked that word, in my heart I have liked it - "Then they remembered His word." You may say, O I am afraid such and such a scripture could not have come to me from God though I thought it did, but then I have forgotten it; it has gone away from me. When I was young that used to trouble me a great deal, but what the Lord made that to me, I have just mentioned, I cannot tell you. "Then they remembered His word." Of course they had forgotten it; they had forgotten it. They remembered it; the Remembrancer came to them; He suggested it to their heart again; He, as it were, spoke it afresh to them. He was the other Comforter to them as He is that other Comforter in the place of Jesus Christ. He brings back the words of the Lord that had been spoken to you but had been forgotten by you, and in this He testifies of Christ, for, as Paul says, "All the promises of God in Him, that is in Christ, are yea and amen unto the glory of God by us." That I say again is another distinct operation of the Holy Ghost. Let me mention another, it is this. Some day you

felt a strange, wonderful sensation in your heart of the love of God. O how it warmed, enlarged, softened, humbled; how it created wonder. What an amazing thing the love of God appeared to you to be, and it was in your heart. You loved Him as an effect of it. How came it there? You may have thought before - Why a world would not be too much for you to give, to have that that you now feel. How came it there? Says the Apostle Paul, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. O how sweet it is to believe in that "God is love". God is love and it is singular and sweet to perceive when this comes, how everything you have had has this love stamped on it. Troubles, crosses, losses, afflictions, everything you have gone through has this love stamped on it, or, as the hymn puts it

Love inscribed upon them all

How often has Satan tried to write a curse across your troubles. How often he may have said in your mind - If God loved you you would not have these things. If God loved you He would take care of you and prevent all this tossing and all this turmoil and all this sin working in your mind. He would not allow all this if He loved you. But when the love of God comes you can see how He ordered your trials, how He permitted sin to work in you, not to break out into open conduct, but to work in you, as that you might be sick of self, sick of self till you could scarcely bear yourself, in order that Christ might be really prized and loved by you. It is a distinct work of the Spirit, the Comforter. He brings comfort, brings good news from heaven, testifies of Christ, shows how Christ is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption to all His people, and that they can only come to prize Him in those particulars as, through the conviction and leading of the Spirit, they realise their awful opposites, namely sins in their nature. He, this blessed Comforter brings the love of God. Precious love, love that makes the sinner say, when he feels it

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 shall testify of Me.

I might speak many more things, I think I could if I had time, but I must not continue. I might speak of what the Spirit does in showing Christ to have in His hand all providences; to have on His shoulder the government of the church and all things in the earth and all creatures in heaven and all devils, and this is not an unprofitable thing to contemplate if the Spirit brings us to contemplate it in faith, that our Lord Jesus Christ is King of kings, and Lord of lords; that devils cannot go into swine without Him; that the wind obeys Him and the waves obey Him and men do His bidding. O it is profitable when the Spirit testifies of Christ in His glorious Kingship, universal Kingship, particular Headship. King over creation, Head to the church.

Well, dear friends, troubles are under the hand of Christ, under the management of Christ, and men and kings and the hearts of kings are in the hand of Christ, to turn whithersoever He will, as the streams in the south. The whole of Christ the Spirit is to reveal and from time to time does reveal in some measure in the church of Christ. But I must conclude. What I would say in conclusion is this, that the whole of that religion that is worth having, that is saving, that glorifies God, that will land those who have it in heaven, is the work of the Eternal Spirit; that man has no hand in it; that he is a receiver of it; that he feels it; that his will, his affections, his understanding, his conscience, his heart, are all affected by the operations of the blessed Spirit, and the effect thereof is glory to God in the peace, the happiness, the stability, the recovery and the ultimate glory of all who are bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

May we then have such a religion and be under such a teacher and have such an unction in our own hearts and it will be well with us.