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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel
Brighton on Sunday evening 5.6.1927.

"Abide in Me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."

John Chapter 15 verse 4

We saw this morning, the Lord Jesus, a man of sorrows, in deep waters, in mire, in trouble, surrounded by innumerable enemies; praying, sighing, groaning, under heart breaking reproaches; a poor weak man, crucified through weakness; saving others, but as man, His enemies thought, unable to save Himself, and if we get a sight of Him whom we see thus, for many people saw and did not perceive, if I say we get a sight of Him; it was a moving sight, a soul moving sight, a soul encouraging sight, and yet it might be to some a discouraging sight. O a sight of Christ crucified, dead and buried, was more than the faith of the disciples could bear for a time. We verily thought it had been He, we thought He had come, for whom we were looking; we thought we had met the Messiah, but He is buried, and with Him our hopes are buried, and said Peter, I go a fishing, I return to my former vocation, and his brethren said, we also go with thee. It is not much faith we have in the dark. A Christ buried is a trial to faith. After teaching on one occasion, He said to His disciples - "Let these sayings sink into your heart, for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men." That is to say, take notice of what I tell you, for I shall be weak and you will see Me weak; I shall be in the hands of my enemies, and you will see it. I shall be crucified and you will behold it. Let these teachings sink into your ears, for you will need them. My friends, whatever Christ says to you, you will need. If He prophesies good in your hearts you will need faith to hold fast to that prophecy. If He tells you He will guide you with His eye, look for some darkness, dark circumstances, dark insinuations of the devil, and dark questions in your own hearts and when you get the darkness, then may you remember the promise. O what a mercy it is to have faith in a hidden Saviour, in a dead and buried Christ, who rises again and as He rose from the dead and came forth out of His grave, He will arise in all the troubles and difficulties that you may meet with and you will say, we were mistaken when we thought He had gone; we were mistaken when we thought our hopes were spilled.

This evening we shall see, may we perceive, this same Lord in another way - a root for poor sapless sticks. A root of life for the dead. A fructifying root,

that perceived by faith, will say in the heart - your barrenness is no bar to that root. It cannot hinder fruitfulness. It will say just as Aaron's rod was made to bring forth buds, and bloom blossoms and yield almonds in one night, so you, mourning your barrenness and thinking you are as unlike the trees of the Lord as any stick can be, even you can be made, and shall be made to bring forth fruit.

If I am enabled to speak as I ought to speak, Paul speaks like that you know in the Ephesians, "That I may open my mouth as I ought," if I am enabled to speak as I ought to speak, I shall show you first that there is this blessed vine, this root, this fat olive, and secondly that it means, when He says, "Ye are the branches", union with Him, real union, and that means, in the third place, fruitfulness, and O may we not falter and fall when fruitfulness is spoken of by the Lord, because He is the fat root.

There is a vine - Jesus Christ. It is a very beautiful figure, a very beautiful teaching, which may we have grace to attend to. It is expressed by the Holy Ghost by Paul thus. Of God, it is said, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." Look then for fruit here. There is this blessed One. It is written of Him, "That it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." There may be, and I am disposed to think there is, a distinction to be made between that word and the word in the next chapter, where Paul says, "That in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily". That was by the will of the Father; that was by His own will, but all the pleasure of God's will dwelling in Him seems to point to the grace, the love, the wisdom, the goodness and the power of God dwelling in the Man Christ Jesus, dwelling for all who shall come to need the grace that is in Him. Ah, this root my friends, this vine. I am the true vine, which points to false vines. Israel is an empty vine, not because there were no berries on Him, but because all the fruit he bore he bore to himself, for he bringeth forth fruit unto himself. So the pharisee did. O he was a wonderful, religious, a wonderful man. I thank God I am not as other men are. A poor stick he was, nothing better, and yet as full of fruit, that is pride and self righteousness, as he could be. Would you bring forth fruit to God's glory? Would you live to His praise? Would you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you hope you are called? Look then to this vine. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" It is a blessed thing that God has planted this vine. I am the true vine.

This speaks in the second place of union - "Ye are the branches" Some branches are taken away. They mechanically attach themselves to the Lord Jesus, they make a good profession, they look like good groves for the moment, but they never show union by bringing forth fruit. O, it is a solemn consideration, that some may mechanically attach themselves to the Lord Jesus, that is profess His name, and talk as if they were His people, but they bring forth no fruit, and the day comes when God, who saw them to be only externally attached to the vine, took them away. The day came then, and it comes still, men are taken away. Providence takes them away; some providence takes place and they cannot bear it. Some teaching takes them away. Said the Lord Jesus - "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" and they who heard it said "This is a hard saying, who can hear it" and from that time, they went away, they went back and walked no more with Him. A very searching word, it has given me many a shake. They went back and walked no more with Him. Bless God, so far as many of us hope, though we have turned away from Him, again and again, and times without number, He has fetched us back. Sent affliction, swift affliction, to drive us home, to anchor on His grace. O but is it not a trying, searching, thing. Men are taken away. May we be favoured to have real union. This can be known by faith. This can be known by the sweet and direct witness of the Spirit. It is good indeed to have this blessed union. And in the third place there is fruitfulness, Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. You cannot give Him up can you? If in temptation you meet Luther's solemn protestation, you would say that is just what I feel. He said, you remember, O Lord I will not detach myself from Thee. Is not that just what you feel. Devils may say give it all up; inbred corruption may say, you have got no grace, no holy life in your souls, temptations may drive you, lusts may drive you, reason may drive you, circumstances may drive you, but they are only like the wind in the sails of the windmill. They drive you closer, send you more frequently and more whole heartedly to Him. O God uses adverse things to bring fruit to His people. He is a great and a wise God. Do you believe in Him? That is fruit. Do you love Him? That is fruit. Do you wait on Him? That is fruit. Is there an eye again and again to cast on Him, the eye of faith? That is fruit. Do you feel that you can submit to His will sometimes? That is fruit. Are the saints better than yourself? Can you esteem them more than you esteem yourself? Do you in honour prefer them before yourself? That is fruit. It is a great thing to be a fruit bearing branch. Then the dear Saviour speaks lovingly, searchingly to His people and says "Abide in Me" If you go from Me for an hour, you will be dry and barren. If you turn to the world you will be dry and barren.

If you run before Me then you will go without the light. If you run before the Sun you go into darkness, but abide in Me, and lovingly and graciously He teaches the mystery of union - I in you. "Abide in Me and I in you".

Now I would like, as enabled, to speak a little about this abiding in Christ. It is, as I believe, and would express to you, this, first a continual going of a poor believer to the Lord for everything that is needed. The continual motion of a divinely given faith in the soul toward Jesus Christ.

When I say continual, I mean that the bent of the heart is to Him, the direction of the mind is to Him. As when we speak of praying without ceasing, it is not that a man is always on his knees, but that the direction and the bent and the trend of his mind will be that way, so this abiding. And we may try ourselves by this. I would try myself by this. Is there a motion of faith, a trend of the soul to the Lord Jesus. Now, for the moment, if you can, do not look at the meandering river, sometimes almost seeming to go back. Look at that which, as you steadily may look at it, with its stream and a straw on its surface, that will tell you whither it is going, and faith will sometimes take a short cut. You might, following the meandering of a river, walk miles that way, when a short cut would take you to the end in less than a mile, and faith will sometimes take a man by a short cut, so to express it, in this "Lord help me" I have been up and down, here and there; I have wandered; I have been under the power of unbelief, or I have fretted against some providence; something has troubled and I have gone hither and thither and I have come to this "Lord help me" Help me to cast my burden on Thee. My burden of sin, my barrenness. Help me to come to Thee with the things I do not know how to manage, a heavy burden I do not know how to bear. Abide in Me. King Jareb was a poor thing to go to; when Ephraim saw his wound, did not go to the Lord who has balm and is a good physician but went straight way to a king, as if he could help him. If you have got a wound, if you have got an immortal soul before you, with its undying interests, if you are troubled with sin, if you are stifled with some corruption, and there is living faith in you, it will say to you, now there is no help for you anywhere, no healing for you by any man, any physician, but only in the Lord Jesus, and when that comes to pass, there is an abiding. Lord I would not let Thee go. I have no other friend to go to. Human help is helpless. Now that is one way in which a sinner abides. O but the opposition. I must not leave that out. The opposition of science, falsely so called, in your deceitful heart, opposition of a terrible spirit that says - You believe in election? Yes. You believe that God has ordered everything? Yes. You believe that every circumstance in your life is

under His purpose and for a purpose? Yes. Then what do you pray for? Things will come to pass if you do not pray. O the opposition, God knows how some of us have suffered. Then the enemy comes and says - You have prayed a good while, many years asked for many things, what have you got? and thrown off your guard for a moment you say - nothing, nothing. Then he says give it up. Then there comes an appeal, - "Will you go away?" says the Lord. That touches the spring of faith, and faith says - No, "To whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life". Poor sinner, you must abide here. There is nowhere else, and God gives you power to do it from time to time. But this is a trouble, how a sinner with such a fountain of goodness, such a fat root of fruitfulness before his faith, can be so slack, so backward, so indisposed, so perverted in his mind and judgement at times as to turn away and go and hew out to himself cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. O you may well join with Hart

Oh what a fool have I been made

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Or rather made myself

and yet the Lord has His own way and says "Come to Me" and faith says

Lo glad I come ; and thou, blest Lamb

Shalt take me to thee as I am

Abide in Me by prayer. Make supplication to Me. Come as often as you will. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Come as often as you have those needs pressing you. Come as often as you will. O what a mercy it is the throne of grace is open still as the hymn so sweetly expresses it

Thy mercy seat is open still,

Here let my soul retreat,

With humble hope attend thy will,

And wait before thy feet.

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Whoever waited in vain.

Pray if thou canst, or canst not speak;

But pray with faith in Jesus' name

This is an abiding, and no wonder the old enemy of our souls opposes this as he does. There is no doubt of the truth of what Dr Watts says

Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees

As I have often said to you, if you can go through your troubles on your knees, you will come out well, and you make good haste then. Haste in our nature grasps at all and nothing keeps, but O when a man can pray, when He can commit his case to the Lord, he is going well, he is going well. Have you enemies?

Take them to God. Do they plot against you? Put a prayer against each plot. Have you difficulties? Do not force a way through them, but beg of God to make a way for you. Are you burdened? By prayer and faith cast the burden on the Lord. Are you confronted by a roaring lion, making you tremble, and say there is a lion in the street, I shall be slain? Call upon God who can chain the lion, and lock his jaws. O prayer! what has it done? Some of us have got answers locked up in our hearts. Answers in our families, answers in the church of God, sweet answers. Answers that have made our faces shine. Well may we ask the Lord to enable us to obey Him in that direction. When thou prayest, enter thy closet and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father, which seeth in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly.

It is not good to carry your troubles on your arm for everybody to see, but it is good to pour them out before the Lord. O it is good to pray; with a feeling, without a feeling, near or distant, dark or light, to pray. I have mentioned to you before, the good advice that Thomas Hardy gave to one of his correspondents as you, if you have his letters, may have seen. He said 'Try what hard hearted prayers will do'. If you have not a soft heart, then pray to the Lord to give you one. O what prayer is ordained to do. Appointed it is to bring down blessings from heaven. Jacob overcame 400, with Esau at their head, by prayer, and when the man who took hold of him, wrestled with him, said 'Let me go' the strength that was imparted to Jacob's faith, by the hold the man took of Jacob, enabled Jacob to say 'I will not let Thee go' and I doubt not, that Jacob's soul was then as full of reverence as it had ever been. The nearer we get, the more reverent we are. The nearer we get, the sweeter the Lord is, but there is a mutual familiarity. He is familiar with you. 'Ask what thou wilt' and then you begin to ask boldly. I wish I could see more answers to prayer in you. Prayer, that often in the night season goes up to God for you, out of my heart, and that I might find more answers in my own soul. I want the Lord to bless you. He knows, I labour for you, day and night often. Prayer, He hears it. Prayer, He answers it in measure and gives what poor people need. You pray for me. I hope you do, and that we may pray for each other, and call on the name of the Lord. By prayer we abide in Him. Abide in Me in love. Sweet grace this, tender grace, and if it were in exercise sometimes when it is not, we should be different from what we are. I should O love cannot bear to give pain. Yet this blessed grace of love is not always in exercise, but abide in Me in love.

There are several ways of knowing if you love the Lord. One is, when He sheds His love abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, then you know you love Him. Love bubbles up, as from a living, powerful spring, in your heart. His name, His person, His grace, His death, His blood, His righteousness, they are all objects of your love and all incitements to it. O the love of Christ,

when that is shed abroad in the heart, brings love to Him out of the heart. That is one way, and then the promises, they are loved; and the precepts, they are loved; and the ordinances, they are loved; and the saints, they are loved.

Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above;
And he's an heir of heaven that finds
His bosom glow with love.

And another way is this, that sometimes He gives you to see Himself, flourishing Himself in the lattice, through the eastern window, the lattices, and He just sits there, or stands there, and as you are passing, or standing, and looking for Him, He lets you look on Him, gives you a sight of His face, His well-pleased face, and then, if the devil said you do not love Him, you would say but I do, and all I want is to have more of Him, upon whom I am looking, and I would like to embrace Him, and I would like every wall that is between Himself and me, to be taken away, and you love His Person. O the Person of Christ, how I wish I knew Him better than I do. I should then try to preach Him better. There is another way, when He speaks to the soul. Peter, Simon Peter, lovest thou Me? Lovest thou Me more than these? You told Me, if these denied Me, you would not, but you denied Me, now here we are together, lovest thou Me more than these? Lord, Thou knowest I love Thee. Simon Peter lovest thou Me? He brings out, Jesus brings it out. His word brings love out. Perhaps He reproves you, then you love Him. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Perhaps He promises something to you and you believe His promise, and love Him in it. Perhaps He brings you into some trouble, deals kindly with you and says "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." O the love of Christ, how it, in this expresses, kindles the love to Him in the heart of a sinner, who hears Him so speak. Abide in Me in love.

Shall I say next abide in Me in obedience. Servants obey your Lord. Soldiers obey your Captain. Obedience is better than sacrifice, hearkening is better than the fat of rams. To obey is a great thing; when you are in trouble, to obey Him, by going to Him, who is the strength of God, and the wisdom of God, and the fulness of God's pleasure, that is to obey Him, and the obedience of faith, is to go to Him. Obey Him by cleaving to His holy word. This book, O this blessed book, this dear book. Does the lack of love to it ever trouble you? Do you ever feel condemned because you do not love this blessed book more? I do, But this book, given by inspiration of God, not a superfluous word

in it; profitable for doctrine, the doctrine of God, the doctrine of the fall, the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of redemption, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of sanctification. All the doctrines which are related thereto, the Bible is profitable for. The only infallible book, the only book to be relied upon. Not to be criticised but to criticise men. Do you cleave to it? Remember how dear to Himself, His word is. He hath magnified His word, above all His Name. Remember how firm His word is, for ever settled in heaven, and the weakest worm who hangs on a word of God given to him, is firmer than heaven and earth. Go To BOTTON OF PAGE,

Abide in Me in My ordinances, They are given for edification. He meant them when He gave them, He meant them to be regarded, lovingly, obediently. He intended it for that, that there should be therein an expression of the mystery of His burial, when the waterfloods overflowed Him, that there should be an expression of His resurrection, when He rose from the dead. It is a great privilege, a very great privilege to be obedient to this and then He comes to a church, a Baptist Church. Now He says - "Eat My flesh, drink my blood, and as often as ye do this, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.

Abide in Me crucified. Abide in Me, with all my heart willingness and determination to save you and do you good, and when you come to My table, I will be your guest and I will be your Host, for I will give you the provision, and I will bless it, and bless you in receiving it. It is a great privilege therefore, to be brought to the Lord's table. But I have got a hard heart. Come with it. He may say in your heart - Eat O friend and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved. He may say it to you and you may be so blessed as to say sometimes

For love of me, the Son of God
Drained every drop of vital blood,
Long time I after idols ran,
But now my God's a martyred man.

And to see a martyred man will make Him your God. God in your heart, in your love, in your judgement, in your will. He will be your God all through, and then love and grief will compound an unction and the sweetest repentance, the most grateful contrition will be in your heart. Abide in Me.

HERE Now I must leave off. I have occupied all the time just on this one word without coming to the vital word - and I in you. May the Lord make up the deficiency. May He speak to you and to me and say - Now I am in you the hope of glory, in you your eternal life, in you your only righteousness, in you your only holiness, in you your only wisdom, in you your only strength, in you your only heaven. I in you. O my brethren, may we go to this blessed One, with everything we have, of pain, sorrow, need, sin, pollution, guilt, and death, that we may receive life and sap, and grace, and forgiveness, and holiness from Him, and

then live to His praise and glory.

The Lord illustrates the first part of the text by the second part. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. Creature power, it is killed. Creature goodness, it is killed.

May the Lord teach us. Amen.