

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening 22 April 1928

JOHN 15 v 4

"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"

"And I in you" is a promise. There is something very awful in the presence of God, and the thought that He will ever take up His abode in a sinful heart is an amazing thought and that amazement arises from first an apprehension of who He is: "I AM THAT I AM" incarnate, the infinite God, the eternal Son of God, the self-existent God. I dwell in eternity. Heaven is My throne, earth is My footstool; where is the house ye will build for Me? Infinite in His Being, incomprehensible, creating all things, depending on nothing outside Himself. This God; omniscient, omnipresent, filling heaven and earth; to dwell in the heart of a sinner is, to a sinner in whom this is at all a hope, I say, amazing; amazing by contrast. "Who am I, O Lord God" said David, "and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto". And when Solomon had finished the house which he had built, and was so many years in building, he said "And will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; how much less the house which I have built". And when you look at your own house, your own heart, when you feel it full of sin, when you look at the contraction of it - even at its widest stretch, 'tis but a finite, little thing - the contrast is so great between this poor heart and the Almighty, that you find the thought of His dwelling with you amazing. The contrast between His ways and our ways, His work and our work. His work is perfect, His ways are right and just, and our ways are crooked and foolish. Will this God dwell with me? Will He dwell with you? And when the question is put seriously to you by yourself, when conscience tells you what you are, what you have done, what you are doing, how contrary to this God you are in your nature, and in your ways, you may well say, will God in very deed dwell with me? Yet faith has a boldness, strange at times to the person in whom it is, it has a boldness that rises beyond

all sins, all unworthiness, unworthiness even to think of Him, unworthiness even to have His Name in your thoughts. This faith will rise and say "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" and will open the heart, as it were, and say, it is a poor heart Lord, it is not worthy of Thy presence, but kindly come. And He says "I in you". It is the very thing that a living soul wants, the favour it asks. Less than this will never satisfy. You will never have more in heaven as to the thing, His presence. You will have more enjoyment of it, sweeter, immeasurably sweeter enjoyment of it, without interruption, but the great thing, the great honour, can never, never be exceeded. The presence of God. You may have a great deal of religion without this; you may make a profession and never get this; but this is the thing, the blessing, honour and glory that a living soul seeks. What is it to have His presence? "I in you". I apprehend it is to have that blessing that the Apostle spoke of to the Colossians which I read, that God would make known this mystery and glory among the Gentiles, a mystery which He hid from ages and from generations, "which is Christ in you the hope of glory". In the Ephesians the Apostle Paul says: I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" Faith, when it has power to lay hold of a revealed Christ brings Him in: I found Him, I held Him, I would not let Him go. The apprehension that faith gets of the Lord Jesus brings the soul to that point: I found Him. O what a wonder: I found Him. One says, I found Him on the cross; I found Him a Redeemer. Another says, I found Him to be my righteousness. Again, one says, I found Him to be my sanctification. Again a man says, I found Him to be my wisdom, and a weak soul, I found Him to be my strength; and one, blind in feeling, comes to say, I found Him to be my light; and one again and again feeling death and a deathly state, says I found Him to be my life. That is what all must say sooner or later: I found Him.

The first remark on this that I would make is that which is in exact accordance with the text, and the leading thought of it is this, that Christ is in His people as a supply of life, even as the vine is a supply of living sap to the branch. Life, eternal life, is a very moving thing, different from the deadness we feel often. It animates the soul, it moves it and you will know when this is your experience that it is spiritual life, the presence of Christ, by the direction of

it, the motions of it, its aspirations, its appetites; they are according to its nature. As Christ is the life of the soul that life moves after Him and God in Him. This abiding of the life of Christ, of Christ as the eternal life of His people, will characterize them in their experiences, whenever they get a sense of it. He is the life. God has left this on record: "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (I John 5 v 11) When it moves, that is to say, when you have Him, then you know the Son of God. You can say "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (I John 5 v 20). Life is a preserving, purifying thing. This precious life of God in the soul will preserve you from all the heresies of your own nature and the wickednesses and the lusts of your own hearts. It will purify your thoughts from time to time. This makes sin hateful and hated. This brings a sinner into a likeness with God. This brings one to say: O I would be holy. He is holy who says he would be holy. He is godly who pants after God. This abiding of Christ, your life, in you will keep you; nothing else will. You will grow flat and dull and deathly; you will become dark and distant; you will indulge the flesh in some ways, if this life be suspended as to its present working and power in you. You will be unkind to Him who is your life. You will move in wrong directions without Christ being in you. There is nothing else will keep you pure in your affections, loving in your desires, upright in your walk. This is the blessing of all blessings. "I in you". "Abide in Me". I give this promise out to you that I will abide in you. Take notice of this in your cases dear friends. When you are dull, inert, flat, unspiritual, when you are grieving the Spirit, you may know who is absent. You may have some experience of that Scripture: "I will go and return to My own place till they acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they will seek Me early". It were well for us to be more observant of these things in our own cases. I know what it is myself, painfully, this absence of Christ. It does not mean He takes eternal life from a person to whom He has given it. "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish", but it does mean that the operation, the purity, the tenderness, the upward tendency, the trend of the spirit will be altogether, nearly absolutely, suspended. You will have enough grace to feel unhappy, I hope. O, I

begged for that many a time, myself, that I might have grace enough to be unhappy when the Lord is away and to mourn the sins that have driven Him away from my breast. But while He will never take away eternal life He takes away the enjoyment of life. He takes away the pleasures of life. The pleasures of spiritual life are within Himself. They are in that river of God which is full of pleasures and to lose this is to lose a great deal. It is to be a poor person indeed and it is to have some painful knowledge of that, that you were singing ' "Lord, my heart a desert vast", and of what we read this morning in Isaiah, the palaces shall be forsaken, joy shall be taken away from the city, the houses of joy shall be desolate. (reference to Isaiah 32 v 13/14). Dear friends, it is a solemn thing to sin away this best of Friends. He went to her once, He went to the fairest of women, His wife, the Lamb's wife. He went to her one dark night when His locks were filled with the dews of the night and were wet, and He knocked and said, open to Me, and she said, I cannot. I am in bed; I am comfortable and quite easy. I have had some experience; I do not see why I should be disturbed; I know I have had things in the past and therefore I am quite content. Do you know what that means? I wish I did not. He goes away, but not until He has left something behind Him. He puts His hand in by the hole of the door and He leaves myrrh behind Him. Now, says Paul, I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Perhaps you say to Him sometimes: "..... why shouldest Thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" (Jeremiah 14 v 8). It is great to have Him for a night, but O to find Him abiding in you, that is wonderful. I wish we might be careful of our treatment of this great Lord. I speak as having some experience of unkindly treating Him and of the effect of it. He is very gracious, but He is very jealous and while you may, thank Him - I have often done it, I hope - thank Him that He is jealous. You will feel very sorry that you ever gave Him occasion to manifest that jealousy. Set up an idol and you will provoke Him, not to destroy you, but to break the idol and deal with you. Then you will say, O my poor dead feelings, my dead prayers, my cold heart, my distant spirit, my dark mind, my wandering steps. You will mourn over such things and then say by faith: "When wilt Thou come unto me?" And will He come? Yes, my friends, yes. I won't preach, if the Lord will prevent me from doing it, I won't preach a hard God, but a tender Redeemer, more tender of us than we

are of Him. Will He come? Yes, He will. "I will go and return to My place till they acknowledge their offence; in their affliction they will seek Me early". And that is what you do. And she made a mistake; she thought she would find Him on her bed. "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not." Of course, she did not. Then she said, I arose. Yea, she got out of her bed and sought Him. This teaches us that the presence of Christ is an exceedingly precious thing and very, if I may use such a word, a very tender matter. Spiritual life is a delicate thing in its motions, more hardy than anything in creation in its root, indestructible, but its motions, O how tender.

"And I in you" in My power. We have many difficulties, we have many enemies, and we have great weakness. The Apostle Paul said that he was not sufficient of himself to think anything as of himself, but he had the great mercy of knowing that his sufficiency was of God. Now the strength of God is Christ. Christ is the power of God and all the power to pray, to believe, to supplicate, to love, to wait patiently, to submit to the will of God, must come from Him and in the chapter I read this evening, there was this, that the people, the Colossian Christians might be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man according to His glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness. Dear Christian people, you will never take a right step without this power; never believe rightly without this power, and never wait for answers without this power. And if Christ abides in us, He abides in us as the power of God, and then we rise, then we love Him, then we fear Him, then we dread sin, then we are afraid of falling. The power of Christ holds up the soul that He lifts up. He raises from the dust, He takes out of the dunghill the vilest and sets them with princes, even the princes of His people, and makes them inherit the throne of glory, and He keeps them there. Not always. Ours is to fall; It is His to lift us up. Sin drags us down, sin binds us with "twice ten thousand ties", Toplady says. Christ's is the power to lift us up, to deliver us, to hold us on in the ways of truth. The righteous is to hold on his way and he that hath clean hands is to be stronger and stronger by this indwelling of Christ who is the power of God. You can live well if you have this power, live on the Son of God, live according to the gospel precepts, live in the Church, live to the praise of God, live in your

business, live in your families consistently if you have this power in your soul. Yea, it will enable you to obey that word: Do all things, whether you eat or whether you drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. One says, I do not see how I can ever hope to reach that. Well, not seeing it will probably arise from the fact that you are looking at yourself, and if you do look there how can you hope or expect so to live. But if you can say

Weak in myself, in Him I'm strong

then you can hope for that which is naturally a hopeless thing. "I in you" I will supply all the power you need for a Christian's life. I will give you power to live a life of faith on the Son of God, to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. I will give you power to keep the Passover not fearing the wrath of the king, of any enemy, of any persecutor. I will give you power to do this. I will give you power to cast your care on Me and tell you, sweetly tell you, that I care for you. I will give you power to wait at My gates and watch there until I come to you and deliver you. O my brethren we have a good God, and He condescends to say I will dwell in you. May we know it, may we have experience of it. We need old things to be made over again to us and made new in us. "I create all things new". He makes them new again and in speaking of this I shall bring three matters before you.

First He dwells in His people as their Redeemer and deliverer from sin and law and curse. It is a great thing to have been delivered. It is in a sense a greater thing for Christ when you have lost, through some sin or sins, the sense of that, to come again and renew it. To have the days of your youth returned to you, to be allured into the wilderness and again to have your vineyards given to you and again to sing there even as you sang when you were brought up out of Egypt; to find again a way opened to you from Assyria like as it was in the day when you came up out of Egypt. This points to a renewal and we need Him to abide in us to renew us, to renew the spirit of our minds. Now it may be, I believe it is, that I am speaking to some who have not had the deliverance. You have not been brought out of Egypt yet or, if you have been brought out of Egypt, you are in the

wilderness and have not been brought into the land of promise. What you need is the first thing, the first manifestation of the Lord Jesus, and don't mistake the little hope that God may have given you for the thing itself. A little hope is a great thing. Those of us who used to feel it before we were delivered can say this, it is a great blessing; it kept me from despair. It keeps all from despair in whom it is, but the thing that will bring you from under the rod into the bond of the covenant is the forgiveness of your sins, the sweet sentence of justification in your conscience, so that you will come to understand the happy relation of a quickened conscience and a justifying God. When you get that you perhaps will think, as most think when they first get it, now you are going to heaven sweetly. O yes, it is a common failing with everyone more or less distinctly when they get this, now we are going to heaven sweetly. Heaven is before the soul; the way may be short to it. Ah it is a great thing to feel it and the Lord does not reprove His poor children for the error of judgment they make at that time. They think they are going softly, sweetly, comfortably to heaven. If anyone had said to me, when I was forgiven first, that I should sin Christ away from my heart and experience, I could not have believed them. I loved Him; I enjoyed Him; I was happy and I could not have believed I should be so ungrateful and so wicked as to sin Him away from my breast. I did though, I did. Now what we want is renewing, the renewal of that experience, the making of it new again by the Lord. He says of one: "I will restore comforts unto him". That is what is wanted, an application again, a new apprehension of His blood and righteousness, a coming in, so as that the sinner finds all the ungrateful things he has done and the wicked thoughts he has thought and the deadness he has indulged in and the carnality and the worldliness that filled his heart and mind, he finds these swept away, and perhaps some of you have heard Him say, when you have been confessing your sins and pressing them on His notice - so convinced were you of them and so sorry were you for them that you went on confessing and confessing and confessing, till at last He said - "Speak no more to Me of this". It is a wonderful word for a gracious, forgiving God to speak to an untender, ungrateful backslider. So He comes in His blood, He comes in His righteousness, He comes in the kisses of His mouth, He comes within the reach of faith and empowers faith to lay hold of Him again and to say: "I held Him and would not

let Him go"

"And I in you". Think of it; do you want Him? Some may be saying O if we could but get Him, if we could but get Him to come into our hearts. If you have got the spirit to ask Him He wont be offended with you, and if you ask Him He wont give you a stone for the blessing you ask. He will give you what you want. Praying men get what they pray for. They get what they ask. They go to a good God, a liberal God, a compassionate God, a sin forgiving God, a sinner justifying God. They go to Him in these particular characters and He gives them what they want. You may say, why are you so confident? Well, I will tell you. A woman went to Him, went to Him - mind how you go to Him - a woman went to Him and she said her daughter was grievously devilled - that is Rutherford's translation. My daughter is grievously vexed - Rutherford translates it "my daughter is grievously devilled" - and Jesus seemed to discourage her, but she answered Him, she argued with Him. She said "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table", and Joseph-like, He could hold out no longer. Try Him, my friends, praying people, try Him. Take the tithe of contrition, take the tithe of confession, bring these tithes into His house and prove Him therewith and see if He won't open the very windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that you won't be able to contain. O, if we could but seek His blessed, His promised presence. What shall I say? I want to honour Him; I wish I could. Honours rest on Him.

I will abide with you in My love; the love of Christ. Now this is one of the greatest expressions of it in the Bible. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich". That is the expression of the love of Christ.

His royal estate aside He laid  
Came down to earth, a Man was made  
To make poor men the sons of God  
And pay the debt His brethren owed

And this was done in love. Love provided wings for Him to fly from the throne to the virgin's womb and from there to the cross, that He might



put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. "Abide in you". This love, this precious, unbroken, unending love, the love of Christ to us will make everything sweet. That is the oil that will make everything go smoothly. That is an influence which you would take into your soul as taking in health and strength and vigour, that will make you wonder, that will make sin more bitter than anything else and this is free. The love of Christ is free and freely He communicates it, freely He gives it. "I in you" in love. O the embracements of the love of Christ, how wonderful they are. And this love makes us do one thing, even love Him. "We love Him because He first loved us". Now my brethren if you get Him like this you will say: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee", and you will want to live a life of faith and a life of love, a life of humility, a life of tenderness, a life of prayer, a life of dependence on Him. O you will want to be lively, and you will, for the moment, be very lively in your affections. "Abide in Me" and I, the Promiser, I the performer of every promise, will abide in you. He illustrates the necessity of this to fruitfulness by saying: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me", which says, in plain English, you will never be fruitful in the ways of God, never be useful in the church of God or to anybody, you will never glorify God, except you abide in Him and have His promised presence in you. Do you follow me in this word; do you follow me in this word? You cannot be fruitful except there is this union, this mutual abiding. Barrenness, barrenness, briars, thorns, desolation, death must be in us if this mutual abiding is lacking. A church must be a poor, barren church, if this union, double union, is lacking. An individual Christian must be a barren Christian if this union be lacking. If you believe this it will be a solemn thing for you. If you believe this it will make you really pray - Lord, make this union in my soul, make me feel it, make me to walk in it. May the Lord help us in this, speak to us in this word, forgive what has been amiss, and the glory shall be His.

AMEN.