

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 3 August 1930

"Howbeit when He the Spirit of truth is come
He will guide you into all truth, for He shall
not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that
shall He speak, and He will show you things to
come; He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive
of Mine and shall show it unto you"

John 16 v 13 and 14

The love of the Lord Jesus to poor sinners is exhibited in these verses; He will have sinners comforted; He gives them that which alone can comfort them. He has told them that He must leave them, that they are to miss His bodily presence, that they are no longer to be under His immediate tuition and protection, but He will not leave them orphans or comfortless; He will send them another Person equal with Himself in the Godhead. It is remarkable to observe in this 13 verse that He first spoke of the Spirit as a Person. "When He" that is a Person; "When He" the Holy Ghost, who, in this gracious work that He is to do, is the Spirit of truth. The personality of the Holy Ghost, His equality with the Father and the Son in the Godhead, is a Scripture doctrine, an essential doctrine; essential to salvation; as essential to salvation as is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this we are to hold fast. "Hold fast the form of sound words". Christ's bodily presence had limitations; His body could not be, cannot be, in two places at the same time, but He is God, and therefore He said - "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee." But as to His bodily presence He said - A little while and you shall see me no more in My present state. A little while and you shall see Me again in another state, though the same Person, in a glorified state. And that you may understand the nature of My kingdom, both within you and in the Church, of which kingdom you have at present but very dim ideas or knowledge, He shall come. I will send Him and My Father will send Him, and He shall come. Coming means He shall come to a

place; He shall come to a person. He is not merely an emanation; He is a Person; and as such He shall come to you, come to you as sinners, as disciples, as greatly needing teaching, needing a teacher. He shall come, and not to speak as a private person; not speak simply as a Person apart from others; but, as in the Trinity, one, and in the Covenant, a party. He shall take of the things which belong to Me and He shall speak of the things which He has heard. Things which belong to Christ are the things of His Person and His work. The things that the Spirit has heard are the things which were consulted in the eternal Godhead in the counsel of peace. Jesus said that He could not speak of Himself, that He could only speak the things which He had been taught, which He had heard. And so now in the same covenant the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father and by the Son, from both of whom He eternally proceeds, to speak those things which were spoken in the Godhead in the eminent eternal acts of the Godhead in the counsel of peace. And this is what we are to understand by the Lord saying, He shall not speak of Himself. He does not come as a private Person with His own things; He comes as a public Person, even as Christ came and will come and is always coming to His people. He comes in the covenant; comes with the tidings of the covenant; comes with good news from a far country; comes as a teacher; comes to teach certain things, divine lessons, and truths. All truth, all the truth; the truths concerning Christ; the truths concerning Christ's kingdom; the truths concerning redemption of sinners. These truths, eternal truths. These truths above the reach of man's mind, above the peering intellect of men. These truths shall be brought down into the hearts of sinners and therein and thereby, the Lord Jesus is glorified by the Spirit. Howbeit, when the things which are not convenient for you to hear today; when the many things I have to say unto you and will say later but cannot say now, for you cannot bear them, but they shall come to you by the Spirit's teaching and by His manifestations of My glory. This appears to be the intention of this gracious text, concerning three parties- the Lord Jesus, who is to be made known; the Spirit, who is to make Him known; and the disciples who are to know Him. And these three things I would, as I may be

helped, mention to you this morning. I say mention, for that is the utmost. Who can open, who can enter fully into these mysteries, these mercies. Mysteries and mercies which express the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of the Spirit. Mysteries which speak of Christ's Suretyship, of Christ's redeeming work, of Christ's full forgiveness, of Christ's eternal love, of Christ's justifying righteousness. We can but mention them. Berridge says - "Living tongues are dumb at best" I believe that.

We have, first of all, to notice this great truth - the doctrine of the Person of the Holy Ghost. His personality appears to be emphasised in the text - "When He". The Lord does not say - "When the Spirit of truth is come". Sabellians and all kinds of erroneous people might say - There is no person here. But here Jesus says "When He" - My Spirit, My Father's Spirit, My equal, My Father's equal. There is a Person called the Holy Ghost, the Person in the Godhead. God is One and He subsists in three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Ghost. May the Lord grant that we, as a people, may be well set down in this doctrine, for without the Trinity as revealed in Holy Scripture, there is no such thing as knowing God and being with Him. The universal God, as the Unitarians speak, the Scripture does not know. Jehovah is One, but the Scripture does tell us that this One God subsists in three Persons. Jesus claims eternal deity. "Before Abraham was I am", the name by which God was known to Isreal in earliest days. He says "I am before Abraham was, that is I AM THAT I AM. And He says the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and from Myself. I promise to send Him to you; not a breath, not an emanation, not an influence, not a light, but a Person, from whom emanates light, from whom comes life, from whom comes power, but first of all a Person. And of Him it is said - He shall be with you; He shall dwell in you. The world knoweth Him not but ye know Him for He shall dwell with you and shall be in you. Do mark, as you read your Bibles, believers in Jesus Christ and others also, all of you do mark this when you read your Bibles and come across statements concerning the Spirit that He is spoken of as a Person. The Holy Ghost moved in creation upon the

face of the waters. The Spirit of God strove with the wicked. My Spirit shall not always strive with these wicked people. The Spirit of God was given of old. "Thou gavest them Thy good Spirit", and He bore with them. And when He was with Israel and they vexed and rebelled and grieved Him, they vexed a Person, and this Person was turned to be their enemy. Ezekiel tells us how that the Spirit came to Him; the Spirit laid hold of him; the Spirit entered into him. And all the prophets, nearly every prophet speaks distinctly of the Holy Ghost as a Divine Person. May we be thankful for the Trinity. May we seek the knowledge of the Trinity as the Trinity may be made known. It is a good religion that has the Trinity in it. It is a good religion that has the Father, who sent His Son; that has the Son, who was sent, who freely, willingly came; that has the Holy Ghost, who also comes, being sent and comes willingly. The Father and the Spirit were concerned in sending Christ, as it is written by Christ Himself in Isaiah - And now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent Me. Not the Father and an emanation, but the Father and the Holy Ghost, sent Jesus Christ. I name these doctrines to you because of the vast importance of them. We speak of Christ as being all and in all in salvation. We speak of the Father as sending His Son, and thereby manifesting His love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And now dear friends there is a third Person to notice; neglected today; where not absolutely denied, yet passed by as if He were not. But religion that is good, religion that will take us to heaven, has in it the Holy Ghost. Immediately, He is the author of it. Knowledge of Jesus Christ that will take us to heaven we receive, if we receive it at all, from the Holy Ghost. The unction that softens the heart comes from the Spirit. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." The unction that teacheth all things is the Holy Ghost, sent by Jesus Christ, as the Apostle John says "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things". Jesus is the centre; the Spirit is the unction sent, the Person who is sent. So far, concerning His Person, the Person of the Holy Ghost.

And now in the second place, look at Him as He is spoken of in this characteristic way. the Spirit of truth. Truth here means the truth of God. Not the true religion as proclaimed among men, but the truth of God and the truth of God when spoken of in respect of sinners, means the doctrine of salvation

Salvation! 'tis a joyful sound
To malefactors doomed to die

Do you pray

Lord, may this bliss in me be found
May I redeeming grace enjoy

This is the Spirit of truth; the Spirit of God who is sent to teach, open up, reveal and apply the gospel, the various branches of it. The gospel of the incarnation; the gospel of the Suretyship; the gospel of the death of Christ; the gospel of the kingdom of Christ. "The kingdom of God is within you". All the truths of the gospel He has given to Him in the covenant; given to Him in the covenant to reveal and apply to sinners. So He is the Spirit of truth; His presence and His teaching and His revealing the gospel, makes the church of God the city of truth as it is written in Zechariah's prophecy - Zion is called a city of truth because she has in her the Spirit of truth. He lodges truth in the understanding; He puts it in the heart. By it He affects the spirit; He affects the conscience. So He is the Spirit of truth. No truth concerning God, concerning salvation can ever be savingly known but by the Holy Ghost. This does not shut out any sinner who has one breathing in his soul after God. The one poor sinner who would fain know God is embraced in the gospel, and the Spirit of truth is given to teach him the truth as the truth is in Jesus. Harshness, hardness, coldness, bitterness are foreign, absolutely foreign to the gospel. Sweetness, truth, attractiveness, love, mercy to sinners, the gospel exhibits. It is full of them; it is the embodiment of them. And it is said of this Spirit of truth that He will guide into all truth. He shall guide you, My sorrowing disciples, My

partially ignorant disciples, My disciples willing to be taught, unable to instruct yourselves. He, the Holy Spirit shall come and as it were place you in the school of Christ, set you down as sensibly needing instruction. And then, when He has done that, that is to say made you teachable, made you understand that you need a teacher, He shall teach you. O what a mercy it is to be teachable. If we are wise in our own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of us. May the Lord teach us our ignorance. He shall guide you into all truth. And that, not all at once, but little by little, gradually. This should be, as it is in itself calculated to be, an encouragement to people, the people of God who do not know much. If you, any of you, feel your ignorance of divine truth, and feel a desire in your hearts to know the truth, as the truth is in Jesus, go and kneel before this Divine Spirit and ask Him to be your teacher. A teacher does not give out any subject in the bulk; he opens the truth gradually. He opens it; begins, so to speak with the alphabet and then goes on and on, opening what Paul speaks to the Hebrews - "Let us go on unto perfection". The beginning is a great thing. When men are entered into the school of Christ and under the tuition of this divine teacher, the Holy Ghost, they are in a good way. They may feel they are in a bad way, but they really are in a good way when they feel their ignorance and say to the Spirit - Do condescend to teach us. A bad sign it is in an individual or in a church when men talk about knowing the truth as if they had grasped all of it, whereas it is but little the most knowing man has in his heart of the truth as the truth is taught by the divine Spirit. There are many subjects in this word "truth", many profound doctrines. Let us look at one or two of them.

They are taught by this divine Spirit that there is a God in heaven. Everybody knows that, one says. No! It may be universally acknowledged that there is a God. There are means of knowing that there is a God. God has given every man means of knowing His eternal power and Godhead in creation. And you who do not acknowledge this are not guiltless, for what may be known of God is knowable, is seen, can be read in the works of creation, even His eternal power and Godhead. O, but good as that

is, the Scripture goes a great deal further; it reveals God in His perfections; it reveals God in His pure nature - Of too pure eyes to behold iniquity; unable to look upon sin with approval. Scripture teaches this. And now sometimes He comes to sinners; He comes to sinners and lets them see in a way they can never describe that there is a God in heaven in whom they live and move and have their being. That is a grand lesson, an essential lesson, a penetrating lesson; penetrating the conscience, the affections, the will, the mind, the understanding. When men see there is a God, they tremble. They are led then by this good Spirit to see that they have sinned against this God; that sin is not confined to external actions, but it is in the thought, in the affections. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and thy neighbour as thyself." And that is a truth into which men are led by the Holy Spirit, and then they see that their action, their heart life, the action of their mind and of their thought is sinful. That is a solemn word in Samuel, "God is a God of knowledge and by Him actions are weighed". Weighed, not simply as man sees them, but in their motives. O it is a solemn truth that God is a God of knowledge. Shall He that formed the eye, not see? Shall not He hear who has formed the ear? So when the Spirit opens this as a divine truth, it penetrates; it searches; it brings to light a man's sins. His neighbours, his family, might say - If ever there was an upright person, this is the one. Husband, wife, child, neighbour, people may say - O what an uprightness is there. Now if God comes to that man, that person, and lets the light of divine truth into his conscience, into his thoughts, his motives, his desires, his designs, why, who is so black, who so guilty, who so polluted as that person in his own judgment? He is then a sinner and sin to him is exceeding sinful. Then this sinner needs redemption, and the Spirit opens that to him. By little and little he sees; it may be one day a singular beauty in the incarnation of the Son of God. O what a ground of hope to him this becomes. He sees God's only begotten Son, sent by His Father; His Father spared not His Son the shame, the pain, the ignominy and the curse of death, the humiliation of the Lord Jesus extending to His burial. But now

this incarnation; O what a truth; Jesus made known, God manifested in the flesh. This, I say, becomes in the sinner to whom it is shown by the Spirit a ground of hope; God, in his own nature. And the Spirit lets the sinner see in His own divine light why God became man; why Jesus was made of a woman, made under the law, even that He might be made sin, that He might be capable of bearing sin, capable of dying for sin. O when the eye is opened to see this you cannot express the beauty of it, the suitableness of it, the sweetness of it, the attraction of it, the glory of it. The Spirit leads into it. It is exalted far above notions; it is not head knowledge; it is heart feeling knowledge. Knowledge in the judgment, knowledge in the affections; knowledge that affects the will and the understanding, and brings the sinner to his knees - O if I were but interested in that Lord Jesus; if I had but an interest in His death. This truth affects the heart; it affects the heart; it deeply humbles the sinner; it draws out prayer; it begets love; it enables the sinner to pray and to wait at the throne of God's heavenly grace. If you have had this in any measure, you understand what I say. Yea, one day the Spirit may give you such a view of the infinite merit of the death of the Lord Jesus as to draw out your affections with an intensity that you cannot describe. You must have this Lord Jesus; you cannot live without Him. The thought of missing Him is a kind of death and a torture of your mind. His death fills eternity with happiness; His death fills the conscience with peace. And the sinner led into this, given a view of this merit then, is thereby greatly drawn and in Him is exemplified the word of the Lord Jesus - "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." It is impossible properly, fully, at all adequately, to speak of this great teaching of the eternal Spirit on this point. I would dwell on it because it is so beautiful. The beauty of it to my own soul at times has been very considerable and I want to encourage those who would fain be found in this atoning work of Christ for their salvation, and say to such - whenever you get a view of it, follow it up, that is to say, go in the light that shines to the throne of God's heavenly grace. And there is not a desire of your soul after this that He will disregard. "He will

regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer." O how the Lord does love groanings; what music they are to Him; how he hears the prayer of a prisoner, one who is shut up in some sin or some sins and cannot escape them, cannot break their power, cannot release himself; one who is bound by his conscience into condemnation; one who feels the distance that sin has placed between God and himself; and yet all the while he is saying "O if the Lord would bless my soul; if only I knew that He was mine. I say to such, press the case

Urge thy case through all unfitness
Sue it out,
Spurning doubt,
The Holy Ghost's thy witness

He that believeth thus far hath the witness in himself. The power he feels which he does not understand; the nature of which, he may be very ignorant. The power he feels in attraction, in praying, in placing His case before God, without any reservation, is a witness that there is something in what he has been taught that is divine. This is truth, divine truth, taught by the Holy Spirit. And here you get a little inkling of the nature of the kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God is within you". Not a set of notions, not mental pictures, but just a power, a real power, a glorious power. It is within the sinner; it becomes part of him; it is a new man; it is a life, a light, an unction and a sweetness. The kingdom of God comes not with observation; no outward show, but within, by the teaching of the Spirit. It spreads itself; it is a pervading and pervasive influence; it spreads itself over the soul. Conscience and mind and affections and will are under this teaching and the man under it is a Christian man, though he may say of himself, he is the chief of sinners.

"He will guide you into all truth". Now I will come to another point. He will guide you into the truth of your personal interest. That is a point in religion, a great point. It adds nothing to the atonement, but the atonement applied adds a great

deal to the sinner. It brings the peace of God, the love of God, the love of Christ, the grace of Christ, the robe of Christ. It brings this greatness of Christ into the sinner, and that is then made good in his experience. "Surely shall one say in the Lord have I righteousness and strength". Men come to Christ for this blessing; He has it to give. Remember the word concerning His ascension and what was connected with it. When He ascended on high "He led captivity captive and received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also", and for this great end "that the Lord God might dwell among them". He dwells among them to justify them, to sanctify them, to give them a sense of personal interest in what Christ is, what Christ did, and what Christ is doing. And the sinner, with some enlarged view, says, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength". I deserve hell; I have a hope of heaven. I am a wicked person and yet I hope God has made me holy. I am unrighteous, but I hope He is my righteousness. And faith lays hold of God's strength in these things - "Let him take hold of My strength and make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me." And the thorns and the briars of his sins and the nettles and every evil thing about him and within him, these God goes through. Let the sinner set them before God as an objection; says God - I will go through them; I will burn them up. These shall not be between God and the soul. They are often between God and some of us. He burns them up. This is a great truth and the Spirit of God guides into it in some measure. The flood of light could not be borne in the fulness of it, but rays sufficient to enlighten and enliven and comfort and bring the sweet peace of God, the Spirit of God gives. O how different from all natural acquisition in religion. What you can acquire you can lose. What you can acquire you may soon see was only a figment of your brain. What the Spirit gives abides. The sense may die, but the thing remains. What the Spirit imparts you feel; not like the moon, cold; but like the sun, warm, life-giving and life-nourishing and life-strengthening. And the guidance of the Spirit in this truth will guide your thoughts, your faith, and your hope and your love to heaven. And you will see some beauty, perhaps, if you meet with the expression in Bunyan's statement of himself. He said - he saw this and he said it - "My

righteousness is in heaven". And if your righteousness is in heaven, and that is the Lord Jesus, then you will want to get there and you will have a living hope of getting there one day. Righteousness in heaven, and this imputed and made near. Yea, says God "I bring near My righteousness, and my salvation it shall not tarry. I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory". And concerning this it comes down in the Spirit's teaching thus - "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it." You understand that; the rain that fell so copiously this morning was received by an opening earth. When righteousness is dropped down from heaven, when the skies pour it down, then the heart, the church of the living God, and every part of that church, like a garden of the Lord, the earth opens to receive it. "Let them bring forth salvation" which means the fruits of the Spirit; the fruit of righteousness which is peace. These, these are truths into which the Holy Ghost guides sinners. It may attract you, if you know your own unrighteousness, sinfulness, ignorance, distance from God, unlikeness to Him, and guilt. Then, when the Spirit preaches this doctrine of Christ into your heart, your heart will, like thirsty earth, open to receive it. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain; My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender grass." So is God's teaching; so is the Spirit's gracious guidance into all truth. If He has inducted any of us into any divine truth, we have had the fulfilment in that particular, and in that measure, of this Scripture - "He", the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, has guided into all truth; into this truth; and there is more to come. These little vessels of ours can receive and hold but little; but when they are enlarged in glory they will receive more.

He shall guide you into all truth concerning the great character of God. God's character becomes dear, precious, to all who are under the teaching of the eternal Spirit.

Now I leave these remarks to your meditation as God may help

you; if you have received them, praying that the eternal Spirit may be in us a divine teacher, whose teaching has one thing in it, namely, infallibility. It does not make us infallible, except in the points, the particular things, which He has instructed us in.