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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 5 September 1928

LUKE 11 v 13

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give
good gifts unto your children: how much more
shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit
to them that ask Him"

There is now here the natural, necessary, presence of Jehovah. "Can any hide in secret places from Me?" "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" He is necessarily present here, reading our hearts, taking notice of our heart life, of every thought, of all irreverence - if there be irreverence here - all unbelief of His Word. And very solemn it is, that we, poor, dying creatures, should be in so awful, so necessary, so judging, a presence as the natural, necessary presence of Jehovah. But there is a presence which is not necessary except God make it so in His loving purpose. There is a gracious presence of God with some people, a presence which Christ says He will never withdraw. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world". A presence in the fiery furnace when any of His people are cast into a fiery furnace. In the lion's den, when a Daniel is cast into that den. In darkness, when any walk in darkness and have no light, yet fear Him. A presence of God with a church, in a church met in a public service. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." And this presence, is the presence of Jehovah, but in an ordained way; not natural, not necessary to any sinner, but as God may say, I will visit that sinner; I will go to Him; I will be in Him the God of all grace. Now such a presence, may we feel. Doubtless there are godly people here who are interested in that promise. Then He is there. God, in Scripture teaching, subsists in Three Persons, "There are three" - says the Apostle John in his first epistle - "that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word" - that is the Son - "and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." And each person in the Trinity has His Own peculiar office and work. The Father, in the Covenant, is the heavenly Father of all whom He predestinated to the adoption of children unto Himself by Jesus

Christ, and He therefore is present with His people. The Son, in His incarnation, and His work as the Redeemer, the Saviour, the Brother born for adversity, the High Priest of their profession, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, ruling in the world, and making everything in His holy providence subservient to the interests, and good of His church; He is present, for He said - "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world". And the doctrine of the Father, as I have just named, is distinctly taught in holy Scripture. Search the Scripture. Do not neglect the Bible. And the doctrine of the Son is equally clearly taught in holy Scripture. The Scripture testifies of Christ. And the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the adorable, mysterious Trinity, is present with His people. And the doctrine of His Person and His work in the church is taught in holy Scripture. We, may I say we, who humbly hope we have been called by divine grace, were so called by the operation of this Divine Person, the Holy Ghost. His calling is a holy calling, a heavenly calling, making all the called ones "Holy brethren". This Person, the Holy Ghost, has a peculiar office in the church. It is His work to glorify Christ, but ordinarily there precedes a work done by Him which is called conviction of sin. "He shall convince of sin". Necessary this, in order that there shall be made in the heart of a sinner, room for the Lord Jesus. This Divine Person, the Holy Ghost, is spoken of from the beginning to the end of this blessed Book, the inspired Bible. He was in the prophets who searched what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. The prophets did not know fully what they prophesied; the doctrines they taught, the prophecies they made, the predictions that they wrote down by the inspiration of the Spirit, were not fully known to them. The Spirit of Christ was in them, and they sought to find out what that was, and what the sufferings of Christ were - for they testified of them - and what His offices were, for they spake of them. Why, Moses did. He said that the Lord God should raise up a Prophet for Israel like unto himself - Moses - and he said He should speak the words which God gave Him to speak, and solemnly, he adds this, by God, that if a man hear not that prophet, hear not the words I have put into that Prophet's mouth, I will require it of him. Very solemn for you who read the Bible and do not hear the words of God by that Prophet, Jesus Christ. The Divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost, in the text was given in the Covenant without

measure to the Lord Jesus, and His descent from the Lord Jesus to His people is assured in the Covenant. "As for Me, this is My Covenant with them, saith the LORD: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." This Holy Ghost had the important work assigned to Him of preparing the body of the Lord Jesus to be taken up into union with the Son of God. That Holy Spirit was given to the Lord Jesus without any measure, and so He went about doing good, God being with Him. We ought to be thankful if ever it has been shown to us the dependence of Jesus Christ on His Father, and on the Holy Spirit in Him. Through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. His Father heard Him in that He feared, and when He offered strong cries and tears, He heard Him. And this Holy Spirit raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and Christ, being in heaven, did, on the Day of Pentecost, begin to give out that Spirit of promise, and from that day to this, in varying degrees of light, and life, the Holy Spirit has been in the church, and will be to the end. Nor is His presence unknown. The world "seeth Him not" - said Christ, speaking of Him, and promising Him - "neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you". And the Apostle John says - "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4 v 13) And the sign of a reprobate is that he is "sensual, not having the Spirit". And this Holy Spirit is grievable. Men in whom He dwells grieve Him, rebel against Him. A very grievous sin. What child of God here could lift up His face to God and say he had not grieved the Holy Ghost. It has grieved me sometimes that I could never address the Lord in the way that it would be well for me; that I could never say I had not grieved His good Spirit. Mercifully there is a word in Scripture that takes that in. "Many a time forgave He their iniquity, and did not stir up all His wrath", and - All manner of sin and blasphemy is to be forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin".

Now this doctrine of the Spirit is a matter of infinite mercy, and of unspeakable good, and encouragement to the church of the living God. Here, in the text, are two relationships, the relationship of an earthly father whose loving heart would always

prevent him from mocking his son who should go to him for bread, and for a fish, and for an egg. His father would never mock him by giving him a stone, and a scorpion, instead of that for which he asked. In this relationship, with its consequent tenderness, the Lord Jesus asks this question, a demonstration of the truth of the matter - "How much more" - if you earthly parents would never dream of mocking your children when they asked favours of you, especially the necessities of life - how infinitely more, more tender, regardful, watchful, merciful, capable; "how much more" shall this loving, heavenly Father, who has adopted you as His children to Himself by Jesus Christ, give a gift; "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him". We have then, a great foundation for prayer, a great encouragement to pray, and an implied promise. O, surely one can say, implicit in this word is a promise that the Holy Ghost, when asked for, shall be given. "How much more". "How much more" naturally, lovingly, will the heavenly Father, your heavenly Father, give that good, that essential gift to you; a gift, without which, you cannot get on; without which, you cannot fear God. A gift most necessary. And He will give it, and He will give it to you in response to asking. The Covenant of Grace is ordered in all things and sure, and one of its orderings is prayer. "For these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do them for them." If the Lord has this infinitely kind gift for us, then He will put into our hearts a desire for it, and a prayer. The Psalmist prayed - having the Spirit - that He may not be taken from him. He had deserved that it should be God's heavy judgement on him, but, said he - "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

Now I would like, as enabled, to speak a little to you about the work of this good Spirit in a sinner. It is a great work that He is sent to do in a sinner, a necessary work. Without that work we shall never get to heaven. It is as necessary for salvation as the death of Christ is; as the blood of Christ is; as the Priesthood and intercession of Christ is. It is absolutely necessary. Very significant therefore was Paul's question to twelve men he met who had been baptised - "Received ye the Holy Ghost?" Men today would tell us it was a very impertinent question, but it was not. "Received ye the Holy Ghost?" Let me begin at the beginning; let me begin with regeneration. The kindness and love of God appeared to men in this,

the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Nobody is a child of God manifestly until that great work takes place in him. "Ye must be born again". The beginning of religion, vital religion, is regeneration. It is promised in holy Scripture. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh". (Ezekiel 36 v 26) "And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD." (Jeremiah 24 v 7) They shall fear before Me for ever. I will sprinkle you with clean water. I will pour My Spirit out upon all flesh. These are promises of the Spirit, and of this great work, this first necessary work in a sinner, the new birth. In some here, mercifully that has taken place. You may not be aware of it now, or you may not be able to go to the place where God met with you, to the time when He stopped you, but if you can say, I began to be in want; I halted, and was stopped in my way of sin; I saw there was a heaven for people to go to by grace, and I saw there was a hell for people to be cast into for everlasting punishment of their sins; and I saw there was a holy God with whom no sinner can dwell; then there was a good work, and has it not continued? In the midst of all that you fear, and feel, and the sin that works in you, often mightily, is not that work continued to this day? Can you do without God? Is He less necessary to you? Is the Throne of Grace less necessary? Is the Scripture less attractive? Is Jesus less beautiful, less desirable, less desired? The work of regeneration is a divine work, an omnipotent work, and it comes from the love of God, although by the operation of the Spirit it begins with conviction of sin. More or less distinctly, conviction of sin, which means a law work. "By the law is the knowledge of sin". Do not make necessary, terror; it is often felt, but it is not necessary. It is not a necessary accompaniment. It does generally accompany conviction, but there can be conviction without any terror. There is a dread of God, a fear of God, a trembling at His Word, but that is dreadful. Remorse can shake a man to pieces; remorse may spoil everything in the world to a man and he may be weeping - Esau did - O, if I had never done this, never done that. Not because this, or that, were sins, but because punishment must follow. Now repentance is of another kind, and that is by the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Holy Spirit. When the work of conviction is commenced, perfected under the law in a sense, then His blessed work is to bring some good news from a far country; news

that you shall listen to; news that shall meet your case, that shall say, O despairing sinner, there is a Stronghold; turn to it. O, guilty creature, there is a fountain of blood. O, naked, ragged, polluted thing, look to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. This is the work of the Spirit, and it is according to Christ's promise. He said, promising the Spirit, "He shall glorify Me for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you". Receive of My things, what I have done, the righteousness I have wrought out, the fountain of merit that I have by My life and death. My Priestly office and work, My sacrifice of Myself. He shall take those things and show them to you. And this is not always indistinct, not always distant. Sometimes it answers to what the Galatians got on one occasion. "O, foolish Galatians" says the Apostle Paul, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" What a sight they got of Christ, what a manifestation of the Lord Jesus did those Galatian Christians receive, as if Christ had really been crucified in one of their streets; so they saw Him. Sometimes that is what the Holy Spirit does. He takes of the Lord Jesus and His Person, His blessed work, and shows them to a sinner with a distinctness that is beautiful, an efficacy that removes the bondage of their souls, that brings them, not only to hope in God's mercy, but to feel that His mercy has come to their hearts, and they have, within themselves, the remedy for sin. This is the Spirit's work. He comes to hungry people. The promise of Christ is that the Spirit shall reveal Him. Now Christ is said to be the Bread of Life. "I am that Bread of Life". Now how are we to receive this, but by the Holy Ghost. Jesus sends His good Spirit and He brings somewhat of that divine mercy, that plan of salvation, that glorious Redeemer, and so reveals them that the sinner receives them just as a person eats his bread, and, what bread eaten, is to the body, so Jesus revealed, is to faith. The sinner receives it, and thus, into a broken heart, is received a broken Saviour. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". And to eat His flesh, is to receive Him by faith, and to receive Him by faith, you must have Him revealed to you. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" writes the Apostle in the Romans (10 v 6) "The word is nigh thee, even in thy

mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith..." the word of the gospel, the gospel being the glorious declaration, and manifestation of the Lord Jesus.

And further, the Spirit's work is to illuminate this Book. It was written by His inspiration. O, the blessedness of verbal inspiration; the certainty of verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scripture. Every word is true, every word is pure. Now the Holy Spirit knows His Own meaning in this Book. A theologian says, It means such, and such, and such and such things. The instructed sinner says, I do not know. The Spirit comes and brings a Scripture to him, and opens it in its divine meaning, and applies it as a plaster to a sore boil, and the man, the sinner, says, I know what that passage means. That is God's word; I heard it, I felt it, I feel it, and know it. It removed my fears, it quelled my doubts, it subdued my sins, it purified my heart, it made me a believer in the Lord Jesus. It caused me to know Him, to cleave to Him, to follow Him; to me there is none like Him. And the word is, to a sinner, when thus brought home, just what David said of Goliath's sword - "There is none like that: give it me". And this is the Spirit's work. His work is to sanctify the sinner unto God. It is called the sanctification of the Spirit; when He comes and lays a gracious hold of your heart, and carries it to Christ; of your affections, and fixes them on Christ; of your understanding, and illuminates it by His Own heavenly teaching. He sanctifies the soul thus, unto God. He sanctifies afflictions, afflictions which, for the present, are not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. When your will submits, when you say - "It is the Lord" - when you are enabled to prefer God's will before your own, when honestly you can say - "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done" - when the narrow path of life is preferred before the broad way to destruction, and when you see Jesus crucified, and you say, Well, what is this trouble? Is it for my good?; you can submit to it. He gives you power to cast your burden on the Lord, to cast your care on Him, believing that He cares for you.

It is His blessed work to confirm sinners, to confirm them in their faith, to confirm the testimony of Christ in them, and make them

acquainted with the faithfulness of God in the testimony of Christ. It is His work to carry them toward heaven. They take good steps when they move in the power of the Holy Spirit. And many other works this Holy Spirit does. He strengthens faith, He makes prayer the delight of the soul, He enables a sinner to walk in that Scripture - "Delight thyself also in the Lord". He enables His people to commit all their matters to God, believing in the rule, and reign, and authority, and management of the Lord Jesus. My friends, the Holy Spirit is an amazing, a glorious Person in the church, the gift of Christ to the church. The care of the church is His. The illumination of the church is His work, and their confirmation is His work, and their growth in grace is by His teaching. Everything that is good in a person is by this blessed Spirit.

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Now a few words upon the sweet way that the Lord Jesus puts this matter in the text. He says - "How much more" than an earthly parent, "shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." There is a relationship then between God and men, some men, called by grace, adopted into the heavenly family of God. Men who were, like all others, children of wrath, are now children of the Most High God; these are His family; the family that the Apostle Paul writes of in the Ephesians, the family named after God, and for that family he bowed his knee. This blessed relationship begins in regeneration. Unknown, unenjoyed, yet it begins there. When the Holy Spirit breathes the life of the Lord Jesus into a sinner, then that sinner is, at once, a child of God, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, but he does not know it. A convinced sinner knows his sins, and that knowledge increases as long as he lives. A convinced sinner knows that he has broken the law, that he has offended God, that there is no hope for him in himself, but now the Spirit comes and gives another view of God. It is very wonderful that the same eye of faith that looks on an angry God in a broken law, looks on God, the God of love in the Lord Jesus. And then, after a time, in some very early, in others later in life, the Holy Spirit comes as the Spirit of Adoption. The coming of Christ is announced in the Galatians - "Made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" that they might receive the Spirit of Adoption crying in their hearts, "Abba, Father". Some of us have not yet received that blessing. Some of you may be sighing at times, and feeling, O, we

cannot be the children of God, we are such sinners; we get bigger, and bigger sinners. We cannot think we are the children of God. Well, what you want, what you need, is, not to get less sinners, not to be smaller in that way, nor for sin to get less powerful, or less active in you; what you need is this, the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Adoption, to bear His immediate witness with your spirit that you are the children of God, and when He comes like that, it wont be by an effort of your own mind; it will just be His mighty moving, His holy operation, His gracious witness, that you are a child of God. And then, in faith, and perhaps you will say almost involuntarily, you cry, "Abba, Father". My Father, My Father; called now by Christ, your heavenly Father. O, when this blessing comes, what sweet tears are shed, what wonder fills the mind, what peace reigns in the conscience, what warm affections move the spirit, what cleaving to, what loving, and praising of Christ, the sinner realises. How near he is to God; how near God is to him. Now, as a child he goes to his Father. I do not believe that any human tongue can adequately utter the sweet sensations, the love, the wonder, the contrition, the happiness, the boldness, the humility, the tenderness, the approaches - holy, believing, bold approaches - that the sinner makes under the powerful Spirit of Adoption while he is crying, "Abba Father". Nor will the sinner who has received this blessing ever quite forget it. He may question it later, but there it is. He will say, There was a day when I was in distress, when I knew I deserved hell, as I now know, but there came an amazing thing to me. I suddenly felt a change; I found in my heart what I did not put there, but was most welcome. I found a power, a life, a beauty, a glory. God was near to me, in me, and I called Him, Father. Some of you may say, O, if we could but get that. God can give it you. He can give it you. He is full of love, full of grace, and mercy.

Now one word more. This asking. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" which means they feel their need of Him. Do you? Yes, they feel their need of Him. They cannot pray without His inspiration. They cannot believe without some testimony. They cannot hang about Christ without His power. They cannot know who Christ is without His teaching. They cannot be sealed unto the day of redemption without the Spirit's sealing them. Cannot answer to that Scripture in the

Song - "A garden inclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." You may say, My heart is just at everybody's beck and call, at everybody's service. Sin makes me serve it, and many, and many a thing I find coming to gather my heart, and carry it away in a variety of directions, from the Lord. When you get this blessed Holy Spirit in His operations in you, then you will understand a little of that. A garden inclosed, a fountain sealed. Not common ground, not for everybody to trample under foot. A fountain sealed; not for everybody's use; sealed and kept for the King's use to water His garden, and this is by the Holy Spirit. "How much more". O, broken-hearted sinner, empty sinner, needy, weak sinner, ignorant, confused sinner, is the Spirit necessary to you? That is to say, do you feel your need of Him? Then look at this encouraging word. Here is a heavenly Father - yours, if you do not yet believe it - and He says, I will give the Holy Spirit. This is a great instruction, and a great encouragement to go to the throne of God's heavenly grace, honestly confess what you feel, what you deserve, how you are, the state you are in, and ask for that one remedy, the Holy Spirit, and He will bring all the rest. If you receive Him, He will bring all the rest to you. May the Lord help us to believe this word, and take courage, and wait upon Him, asking for this most necessary, blessed gift.

AMEN.