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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 15 March 1922

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"

The Scripture doctrine of the Godhead of the Holy Ghost shines with equal clearness as with the doctrine of the Godhead of the Father and the Godhead of the Son. One God; three co-equal. co-eternal persons, only one God. This God only hath immortality, and He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto. No man hath seen Him nor can see Him, but it is clearly revealed in the Scripture that there is One God and that this One God does mysteriously subsist in three Persons whose proper, divine, and glorious Names are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and they are known in salvation's plan in their different offices. The Father's office in the Covenant of Grace was to set up His dearly beloved, His eternal, and only begotten Son, to be the Head of all principality and power; to make Him the Head of the Church in particular. To choose for Him, to give to Him a bride, the Lamb's wife, she is called. Here is electing love. Personal election and predestination of sinners for whom a Saviour was found, but in the first place a bride chosen before all creation and without respect to anything that should come to men after they were created; purely, freely, eternally chosen to be the Lamb's wife. And the Father had, in this great work, the pleasure of giving to His Son all fullness; grace to save the church; life to quicken and animate her. The work and office of the Son in the Covenant we have set before us in the Scripture in His freely undertaking to become Man in the fullness of time; to be in the Covenant the Head and Surety of His people, to have imputed to Him all their sins, to redeem them from hell and death by removing their sins by the sacrifice of Himself. And the work of the Spirit is in the Covenant and in the church to make known these two divine Persons in their wondrous works and offices; works of salvation, offices in which they stand intimately related to the church. The Holy Spirit therefore is as important in the matter

of salvation, even as in the work of creation, as the Father and the Son, and may the Lord ground us well in this, that we could as easily reach heaven, be holy and fit for the presence and society of God without Christ and without the Father, as we could without the Holy Ghost. Where alas He is not denied today perhaps in word, He is denied by the most dreadful silence concerning His Person and operations. May not the guilt of silence about the Holy Ghost belong to me. May not the guilt of denying Him by silence belong to you. May we hold fast the doctrine of the personality, eternal deity, and glory of the Holy Ghost, who is equal with the Father and the Son. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." In the text the Lord Jesus applies what He has been saying by way of teaching and, as it were, brings it to a most encouraging point for all seekers. He illustrates the benefit of importunity in prayer by the coming of a man in his journey to a friend. This friend had nothing to entertain him with. He, at that moment, had no bread in his house. In his necessity he is driven to a friend. It is late at night, but necessity knows no sort of rule. He goes at night and says, a friend in his journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; lend me three loaves. He, from within, does not want to be troubled, and asks not to be troubled. He says, trouble me not, the door is now shut, my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee. But this needy man cannot take a denial like that, so he presses his case, urges his position and entreats for an answer, a favourable answer, and the man who is thus sought unto rises, not because of friendship, but for the importunity that is brought to bear upon him, and gives, or lends, as many as he needed. And again Christ sets the Lord's goodness before us in what follows. If you, who are a father, should be asked by your son for bread, will you give him a stone? If he should ask a fish, will you, for a fish, give him a serpent? If he shall ask an egg, will you offer him a scorpion that looks like an egg? that is said to be in shape like an egg, hardly distinguishable from an egg. Will an earthly father mock a begging child? Says Jesus Christ in applying this, "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?"

As enabled to speak a little this evening on this very, very

important doctrine of the Holy Ghost and His work, I shall first of all speak of the necessity that there is in every elect person for the Holy Ghost. By nature we are dead in trespasses and sins, have no life in us, no knowledge of our death, no conviction of our sins, no realisation of our position, no proper conception of the Almighty God in whom we live and move and have our being. We know not our sickness. If we were addressed, as Christ addressed the Jews of old, our answer after the flesh would be precisely the one they gave. "Are we blind also?" Are we in bondage? This is the woeful condition of every son and daughter of Adam, the election of grace not excepted. How then can one dead in sins, loving sin, having a carnal mind at enmity against God, not able indeed to be subject to the law of God; how can such a one ever come to know either himself as a sinner or God, against whom he has sinned. "The dead know not anything." They have no power, no life, no conception of spiritual things. God did not make us so. I would again and again insist on that, and teach it. God did not make us so. We are to blame for our helplessness, Our helplessness is part of our sin. We are responsible for our inability, answerable for our death, as much as for any open sin or any sin that we commit. We are born in sin, shapen in iniquity. Dear friends, what a solemn condition this is. What a fearful condition it is. O may I say to any of you who may not be awakened and quickened by the Spirit, your condition is beyond all expression, grievous, and if you should turn round and say but I cannot help it; here I am and you tell me I am helpless; I say to you in reply, your helplessness is part of your sin. The Lord look on you and speak a word of life to you. This is the necessity that lies in us for the quickening Spirit. We are dead in trespasses and sins and all the external trappings and paraphernalia of religion and of the fleshly religion that a man is capable of possessing and living in, all the fair show in the flesh he may make, all the intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures he may attain to, all the natural persuasion that there may be in him that there is a God, a contriving mind and a working hand, and a governing will, and men may believe all that. Still spiritually with respect to the need of God, to the claims of God on us in the law, to the infinite goodness of God that makes the punishment of sin necessary; to Jesus Christ the friend of sinners; a man, and all men together, are just dead creatures. If then anyone is to rise into life, to have any true perception of God, any real conviction of sin, derived from that true

conception of God, any faith, any prayer, any love, any hope, any sense of pardon, all, all must be given to him, be wrought in him by the special operations of the eternal Spirit, the Holy Ghost. Are we persuaded of this truth? Do we believe that as to all spiritual things by nature we are as dead as these pews we are sitting on, but that that deadness is our guilt, and that if we are to rise from that deadness, the Holy Ghost must give the life. Here Christ is speaking to His disciples. They were blessed men then, though ignorant of much, for they were His. He had called them. He is in this chapter teaching them most important lessons, and this, the most important of them all, that they needed the Holy Spirit. But so unworthy are we, may we ever hope to have Him? So infinitely distant from God, may we ever think God will give Him to us? So unworthy to pray, may we ever hope that the Lord will listen to us? Here the Lord brings in an intimate relationship which, though some of you realise not, really subsists between you and God, inasmuch as you have His divine life in you. It is the relationship of a father and a child. What will not an earthly father do for his offspring? What will he withhold from his children that shall, in his judgement, be for their good? And when it is brought down to the necessaries of life, namely food, what will not a father give to his child? The Lord Jesus appeals to this in us, appeals to a parental feeling of love, compassion for a hungry, needy, asking child. If one, possessed of an evil nature, as all men are, who yet, is a father, is appealed to by his hungry child, will he, when the child asks a piece of bread, give him a stone? If the child asks for a fish, will the father mock him by giving him a serpent? And if he should crave an egg, will the father injure and expose him to death, by giving him a scorpion? So the Lord appeals to our nature. And if a father will do so much for a child, "how much more". There are several passages in the Scripture of this kind. "Much more". "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." Here "how much more", infinitely more, beyond all our conceptions more, "more than we can ask or think"; more than we have the capacity to receive. More than we have faith to believe God can give to us. What kindness there is in God. What love there is in God. Come then, children of the Most High, look at this, may it attract you, may it get your eyes and hold them, your hearts and retain them: "If ye, being evil, know"; naturally, as water flows from a living spring, so your kind deeds to your children do spring from natural love, and if

that be so with you, so that you will never mock a child, how much more will your Heavenly Father give you the Holy Spirit when you ask Him. That divine Spirit. Dear friends, there is such a mercy as the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Christ said of Him, that the world knew Him not, saw Him not, as who can see Him and know Him till he is born again? But said He, Christ, to His disciples: "Ye know Him, for He shall dwell with you and be in you." And this sets before us the wondrous mercy of having the Spirit and the wondrous operations of the Spirit, of which all saints are the subject, the happy subject. How shall we know if we have the Holy Ghost? First of all, we shall have faith, and he who has faith sooner or later knows it. Faith is that mysterious grace that is begotten by the eternal Spirit in a sinner's heart, whereby he does become conscious of believing that there is a God, and the being, in the sight of that God, a sinner. One day I knew nothing about God, did not want to know Him. The Word of God came, as it is written: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." It came into my heart: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". Instantly I believed there was a God and, believing that, I also believed that I was a sinner, and therefore said, where that God is I shall never be. If you receive a divine word from the Holy Ghost into your heart, it will bring a real conviction into your conscience that there is a God, and that light that brings that conviction will also convey to you a conviction that you are impure, and not fit for the presence of God. You may have been the most moral person that ever breathed and walked on the earth, but you will know your impurity when you know there is a God. And this is a point I believe in experimental religion that is most important for us to notice that it is from knowing in some manner and degree that there is a God, that we come to know that we are sinners, real sinners. Now this comes by the Spirit; it is one of His operations. He creates faith and this faith is a persuasion, an adequate evidence, of God and His things. I say an adequate evidence, and that adequate evidence is brought by the Spirit; nobody else could give it. Nobody else could give it. A historical faith wont persuade you that there is a God spiritually. Notions that God is holy wont bring true conviction into your heart. You must have this blessed truth made known to you by the Spirit. Spiritually you must believe there is a God. Now although this may sound as belonging to the very first work, and some may think it is confined to it, I may say this, it is not

confined to it. "Faith is by knowledge fed", and every discovery of God will be an increase of faith. Whatever it be in God that is discovered, your faith will lay hold of. If He speak in the law to you, O you will believe the law condemns you. If the Spirit should reveal Jesus, then you will believe in that divine Saviour the Scripture speaks so abundantly, so beautifully, so strongly of. Whatever truth, divine truth, the Holy Spirit is pleased to reveal in a sinner's heart, will nourish the faith that is already there. And this will put your religion on a higher plain than anything in nature could. This will make your religion spiritual. This will train you up in the true knowledge of the Almighty. This will bring you out from notions. This will save you from persuading yourself into things. This will persuade you, which is a very different thing. O what a mercy it is to have the Holy Spirit. Now do you want Him? People ask for the Holy Spirit for more reasons than one. One reason is that they believe they can have no faith without Him; that therefore they are not safe in anything without Him; that they are exposed to the deceptions of the devil, to the workings of their own hearts, to the evil of their own minds, to the blindness of their own understandings, to the temptations and the wiles and the snares of the devil, without the Holy Ghost. Do you feel such danger? Do you fear such evils? Do you believe that there is no religion in the world worthy the trouble of holding except this that the Spirit gives? Cry then you will to heaven, that the Lord would give you His Holy Spirit, to teach you and give you that religion which will stand the fire that is to try every man's work of what sort it is; that faith that will stand while devils roar; that love that will not be offended in Christ; that hope that will not be washed away by any sea, reigning over you, of trouble. You will cry for the Spirit to dwell in you and give you faith. Faith, dear friends, is a mighty grace. It seems little, and is little, in some of us, but it is a mighty grace, and well deserves the names that the Holy Ghost has given to it as "the faith of God's elect"; "the faith of the operation of God". Also it is written concerning it that Jesus is the author and finisher of it because all of it comes from Him by the Spirit. And if He be the author of your faith, see what a blessed faith you have. How the fear of God may attend it; how hope will hang about Him; how love will seek to embrace Him; how hungry will the soul be for Him; how sick of love sometimes will the soul be for Him.

And another wonderful and most precious, profitable operation of the Spirit is prayer. You can pray with Him working in you, pray acceptably, and pray so as to prevail and receive answers. Returns to prayer are among the most solid persuasions you can have that God has heard your prayer. Returns to prayer are wonderful. But how does this Holy Spirit conduct the work of prayer in a sinner? We are told by the Apostle Paul in the Romans that He makes intercession for the saints with groanings which cannot be uttered. And this takes real prayer outside the form, though the form be proper and much to be observed. But there may be, and doubtless is, much prayer without the form. Also it removes prayer, as to its nature and prevalence, away from words. Words must be, specially in public worship, but they are, after all, but the clothing of a body. They are the dress. The living child of prayer breathes and pants and hungers for God, without any words at all. And I have more than once called your attention to the mysterious and blessed truth, that when a sinner - however much he may be mourning his ignorance and helplessness and emptiness - prays under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, he really prays - without knowing it often - he really prays according to the will of God, and then, and therefore, he must get answers. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" and you may little have known at the time when you were praying with a fervour, an energy, a persistence - I use the word advisedly - surprising to yourself, but of which you were really conscious, you may little have known then that you were moved and led so to pray by the eternal Spirit. And then, when the answer came, you said, I now know the Lord taught me to pray that prayer. I did not know it was in exact accordance with the divine will when I prayed. I little thought that the Lord had eternally designed to give me that good thing that I was led so to ask for; so to ask as I could not keep silent, but was obliged to pray, sinner though I was and am; sinner though I felt and feared often that sin would block everything and shut me out of heaven, yet now I know that the Holy Spirit did teach me to pray. Is not this an encouragement to us to go on asking for the Holy Spirit? Is not this a good and sweet encouragement for us so to go on asking, for we cannot pray without Him. We cannot urge our speech without Him. We cannot move even, so to speak, without Him, but with Him operating we do. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name" says the dear Saviour, "I will do it". Who teaches to ask in His Name? This is what Jude speaks of

when he speaks of "praying in the Holy Ghost".

Now again this divine Spirit is given to move the saints after God and to bring to them that which they are led to seek. For instance, who is it that gives those heart-warming apprehensions of Christ that sometimes we feel? Who is it that gives us, perhaps only for a moment, a most transitory view of the Lord Jesus? a view so transient that you say, it hardly had come before it was gone, and yet it has left something behind. Who is it that does all this? The answer is, according to Scripture, the Holy Ghost. "He", says a gracious Saviour, "He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you", the unworthiest, the guiltiest, the weakest, the poorest. Indeed the weakest soul can best use the weapon of all prayer. And what a condescension of God to give Him. Seeing a sinner and hearing him pray, O God give me Thy good Spirit, He sends that divine Person down through and from Jesus Christ. He sheds Him, that He may be in the sinner a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Ah people may make great mistakes, and do here. The intellectual man, if he reads the Bible, may see much beauty there, but a poor creature, illiterate, incapable of any consecutive thinking, gets, one day, a sight of Christ that reminds him perhaps of Yeddie's first prayer and last; of a communion when he saw yon Man. A sinner gets a view of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ that warms his heart, draws his affections, persuades him that if that Saviour will but come to him and bless him and forgive him and justify him and sanctify him, all will be well with him. And he is so persuaded of that, that he presses his case. Every sight of Christ draws the sinner, who gets it, after Christ. He says nothing, nobody, will ever satisfy my soul, but the Lord whom I have seen. And he then can enter into that warmth of heart that those two disciples felt as Christ was with them, yet holding their eyes from beholding Him. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" This accounts for that burning desire after Him, that longing and yearning and groaning and sighing for Christ, that none can understand but the subjects thereof - this accounts for all - God the Holy Spirit. Do you ask Him? Is He the One you would fain have in your heart for a Teacher, a Guide? as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. And again, if you feel your lack, and say, now that religion I do not know; say I have a hope sometimes, I get a soft heart sometimes; sometimes the minister picks me up; sometimes a chapter or a Psalm helps me;

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sometimes a hymn does me good, but this religion that I read in Ephesians, I do not know; well then the enemy may say, you had better give up altogether. There is a point that he will push as long as he can, but here is a point for you who may feel as I have just spoken: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more" will He, from whom your new heavenly birth came - though you may not believe you are born again - "how much more" will He - who has given an appetite and a thirst for divine things, for Jesus Christ - give you the Holy Spirit, to be in you as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. What can clear our cases, my friends? Who can persuade us that Christ died for us? Who can show us the glory of Christ on the cross and persuade our backward hearts that that glory is for us? that death was for us? Who can bring Christ to us and into us, so as to form Him in our hearts, the hope of glory, but this divine Teacher, this Spirit of wisdom and revelation. All restoration comes by Him. All starts in grace come by Him. All accession of knowledge and sweet experience comes by Him. All firmness comes by Him. All heart burnings of love and desire and sickness of love come by the blessed Holy Spirit. And dear friends, we believe the inspiration of the Scriptures, do we not? May we never doubt that inspiration, never yield it, nor give it up. But then, one says, I believe that but I do not feel them; I do not feel the Scriptures as I want to feel them. I read the promises, but I want the promises to talk to me. I see the Covenant, but I want to know that I am inside the Covenant. I see God is good, but I want to feel Him good to me. Then it would be well indeed. And who can meet your wants? Who can answer your desires? Who can satisfy your souls? The Holy Spirit, that divine Person, who inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures, He is able to take of the Scriptures and put them into our hearts. The divine direction to the prophet was - concerning king Hezekiah and his sore boil - Take a plaster of figs and let that plaster of figs be laid on the boil. Have you got a running sore? Does that sore run in the night and cease not? Have you got a soul trouble, a soul disease and sickness, an outbreak of sin somewhere, no human eye seeing it? Have you got a case? Now there is a Scripture somewhere - any Scripture will do that the Spirit takes - there is a Scripture that will cover that. The Saviour will cover it, His blood will cover it, His righteousness will cover it, and heal the sickness, cleanse the boil and make you whole. And it is the Spirit's

part to take that word and seal it there, lay it on your heart, on your sore place, your sore feelings. What a Spirit He is; how kind He is. How kindly disposed He is to sinners. And what a heavenly Father these poor sinners have, who cannot do without the Spirit, and who, when they ask for the Spirit, will give Him in yet larger measure than has been given before. He takes the Scripture. True religion is like this Book; it is not something beside this Book; it is not something outside it and independent of it. It is exactly like it. If you have a religion that is not sanctioned, approved, and owned - if I may use such terms - by the Scripture then you would be better without it. Ah it is a mercy for the Holy Spirit to bring some truth to our hearts as a live coal to warm them, as a plaster to heal them, as a cordial to cheer them, as bread to strengthen them, as wine to make them glad. "How much more". O earthly parent, what would you not give to your children? O but what a thing this is, rising above it infinitely. There is no measure, there is no comparison, really. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Then we are encouraged in this word- may the Holy Ghost encourage us to believe it - to go on asking. Here is every reason for encouragement. Our wants, go with them. Our desires for the Spirit, go with them. As the man wanting bread for a friend went where he knew he could get it, and did get it, so may we, hearing the truth, hearing the gospel and of God, go to Him who alone is able to give what we need.

Now one word in conclusion. Do you want to get to heaven? Not anyhow, but in God's way, to come honourably through your difficulties, and sins; indwelling corruption, hardness of heart, and all temptations, and everything of a kind to hinder and destroy you. Is your heart set toward heaven as Christ's face was stedfastly set to go to Jerusalem? And is your language, O may I reach that heavenly place, that abode of the Trinity, that home of the church, that place of glory, where living fountains of waters are. O that I might reach Him who was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Is it so? Then when you look at the way, what is the language of your heart? There is a lion in it. When you look at yourselves, what is your feeling? I am a sink of sin and unbelief. What then? One voice says, give it up. That is a wicked, wicked voice. Another says, you have no warrant to hope and perhaps you have not, as to any sweet

experience. Another voice says, you are too guilty, how can you think God will bless such a wretch as you? He does not hear sinners. Another voice says, you have never had anything clear, no clear testimony. Well, that may be so. Still this remains. Would you mock your child if he asked for bread? You say, I think I would not, I believe I could not. Says the Lord Jesus God is infinitely better than you, and if you want Him and long for His Holy Spirit, that He may teach you, lead you in the way everlasting, and bring you honourably to your grave, and take you, as a fitted person, "made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light"; if you ask that great God who is your heavenly Father, though you know it not, will He refuse that Spirit? Will He decline to give Him? Will He turn your request away? Jesus Christ makes it quite plain here. We may say, No, that be far from Him. My friends, God's character is great, it is tender, it is loving, it is pitiful, it is compassionate, and therefore may we be encouraged to pray that He would give to us His Holy Spirit.

AMEN.