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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel Brighton by Mr J.K. Popham on
Sunday morning, 9th June 1935

Text : Luke 15 verse 2

And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Christ receives sinners, for their salvation, and that is, His glory. He receives His people in two ways, first in this life, when they come to Him as sinners. And then in the life to come, when He receives them, as justified and sanctified in the name, and by the Spirit of God.

He has taken nine people away from us, in about eight weeks. And we perceive His dealings with us in their vacant places, but heaven, if one may say that word, is richer for our poverty, in this regard. Some of them were too ill to speak much, others were favoured to leave a most blessed testimony, the last one, long afflicted, painfully afflicted, suffering intensely, yet favoured much in her soul, a beautiful case to me, because I saw, running as it were, side by side, repentance and forgiveness. O she was very happy in the Lord, and anticipated the end, which happily for her has come, and I buried her yesterday. The family cannot mourn really, in one sense. It should be a grateful thing to them, though naturally they must feel the bereavement, but that her sufferings are ended, must be matter of gratitude.

Now I want to look at this text, as the Lord may help me, and direct you to that, which has wonder in it. First of all, I would notice the indignity, that the pharisees and scribes, heaped on Christ, when they said "This man" a contemptuous term, an utter rejection of Him. "This man" true He was and He is a man, but also He is very God. They knew Him not. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1 verse 11). And all their watching, seeking to trap Him, and catch Him by words, all their enmity, culminating in the crucifixion of Him. Ended with regard to Him, but not with regard to themselves. If He had only been "This man" Jesus would not have been a perfect representation of God, the image of the invisible God. I would beg you to attend to this point, because if Christ is not, to you, and to me, the image of the invisible God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, we can have no proper conception of God. And therefore we can never worship Him properly. The whole of vital religion, the whole of acceptable worship, is intimately connected with, dependant on, and flows from the Lord Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God. In infinite mercy, love and wisdom.

God has given to us, that perfect representation of Himself. And that blessed grace, His covenant, "An everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." (2 Samuel 23 verse 5). Dear friends, as many of you as pray at all, pray earnestly that, you may get, from the Holy Ghost, views of Christ, as the image of the invisible God. A man indeed yes, but united to God. God inhabiting that man, that man never subsisting separately from the son of God, full of grace and truth. And He is spoken of in the scripture thus, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:" Two people? No, one. And His name?, the child born, the son given, constitute one person, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9 verse 6). On His shoulders, is the government, and of His peace, there shall be no end. This is the man in the text, the glorious God-man, here is, the rose of sharon, whose fragrance enables poor sinners to gather, fresh strength and comfort. The refuge for sinners, unto whom they run by faith, and find safety. The foundation of God laid in Zion, the tried precious corner stone, binding the whole building together. The daysman, the intercessor, the mediator, the life of the dead, the righteousness of the guilty, the holiness of the polluted, the strength of the weak, the light of the blind. This is the man! Do you know Him? Did you ever get a glimpse of Him? Was He ever precious to you? Did you ever believe in Him really, and say to Him That you would fane find Him:

Who fain would believe Him, and in your best room
 Would gladly receive Him, but fear to presume
 (804 verse 1 Gadsby's)

Would fain have union with Him, know none beside Him. Believers, by the power of The Holy Ghost, faith unites to Christ, gives some understanding in, and experience of, that word "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. (John 15 verses 1 & 2)." This is not a place for me to enlarge on that. He purgeth it, beyond saying, that means chastisement of the Lord, cleansing of the Lord. "Now ye are clean", which is the same word as purging "through the word, which I have spoken unto you." (John 15 verse 3). Now He was sent of His Father. His Father sent Him, and He lovingly, willingly became the servant of His Father, whose equal in the Godhead He is, and He said "Lo, I come:..... to do Thy will, O my God:" (Psalm 40 verses 7 & 8). He came, He was accepted, at the time of His birth. There was a national expectation of Him, but the expectation had an object, which He did not realise to them.

They expected a King with powers, authority, victoriously delivering them from the hated yoke of the Romans. He did not answer to that expectation, and so they rejected Him. There is no man living today, in the world who would not, as a fallen sinner, reject Jesus Christ. Every man is fallen, every man would naturally reject Christ. But He was glorious, and He manifested His glory, in different degrees, by faith, from time to time to His disciples. "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me". (John 17 verse 8). That is the teaching we must have, if we receive this truth, what is said of Him in the text - He "receiveth sinners and eateth with them".

The word receive, beares this meaning - He takes them to Himself. "He receiveth sinners to Himself, not coldly as a superior looks on an inferior. Not distantly, allowing them to come so far, and no farther. No, He receives them to Himself, takes them to Himself, takes them for His own. In the beautiful parable in the chapter, this taking to Himself is set forth. He seeks the lost sheep, and puts it on His shoulder. He seeks the lost piece of silver, and rejoiceth in finding it. It is no distant thing, I would just press that on you. It is no distant receiving. You might receive one who has injured you, you might receive him coldly, distantly, to let him know that you receive him in a way there was no reconciliation. You might even go so far as to say, you forgave him, and yet you would say no communion, therefore that was not a perfect reception.

Christ is different, O how different, He sees a poor wretched, ragged, hungry, starved prodigal coming. He does not wait for him to get to Him, He runs to meet him and embraces him, kisses him, this is the reception. (Luke 15 verses 11 - 32).

Let us look at the character, sinners. The pharisees did not want Him, sinners do not want Him, in the sense of our text. In the sense of that word, in another place. He came to save the lost. I am of opinion, yea it is more than opinion, it is an experience, that the older a child of God gets, the bigger sinner he feels, the more he is lost. That does not mean despair, it does not mean a great distance from the Lord, it means a growing downwards, and growing in a knowledge of yourself. A knowledge of your ruined condition, in a knowledge of the truth of Christ's word. "Without Me, the true vine, you can do nothing", and so all through the experience of the people of God, there is this coming, and this receiving, they come.

What is this coming ? Believing. good Joseph Hart says:

Let us resolutely strive,
To work God's work, with full intent;
And what is it ? To believe
On Him whom He has sent. (Hart's Hymns 1st verse of
part 1 No.23, or of 779 [but omitted from] Gadsby's)

O the greatness of grace in giving faith to a sinner, you will never come without faith. "He that commeth to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11 verse 6). There are not many diligent seekers to-day I am afraid, how many are in this congregation, God knows. A diligent seeker becomes a finder. They come to Him confessing, you will never pray much without confession. You will have sins to confess, every day of your life, while in this world. Nature grows, and outward backsliding, but sin, sin when on your knees, sin when your eyes are on the sacred page, sin when you are conversing, perhaps with a child of God. Sin while hearing the truth preached, sins in your thoughts, sins against providence, sin regarding everything within and without you, it may be. Sin, and shall you, can you pray without confessing sin ? Can you get near to God, and not confess with the prodigal. "I am not worthy to be called Thy son" ? No, so when you come like the publican to Christ, He gives you grace, for it is grace that works this, to confess your sin. And what saith the scripture respecting confession ? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". (1 John 1. verse 9).

They come next without any righteousness of their own. Rags, filthy rags are the best you have got, and the best you will ever have naturally - filthy rags. O my friends, is it not shameful, and yet is it not wonderful, that God gives any of us grace, to go to Him with these filthy rags. Yes, if you go with a good garment of your own, He won't receive you, but if you go with filthy rags, ashamed of them, ashamed of yourself, He will receive you. He has love in His heart for sinners, they go again with their pollution, not easy, O not easy, I know it is not easy. I know it is not easy with some wretched thoughts which have polluted your conscience, and then have to go. You must go, you have to go, He will not let you keep away. O no, it is His own drawing, it is His Father's drawing, and you go with all your pollution, ashamed and say with Ezra "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God:" (Ezra 9 verse 6). "Thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped." (verse 15). They go as polluted. The Apostle Paul in the Corinthians, innumerates the sins done by the gentiles. He says to them, "And such were some of

you" (1 Corinthians 6 verse 11). And such here, were some of us, in this congregation, perhaps some this very morning, yet we had to go, and were received by Him.

Next they go as weak people, having no strength, no strength to resolutely strive to work God's work, with full intent. No strength to take up a cross, and follow Christ. No strength to be content with such things as we have, no strength to love Him, to fear Him, to tremble at His word. No strength to walk in the way of truth. Weakness belongs to us, happy the people who feel it rightly, and who in their weakness go to Him.

They go to Him ignorant, I am very glad that the disciples, grew very slowly in knowledge, that though Christ gave them His word, His Father gave to Him, they little apprehended them. Very gradually the light shined in their hearts, and even up to Christ's resurrection, ignorance reigned in them, in particular with regard of His foretold resurrection. They had enough warning of His death and of His resurrection, and yet when He arose from the dead, compared to Mary Magdalene, who reported His resurrection to them, though they did not believe her. "And there words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." (Luke 24 verse 11).

Were you ever glad of that kind of thing ?, as you read in the scriptures, and have you to go, even today, feeling ignorant. And had this very day to go like that, and ask God to grant you a true conception and apprehension of Himself, and teach you the truth, as the truth is, in Jesus. But you say surely, one who has had that revelation, cannot lose it. He cannot lose the revelation, but there may slip from him, much of that which he received. The disciples forgot His word, again and again, this took place, "And they remembered His words".(Luke 24 verse 8). You will forget it, and then you will remember it. How will you remember it? He shall bring, that is the Holy Ghost, "and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."(John 14 verse 26). But you must go ignorant, pleading teach me, "That which I see not teach thou me." (Job 34 verse 32). "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Psalm 119 verse 18). The Holy Ghost is promised to teach, but we have to go to this heavenly teacher. They go to Him with desires. O what desires move you sometimes, O that I could find Him, O that I knew where I might find Him, O that I could come unto His seat, O that my heart was softened, that my conscience were tender, that my love were warm, O that I were diligent in the ways of God. It is written in the Proverbs " The desire of the righteous is only good:" (Proverbs 11 verse 23). Thus they go to Him.

Now let us look a little, as helped, at the reception. "This man receiveth sinners" Did He ever frown on you, when you went to Him ? Did He ever frown on you ? He may, often in love, have frowned on you, in regard to your backslidings. He may often have said, you have destroyed yourselves. Often, His holy wise providence, may have seemed to put you, at a distance, as if He would have nothing to do with you, as if He would take no notice of you. But, when publican like, sinner like, you have gone to Him, confessing and saying, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips". (Hosea 14 verse 2). Has He then frowned on you ? No, No, He receiveth. He takes hold of a sinner, thus coming to Him. He takes hold of him, and brings him to His bosom, to His blessed footstool. And He lets fall into that sinners heart, a sense of acceptance. He can no longer be shy or backward, no longer seem as if he would retreat. No, closer, nearer, he desires to get. That word may be a shining word, in his heart. "A people near unto Him" (Psalm 148 verse 14). Near to Him, in His atoning work. He receives this in that precious atonement, and reconciles them to Himself, and He says "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely:" (Hosea 14 verse 4). He says to one, who has never before had, the comfort of love - "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31 verse 3).

Is there one here who wants that ? cannot be happy without it, feels the ruin in his spirit, his conscience, his very being, and pants for this ? Now wait on God, whoever waited and was put to shame ? "They shall no be ashamed that wait for Me." (Isaiah 49 verse 23). Save me Lord, put Him to the test, Try me He said, you come to Him and put Him to the test. Did the importunate beggar get, at mid-night what he asked his friend for. Yes, and can the Lord Jesus, who speaks in the parable thus, send you away empty, when He has given you a hunger for Himself. "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." (Proverbs 13 verse 4). Give diligence dear seekers, give diligence, and that God you seek, will receive you to Himself. Take hold of you, put away your fear, your slavish fear, and say "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" He receiveth sinners lovingly. How often have some gone to Him, prodigal like, expecting a frown, and they have had an embrace and a kiss. He receives them graciously, His whole heart is with them, and He opens to them, saying Fear not. Then what ? He eateth with them. Bringeth forth the fatted calf, kills it, let us make merry. O the heavenly merry-making, that awaits some in this building. You cannot believe me, perhaps, but I tell you there awaits you, as you are seeking Him, as approaching Him, praying to Him, a heavenly merry-making that will make you wonder.

Is this the manner of man O Lord, an enemy turned into a friend. A guilty person justified, a polluted sinner sanctified, and now a feast prepared. A feast of love, what does He give to eat ? This is my body, which is broken for you. Drink this cup, this cup is the blood shed for you. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6 verse 53). Christ is received, Christ is partaken of, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?" (1 Corinthians 10. verse 16). This is an ordinance that sets forth these blessings, in the beautiful symbols of bread and wine, and before that ordinance is attended to, yea, by many who never did attend to it. The precious body and blood of Christ have been their sweet repast. The thief on the cross, got this feast. "To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise". (Luke 23 verse 43).

He eateth with them. O one says, I could never expect, He would let me sit at table with Him. He will constrain you to it. Yes, you wont be able to refrain. You will take when He gives it you. He eateth with thee. Look at the love of it. Love brought Him to the cross. Love moves Him to say "Take eat, this is my body" Take and drink this is my blood. This is the covenant - love brings Him to this, Wisdom brought Him down. "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions" (Proverbs 8 verse 12). And this was the great invention, that He should die, that He should rise again, that He should come into His garden, and say to His friends "Eat O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song of Solomon 5 verse 1).

My friends it is free, it is a free feast a great feast, a heavenly feast, a divine repast, and "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." (John 6 verse 56). And shall never die, O what a wonder. I give unto My sheep eternal life (John 10 verse 28) Never die, so some in this congregation are not to die, as to their bodies, yes, they must die, as to their souls never. This man, O has the Spirit ever set Him up on high, that you have looked on Him, believed in Him, felt a love to Him, an attraction in Him. Then you will go to Him, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." (Luke 15 verse 1). He is good to them, I cannot convey to you, the sensation that this goodness, this reception of sinners, begets in the heart. The wonder, the fear, the hope, the contrition, the blessed attraction and sweetness of being saved. You must have it, to understand them, the sweet sensation, the beginning of heaven. I say the beginning of heaven, lost very quickly by some vanity, some foolishness, some wickedness in you, but not as to the principal, only the enjoyment.

This man, can you try Him any of you ? Do you go in secret and try Him ? Ask Him to receive you. "Receive us graciously" (Hosea 14 verse 2). Ruined people are compelled to say that, people who have been self destroyed. "Thou has destroyed thyself," (Hosea 13 verse 9). "Take with you words....say unto Him (That is to the Lord, who has borne testimony against you) Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.". (Hosea 14 verse 2). And God give you, who seek Him, courage to go. As the publican sinner, smiting on your breast, saying "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18 verse 13). Go.

He is full of grace, think of, it full of love, of mercy. No man can see God without Him. "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him". (John 1 verse 18). "Who is the image of the invisible God," (Colossians 1 verse 15). All worship must be in and by Him, all comfort of love must come from Him by His Spirit. The beginning and the ending, the first and the last.

If I have not misrepresented Him to you this morning, I think I have not. May you find the attraction of Him, and feel, now, I will go, ragged, polluted, guilty, lost, I will go to Him. I will venture to say to Him "Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." (Hosea 14 verse 2)

Amen.