

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed  
Chapel, Brighton, on Sunday morning 30th  
August 1925

Text: Luke XV Verse 2

"And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured saying  
this Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them"

What occasioned this reproachful remark of the Scribes and Pharisees concerning Jesus Christ? It was neither the character or the numbers of this audience, for from the day of Christ's entering on His public ministry He had been attended by multitudes and they were all sinners. He had healed all that had need of healing; He had shown compassion constantly; He had raised the dead, had opened the eyes of the blind, God being with Him. He went about doing good and yet these good people reproached Him. These doctors, lawyers, Scribes, Pharisees, they murmured, they reproached Him for His society. What was a reproach to them is salvation to the church. Why should He not receive sinners? What other characters did He come to save? How could He save people who needed no saving? He came to save the lost, to give life to the dead, bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty. He came to speak eternal truths. They hated Him without a cause, these murmurers did, these murmurers, Scribes and Pharisees. Oh that we may see by God's kindness to us the wonderful compassion of the Lord Jesus in receiving sinners. Let us look for a moment at His person. His person is unique. You say He is a man, that is true; not a man as we are men. You say He is God. That is true. He is not two persons though. He is one person. He is God, the eternal God. Before Abraham was I am. I am that I am. Ever in the bosom of His Father, delighting in His Father His Father delighting in Him, and the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, with both of them and proceeding from them both, and these three were in council, held

communion each with the other. They spoke; Christ said so, for He came to speak the words He had heard His Father speak. They wrought; He said so. He said He came to do the works which He had seen His Father do. Does not all this point to the council of peace, to the eternal covenant of grace, all the council respecting creation, respecting man, the fall, the redemption, the work of the Son in the flesh, His vicarious offering of Himself without spot to God on the cross, His burial, His resurrection from the dead, His showing Himself alive after His passion, by many infallible proofs. His ascension into heaven, His intercession there, His pouring out the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of promise, all these, together with providence in its great complexity and mystery, the wringing out of waters of a full cup to the godly, and the giving of prosperity to the wicked, all this fixed upon, consulted about in eternity, and these things in God's heart, in God's purpose, could not of course be known by a creature unless they were revealed. God must be a self revealing God if any creature is to know Him. By whom shall God reveal Himself? By His Son. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." He said "The Father sent Me" and concerning Him the Father said by Isaiah "Behold My Servant, Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth" I am come said Christ to speak the words My Father spoke, and He has given Me them to speak. He has taught Me says the Man Christ Jesus; He has taught Me to say these things. What a beautiful light this may shed on that wondrous passage in the book of Revelations, the first word in that book. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him. If you are to know God, if I am to know God, the Lord Jesus must tell us about Him, that is reveal Him to us. What a mercy there is this means of communication from God to men. The Man Christ Jesus was sent to speak the words of God, to speak them not into the ear, but into the hearts, of sinners; to do the works of God, not without a purpose, but with and for that purpose and end given to Him. I came to

do, He said, the will of my Father. He came to do it with great delight. I delight to do Thy will, O My God, yea Thy law is within My heart. Our Lord Jesus is Almighty God. Satan has, ever since His birth, endeavoured to rob Him of His divinity, but when the deniers of the divinity of Christ are all dead, the eternal God Jesus Christ will be on His throne, and terrible will it be for the men who die denying His deity, to see Him. Oh how glad would they be if rocks and mountains would fall on them to hide them from the face of Him that cometh and the wrath of the Lamb. May none of you dread His awful coming. May none of you ever be found thinking against His divinity, uttering a word of doubt about it. But He is not God only. God is incomprehensible to us. No man can comprehend Deity. What you can comprehend is certainly no bigger than yourself. He is apprehensible, blessed be His Name and He has made Himself knowable, knowable in Jesus Christ. It is very beautiful to believe what you cannot comprehend here; that Almighty God sighed human breath. The devil has never loved this truth, men have always been denying it. The virgin birth men have denied, and are denying it. Christ is a Man but not as we are men. The Holy Ghost overshadowed the virgin and the holy thing that was born of her is called the Son of God because the true and only begotten Son of God assumed that so begotten and born nature, human nature, and thus we have Emmanuel, God with us. Here in its fulness is the love of God. Here in all its greatness, is the counsel of God. Here in all its power, is omnipotence. You have wisdom in Him, the fulness of it; all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him. So this Person Jesus Christ is above us but He is also with us. He is a Man, and being a Man, He had something to do; it was given Him; a work given Him. He had to bear the sin of many as Isaiah tells us. What a burden this was. The holy nature must have suffered the most exquisite pain, grief, anguish and shame, when imputed sin, with its weight, and inevitable death and curse came upon Him. Were your sins there, were mine there? He must bear them or we must be lost. He must bear them. Think of

that great word, beautiful in its significance and profound in its deep meaning. " He hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" My brethren, this is eternal life in a word. "Hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all". What did He do? Offered Himself, without spot to God; offered Himself. A priest is, as a priest, active; he has somewhat to offer. He has a person to whom it is offered; he has an end in offering it. The life of a priest was an active life, so was the life of the Lord Jesus active in obedience, in every step of His sinless life. Active on the cross in all the labour of offering Himself, in His suffering and anguish, and in the infinitely meritorious offering of Himself to God is the salvation, the eternal life of His people, and He died. They took Him and by wicked hands they crucified Him and slew Him and yet they did not kill Him actually. All they did was calculated to take away His life as it was calculated to take away the lives of the thieves crucified with Him, but they failed of their object, for when He knew in Himself that all was now accomplished He said "It is finished" and dismissed His spirit. The priest offered, Jesus offered, and He was buried and He was raised again the third day by the glory of His Father and after having shewed Himself alive by many infallible proofs to His disciples, to above 500 brethren at once, He ascended into heaven and there He is. This is the Man against whom the Scribes and Pharisees murmur today. This is the Man, the God Man, on whom, if you have a right hope, that hope is built. In whom, if you have eternal life, that life in all its fulness, resides. By whom, if you are well guided through this life, you must be guided. Here is the light, here is the life, here is the peace, here is the ground of hope. Here is the way of access, here is pardon; all in and by this Man. Do you murmur at Him, or have you in your measure and manner, that that the Father has, in an infinite degree and manner, pleasure in Him. It pleased the Father to have Him the Son of Man, to say of Him "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. " How many sinners in this congregation can lift their faces up to God, and put their

hands on their consciences and hearts and addressing the "I Am that I Am" say, Lord we are well pleased with Jesus Christ. We would be glad beyond expression if He would kindly receive us, would eat with us. They murmured, were angry. They were looking for a Messiah, but not the promised one. Though their minds ran to the promise, they were looking for a mighty one, one who should redeem them from the hateful, hated, yoke of the Romans, for one whose prowess should be exercised on their behalf in that particular. He disappointed them, and you will be disappointed in the Man if you expect natural things and a natural salvation only. You will be disappointed and offended, and with the Pharisees of old, you will persecute Him, and say away with Him, and be a murderer of Him in your heart. Oh but if you have life, if you have eyes to see Him you will see Him more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. You will see Him to be what the church saw Him to be of old. Oh she said He is most beautiful, wonderful, glorious. This is my Friend and this is my Beloved. Happy sinner who can say as much as that. And so He is lifted up, He is on His throne. He goes about today doing good. The inconvenience that the disciples expected to result from His leaving them is more than compensated by the presence of His Spirit and Christ goes about doing good. He walketh among the churches. You ask Him to come here. Never may we be indifferent to the presence of Christ. It is a promised presence; it may become an offended, and therefore a withdrawing, withdrawn presence and if it be so, if it ever should be so, here, you will have the shell, the skeleton, nothing better. Let us look at the people He receives, a sorry set, were they not, the people He received then, the people He still receives. Publicans, notorious sinners. Publicans, hated by reason of their vocation, extortioners, sinners, and all of them, that is a great number of them, probably all in that district at that time, His fame had reached them, and we would hope that His grace had touched many of them, that they were drawn by that invincible attraction that is known only to those in whom it

is. There is an invincible attraction in Jesus Christ. The world is nothing to the man in whom this attraction is exercised from time to time by the Spirit of God. You will do what Mary did if you have the attraction Mary had; she made choice of that good part. They were sinners. What is a sinner? A breaker of the law. Sin is the transgression of the law. There are many kinds of sinners in one sense, but in one other sense there is but only one kind of sinner and that is a transgressor of the law. You go to the cemetery and you pass by them and in them there are various degrees of decomposition of the bodies buried, but death is equal in all of them. There are different measures of sin in different people, as to open things, but death, that is sin, is the same in all men. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All are concluded in unbelief, that immoral thing, unbelief, that hater of God, and being sinners, they needed saving. A sinner needs salvation. Not every sinner seeks it; not every sinner prays for it; some sinners feel their need of it and pray for it. They say again and again "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation", and they say that to Him who can answer the prayer, to the Saviour. Well how many of you say it? How often, if at all, do you bow your knee, and even when you are not doing that, bow your hearts, kneel in your spirits before Him and say to Him "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation". Sinners come to Him by reason of their felt ruin. They come to Him by reason of the attraction that He is to them. If all the world were on one side set before your eyes and the ignominious tree on the other side were set before you by the Holy Spirit, I venture to say this, that the attraction of that cross would be invincible and the world would be like a vain show, a shadow, an emptiness. So men come; they come to Him. They come to Him as they feel themselves to be, and as they really are. They come to Him with, and about all their sins. They come with an eye to the fountain, the blood of Jesus. That is how every sinner comes. He would <sup>not</sup> be Jesus, if there were no sinners to be saved. His Name tells us what is to be done "He shall save

His people from their sins" and this explains at once what it is these people come to Him for. Publicans and sinners, they come to Him for forgiveness. If sin be not forgiven, if sin be on your conscience, unpurged, you cannot properly be happy Think of it. How can your sins be forgiven? How can your consciences ever be as if they had no sin on them? How can you be made holy, who by nature are unholy? The questions are answered in that one significant profound, wondrous, glorious word "blood". "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" But will He receive me says one. What did He do with Saul of Tarsus, with Manasseh, with David, with Solomon, with the thief on the cross, with the publican, with the prodigal, what did He do? He frankly forgave them all. We need it as much today as ever, that is to say, we are continually, through the up-bubbling of those unwelcome thoughts, of that terrible unbelief, of that limiting of the Holy One, of that carnality, that worldliness, that rebellion against some untoward providences, we need the blood of Jesus Christ. Are you to have communion with a Holy God? Are you to be near Him? Is He to convey to you some loving word, to tell you that He will be with you to the end, that He will bring you honourably through to your graves? Are you to know what union with God in Christ is? He will convey all these great mercies to you by the blood of Jesus Christ. "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" Never expect a pure conscience but by the blood of Christ. Never expect strength to contend with sin and Satan but by the blood of Christ. Never think of union with God, apart from the blood of Christ. Never look for communion with Him for friendliness on His part, or familiarity with Him, but by His precious blood. He receives sinners and glad He is to receive them for they are the purchase of His blood. If angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, how must He who laboured with such infinite pain and skill and wisdom and love to save them, rejoice over them as He receives them one by one. We shall need this to the end. We

must come for this and it will often be "cry or die". You come to an extremity again and again, and will need, and needing, seek, and seeking, find forgiveness. Is not that a beautiful scripture in the Psalms "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" Sin, rightly felt, is the sharpest pain you will ever feel, the heaviest burden you will ever carry. Sin removed by the blood of Christ becomes a wonder to a sinner. He looks for his sin and finds it not. When God covers sin, it is covered. He does everything like a God, and when He forgives sin, He forgives like a God. He takes your own infirmity of memory, that is your forgetfulness, as when you forget a thing it is as if it existed not to you. He takes that very infirmity and says "I will remember your sins no more. I will forget them all" "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin". It is not a little; immense sins. Guilt, in its deepest dye, iniquity in all its malignity, corruption in its great and ever spreading power. All sin. I wish some of you felt sin rightly. Oh you would be happy people, in your state, and soon be happy in your feeling. It is a great thing to feel sin. Every saint is conversant with sin, and the more grace a person has, the more he feels sin, but it brings Him to this Person. " This Man receiveth sinners." They come to Him for strength; they need it. You will never get on without strength. Naturally, people succumb to any little trouble if they have no strength of mind, or courage, or understanding. Much more so is it so spiritually. Who are you to contend with the devil, with the world, and with that which is worse than both of them to you, indwelling sin? You know that to comply with sin in a child of God, is to bring a kind of death to him. Who are you to contend against it and overcome it? Watts says

I asked them whence their victory came  
They, with united breath  
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb  
Their victory to His death.

and that is how you will do it. You will bless Him for His blood, you will rejoice in His blood, you will be thankful that He shed it, and thankful that the Spirit ever revealed it to you, and applied it. You have strength to overcome, strength to resist, strength to believe, strength to wait, strength to cast your hope on God, strength to cast hope as an anchor into that which is within the veil, through the blood of Christ.

Remember, beloved friends, remember that the covenant was sealed with blood. You make your will and there is wax on the document. You sign your will, you place your finger on the seal, and say this is my act and deed. There

is a covenant of grace, full of mercies, legacies, blessings. The death of the Testator brought all into force and now that once dead Testator liveth in heaven and He sends His Spirit to bring these blessings. Remember that the blood sprinkled all, sealed all, made all efficacious, and brings all into force by the gift of the Spirit. This is known. You will come then for strength by the blood of Christ. You will plead by the blood of Christ. You will look for blessings by that blood. The one thing, if one may so express it, the one thing that is the means of conveying good to a sinner, is the blood of the everlasting covenant. I only pray the Lord to give me grace and wisdom to preach it, and you mercy to receive it.

This Man receiveth guilty people; He receiveth defiled people, weak people, poor people. I should never get to the end of the matter if I attempted to describe the different kinds of people this Man receiveth. He takes them to Himself, lays hold of them and dissipates their fears by an encouraging word, removes their objections to coming by a kind invitation conveyed to them "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden" What treatment did they receive? Love tenderly expressed. And what will He do with them? He knows their hunger, that if He sent them empty away they would faint by the way, so He says "Sit down, sit at table with Me your Lord" "He eateth with them". He has a multitude to feed; blessed be His Name, thanks be to His Name, He has some here and He says at times "Come sit at table with Me" A table has provision. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars, she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine" and having done all that she sends out an invitation "Come oh ye simple turn in hither" and what is the provision, what is the food this blessed Man gives to publicans and sinners. This is it "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life" That is the bread you must eat and this means the receiving of the Lord Jesus by faith into your

heart. A broken heart and a broken hearted Saviour fit well when they meet. When He gives you Himself, and you receive Him by faith, and are enabled to protest to the Almighty that you have no hope but Christ, no life but Christ, no strength but Christ, no foundation but Christ, then, then God is pleased and you are satisfied, and these two know each other. Yes true religion is religion of knowledge. Ignorant people are taught; they know Him, in whom they believe. They have seen His well pleased face; they have heard His gracious voice; they have received His loving words into their hearts. They know Him. Says the Apostle "I know in whom I have believed" We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we have followed a loving Lord Jesus Christ, and have seen Him on His cross, on His throne.

"Eateth with them" What condescension. Two infinitely dissimilar, Almighty God and man. Two alike in nature, different in respect of sin, the one sinless, and the other sinful, these meet. These meet, and they meet in amity. Yes for their enmity is conquered, broken, and their unbelief is overcome and their consciences are purged and their hearts are dissolved and they are made one with a loving Saviour. He eateth with them, gives them His flesh to eat, His blood to drink, and they, believing that except a man eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, he can have no life, receive this. They receive celestial food. When did He receive you, when did He receive Me? Brethren there must be a contact between Christ and you in this life if you are to be with Him for ever. Oh when He stretches out His hands to a poor, coming, trembling sinner, fearing that He should have rejection and lays hold of that sinner, and pulls him in, overcomes all his objections, the objections that guilt raises, the objections that unbelief raises, the prejudice that unbelief sets up, overcomes them all, and the sinner dissolves. It is great to dissolve under kindness. Wrath may terrify you, law follow you with its fearful curses, and yet your heart may be hard. When love and blood divine touch the heart and conscience,

repentance is the sweet effect.

This Man receiveth sinners. Mind this you must be sinners. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance and if any of you are just righteous people you at the present have no part or lot in this and if the day comes, and God grant it may, when you become sinners, then this will be a welcome gospel to you. Oh how welcome. I was a young man in great trouble about my soul when I heard those words of Hart quoted

Sinners are high in His esteem  
And sinners highly value Him

What a revelation that was to me. May you come to be in such a state who are not now in it, as to find the same sweet sound in your own heart. Sinners, hell deserving sinners, acknowledging the justice of the sentence that condemns them. Sinners, helpless and hopeless in themselves. Sinners who have got to self despair. Not a bad place, though very distressing, self despair. How near to the gospel such sinners are, and He receives them. He receiveth sinners and is familiar with them. Familiar with them; stoops with an infinite stoop and touches with love and grace and lays hold of and pulls in these sinners who are always ready to object their sinfulness and set it up as a thorn and a briar against the Lord. These He receiveth. I wish I were good says one; you will never be so out of Christ. I wish I were pure says another; you will never be so without His blood, never. Most welcome is he who is most lost, but it is hard to believe it; difficult to come with all the objections of your ruin, but remember this, this Man, this God Man, now in heaven, once on earth, now on His throne, once on the cross, this Man receiveth sinners, not saints, though they are made saints. You will never, never value the sweet power of the blood of Christ but as you are feeling sin. Then with the cleansing efficacy of that blood on your conscience, you will rejoice in Him, place your confidence in Him, and sing His high praises.