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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 3 July 1927

MATTHEW 16 VERSES 24 AND 25

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it"

These penetrating, separating words are, to those to whom they are spoken, very solemn, especially when we consider that every anti-christian error that is in the world - beginning with Popery and coming down to the evangelical man who does not see the necessity of God speaking to the soul - the people of God find in their own hearts. There is not a good man here who has had time to consider, and been under the searching teaching of the Spirit, who would deliberately deny that statement. And if that be so, what a solemn consideration, what a cause for thanksgiving to God from our hearts, is this, that we are made to differ from self, in the first instance. To differ from our own hearts, to contradict the blasphemies that are in us, and to struggle against them and seek the power and the love and the grace and the goodness of the Lord Jesus brought to us by His Holy Spirit. Do not expect that you will be separated, or can be separated, from the world unless you are first separated from yourselves, unless you are brought to deny yourselves. There is not a wicked principle in hell, in the whole world, that we have not in our hearts, and this could be demonstrated both from Scripture and painful Christian experience. Ah then we have no stones to throw. If we have grace we must hate sin, wherever it is, but we have no stones to throw. We shall never say, God I thank Thee that I am not as other men are by nature. This great, this undeniable truth, respecting self brings self-denial into a very solemn thing and makes, so to speak, point and edge with respect to our own cases and well were it for us to be enabled, from time to time, to see the awful evils that lodge and work and lurk in our own hearts. That each child of God may put his hand on his mouth and say, leper-like, "Unclean, unclean". But this does not

shut the door of hope. This does not make it necessary for one who realises the terrible condition of his nature to say, there is no hope, for God hath opened the door of faith to the Gentiles and the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is a door of hope and faith sees it and the kingdom of God in its spiritual nature, in its secret workings, in its repeated incomings, in its victories quiet in the soul, I say this blessed kingdom is seen to have a glory that no tongue can adequately express. The glory of infinite love fixed on a worthless sinner, the glory of the incarnation of God's only begotten Son for the sake of that sinner, the glory of the sufferings of Jesus for that sinner, and the glorious grace of the Spirit convincing of sin and opening the mystery of iniquity in the heart and then opening in some degree the grace and the sufficiency and the loveliness of the Lord Jesus. This kingdom, this inward kingdom, this glorious kingdom, this blessed kingdom is within the saints and it is the secret, the efficient cause, the powerful reason for all self-denial. Deny himself; not of so many pounds, not of the least mite, but deny his own wicked life - not necessarily openly wicked - but the life of his nature, bad nature, depraved nature. What sympathy I have often felt with Rutherford I am not able to express, in this - My friends, said he, think my one talent to be ten talents. Of that I can have nothing to say; that is to say, it does not belong to me. But if they knew me as I know myself not one of them would cross the street to ask me how I am. Do you believe a good man could say that? Have you ever said it or felt it? When you have looked at so and so and have known the kindly feeling they have to you, have you thought, if they knew me; if they knew my heart, as I know myself and know my heart, they would not look kindly on me. Ah you have to deny this self. Away with this wretched self. O I have sometimes, in this pulpit, wished I could put my foot on this self, this wicked self.

Against it preach, it prompts the speech
Be silent, still 'tis there

Do you feel it in the pew? And this is the man you have got to deny. This is the person you have to deny. Not your neighbour, but yourself. From this wretch you have to flee. "If any man will come after Me". If He will come after Me to Calvary; if He will come after Me to My grave; he must deny himself. This makes the child of God's

life a very heavy one for, while he lives here, this self will live with him and he will repeatedly be saying, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death". How can I be a Christian? How can I think of getting honourably through? How can I expect to have a comfortable dying bed? How can I expect the Lord to bless me and kiss me out of time into eternal bliss? How can I think of it? And yet this is the man who says "Thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". The man who says, I, through the law, am dead to the law. I am dead to the law by the body of Christ and I expect to reach heaven as another creature and yet the same. Through the grace, and the regeneration, and the love and the blood and the righteousness of the Lord, I expect to reach heaven. Yes, and sometimes, this same man says I thank God that sin and a sinner are separable. O I have been glad of that. O the wonder that it is possible and more than possible, true in experience by all in heaven. Every spirit of a just man made perfect knows that sin and himself were separable and sin and himself are separated. Happy souls in heaven. When you get a glimpse of heaven and what it is to be there, when you get an inkling of it by the Holy Spirit, when you see the land which is very far off and the King in His beauty, even for five minutes, then you long to fly away, not only to get rest, but to be rid of yourself. This myself that eats into your peace, that like a canker destroys your peace, many and many a day. This wicked self, this rebellious self, this proud self, this independent self, what can I say about him bad enough. It is not possible to exaggerate the wickedness of self, but God give us grace to make a distinction here.

It is not possible to exaggerate the evil of sin as it is sin, but may we be kept from making sin more than the blood of Christ. May the Holy Ghost give energy to our faith in this and the more energy there is in our faith the more we shall deny self. "And come after Me".

Your Master's lot you must expect

They said He had a devil; they said He was a gluttonous man, a winebibber and a friend of sinners. They denied His claim to the Sonship which was His in eternity, dwelling in the bosom of His Father.

Your Master's lot you must expect

It is enough that the disciple be as his Master, the servant as his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they have hated Me, they will hate you. And here comes the closeness of this "Deny himself and take up his cross". Well you know I spoke this morning just of one thing constituting the cross only - the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. This man you will have to carry with you to your grave. This man you will many a time take to the Lord in prayer and often be saying - Let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Lord, this old man drives me to do what I do not want, what I hate, and keeps me from doing what I love and would love to do every minute and live in. O let not mine enemy prevail against me. Give me not over unto the will of mine enemy. When I would come to Thee he stands in the way. When I would draw virtue from Thee He proudly says, there is no virtue in Thee. And when I would look on Thy glory he turns my eyes to some bit of tinsel in this world and dangles it before me and tempts me. This is the man you have got to carry with you, tied on you, a corrupt thing, offending your holy soul, your virgin soul. Well, dear friends, the Christian's life must be a heavy one. As long as grace is in him, as long as he is kept lively in his spirit, as long as the Holy Ghost leads him, it must be a heavy life, and yet not a despairing one. No. The cup seems filled with gall but there is something secret sweetens all. And sometimes hope says look up and lift your head up; your salvation is nearer than when you believed. Other things make a cross to take up. Things in providence, the dealings of God with us in providence. A loss here, a burden there, an afflicted body, circumstances, sick consumption decreed on business. Something of that you will find together with disagreements in family life. I have come, said the Saviour, not to send peace on the earth. I have come to set father against son, mother against daughter, and son against the father and the daughter against her mother, and a man's foes shall be all found within himself and his own house. God knows where this cross is and it is a heavy one, a very bitter one. The sovereignty of God comes in here and now and again with your loneliness, your sorrow, with your realisation that it is not with your house as you would have it, as David said - Although my house be not so with God, as I would have it; yet hath He made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. Now when you can take this cross up and say

It is the Lord whose matchless skill
Can from afflictions raise
Matter eternity to fill
With ever growing praise

It is the Lord, should I complain

Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it? Shall a son rise against his father and the Lord have nothing to do with it? Shall there be trouble in a house and the Lord have nothing to do with it? O Christians, people of God, you have your sorrows. Now, says the Lord Jesus, if a man would be My disciple he must take up his cross. Fretting does not make it easier, does not remove it. Rebellion does not make it lighter. It does not take it away. It brings the person, the rebellious sinner into a dry land, as we read. But, thanks be to God that Jesus Christ, when He ascended on high and led captivity captive, received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also. The line of division is very solemn. Divine sovereignty in eternal love and election is very solemn. Who, with right feeling, would ever speak lightly of this when it comes into his house, when it discriminates between him and one or more dear to him? He must take his cross up. I have come, said Christ, to send a fire, a sword, and what will I, if it be already kindled. (Luke 12 v 49). Did you ever take this cross up, those of you who have it. Did you ever say, Lord help me to resign all this into Thy hand and follow Thee? Nature says, I wont have it. Grace says, Lord I accept it. And you may tremble before Him when you say it, but there it is and you would not take it back, would you. I have said some things in prayer that have been very heavy and, on reflection, have felt them to be heavy, but also have felt this, I would not, I could not, take them back if I might. You understand this, some of you. Take this up. And when you are enabled by faith to take it up and bring it before the Lord and confess to Him the heaviness and the bitterness of it to your soul and yet say, give me grace to say, the will of the Lord be done; Thou art righteous; Thou art holy; Thou art glorious; Thou art wise; Thou canst not do an unkind or an unwise thing; that is taking it up. You must take the cross of temptation up; temptation more or less, the Master's lot, you must expect. If he attempted to fire such a good, such a green tree, we may well say, with Hart - "Good God defend the

dry". That foul spirit, the devil, envies every person who has any good. Every child of God is a mark for him to shoot at. Every living soul, leaving the kingdom of darkness is one after whom this devil will be running, fighting against him. You must expect it. But it is very bitter when the devil comes and, serpent-like, says "Hath God said?" or, there is no God, there is no ground of hope. There is no one to pray to. When he may stir up the most awful, unutterable blasphemies against God and you cannot get rid of them. It is a cross, a trouble, an affliction in you, about you. O, but when you follow the Lord you follow the leader and commander who one day will bruise Satan under your feet. You follow Him. What a leader, what a Prince, what a King. O, the honour of the cross. O, the honour of being called upon and blessed and enabled to follow a tempted Saviour in your own path of temptation.

Now this will bring a pain It will so separate you from an empty profession, from a groundless confidence, from a hard heady way of walking, from walking without good ground in this or that path, that you will find yourself separated. Yes, and it will be this; the line is faith. The unbelieving world has no faith. When you have faith it separates you. The unbelieving world thinks itself sufficient for itself. Faith in you says, none but Jesus can do me good. In you faith says, I must have the witness of the Spirit or I have no confidence. It says in you, now unless the blood of Christ speaks peace to me, I have no peace. Unless His righteousness justifies, I am unjust, and unless holiness is brought I am a polluted creature, and this will separate you. Then you have got to take the cross up. You will be filled with contempt, the contempt of the proud and the scorning of those that are at ease. It was a very bitter thing for Sanballat and Tobiah the Ammonite to say, what do these feeble Jews? If but a fox go upon the wall it will break down. Will they remove the heaps of rubbish? What do these feeble Jews? They did not know the God of those feeble Jews. And the enemy may come and say, what are you thinking about? Do you think you will get to heaven with all your sins? Do you think God will bless you with all your waywardness, carelessness and forgetfulness and hardness and unthankfulness and worldliness? Do you think He will bless you? And when you reason about it, you say, no. When faith moves you say I can no denial take. I am more vile than anyone else but I will go as the Spirit helps me to

the throne of God's heavenly grace. To whom shall I go but to Christ; He has the words of eternal life. And you may get another sort of contempt. When you get old in the ways of God and feel only a poor, barren, ignorant, foolish creature, as prone to wander as ever, or more so, then you will get the contempt of the proud. Ah, and as Satan quoted Scripture, but not properly, to the Lord Jesus, he will quote it to you. He will tell you that the trees of the Lord are full of sap, and he may say, you have been confessing to God your barrenness and dryness. He may tell you that the Lord's people bring forth fruit in old age and you have been telling God that you have no fruit at all, and you will be filled with the scorning and the contempt of this devil. And what are you to do? What do you do? You cannot argue and say, well, it is not as bad as you think. No, that is no good; that is nothing for a child of God to do. The only thing is this, to go with your temptations and the tempter and the truth of his accusations to the throne of God's heavenly grace and confess to the Lord it is just what the tempter says You have been confessing it, and it is true, you are barren, you are prone to wander, you are wrong here and there and then cast yourself, by precious faith, on the Lord Jesus, His blood and His righteousness. Take the cross up. Go with the scorn and the contempt hurled at you to that blessed One who says - "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". Whosoever will do this, says Jesus and follow Me, he shall find, by losing his life, he has saved it. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.

I would like, for a few minutes, to speak of Him who speaks here and says "For My sake". He is the Lord Jesus, the King of glory, the Son of God in our nature, who took our sins and bore them in His Own body on the tree and who, though covered to the eye of man with shame and ignominy, and who bore the curse of a broken law, is all glorious. The glory of eternal Deity, the glory of eternal love, the glory of redemption, the glory of righteousness, the glory of holiness for His saints, He possesses. When a sinner, by faith, sees this glory of Christ in the light of the Spirit, he a little enters into the feelings of Moses who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. O what is honour, wealth or fame, to the Lord Jesus. What is the whole world to a Saviour, the Saviour of a

sinner, the covering of a sinner, the glory of a sinner, the life and the hope and the peace of a sinner and the heaven of a sinner. He says, for My sake. Denies himself, his life, for My sake. If you never see this glorious One you will not deny yourself of anything for His sake, nor lose your life for His sake. But if you see Him, if you see Him on the cross and beneath the shame and the spitting and the sorrow and the curse, see eternal love, saving grace, justifying righteousness, acceptance of the Father in and through Him; if you see Him there, you will say, what is the whole world to Christ crucified. Let us, as we are enabled, cleave to Him here. He has the words of eternal life. He prevailingly intercedes in heaven. May we cleave to Him here. All your sorrows and burdens and difficulties, all your griefs and losses, all your pains and evils, He, in His infinite goodness, can sanctify and turn them into gain and peace and pleasure. "For My sake". He fills heaven and earth, my friends. He sits on the throne and He says to a poor sinner in conflict, who does not know how to stand under the cross and is afraid that one day he will fall altogether, He says: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne even as I also overcame and am sat down with My Father in His throne". What a prospect. O poor, struggling sinner, what a prospect. Heaven is before you; victory is before you; Christ is before you. All that heaven has good belongs to you, and yet you say, I am poor. Having nothing yet possessing all things. Having nothing of your own yet possessing all things in Christ, given freely to Him by the Father, given freely by Him to the soul by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. And here it is that real riches are found. Durable riches and righteousness Jesus Christ possesses. Now, though I can say nothing good about self, nothing good about the world that lieth in wickedness, I can list a few good things concerning this gracious Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, and may the things attract our souls. May we see Him sufficient. All the gold in the world could not do your soul good, but one touch of His love would bless you. All the smiles of men could not make you happy really, but one smile from Him would bless you, do you real good. O what a Christ He is, what a Saviour, what a Redeemer, what a King, what a Lord. Well might Hart say to a poor believer - "Hope all that heaven has good". Think what the blood of Christ has bought, invaluable blood, and this, this is what we have. Now then let us keep the Passover, not fearing the wrath of the devil nor any man nor any creature. Let us,

Moses-like, keep the Passover. Jesus said "Do this in remembrance of Me". Eat My flesh, drink My blood. "Christ, our Passover, was slain for us". So may we keep this Passover. Moses kept it, not fearing the wrath of the king, and though we may often fear what this bad man, self, will do, often fear what the devil may be allowed to do with us, and to us, still may we go on secretly keeping the Passover, looking to the cross of Christ and saying with the Apostle Paul in our own measure "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." That is the secret of being dead to the things of time and sense, by the cross. That is the secret. The cross, it bears our spirit up. The cross, it tells us of good things to come. It tells us of the love of God in Christ and the condescension of Christ to save poor, wretched sinners. The cross says, do not despair. It says, look to the Lord; wait on Him; be of good courage. It says the cross can sanctify all your pains and losses and turn them into pleasures and gain. O, the miracles of the cross. The miracles of poor sinners in their souls when this comes to them. New life, revivings, helps, supplies, deliverances, guidance, all things, come from this. As you see, Paul gathers all things up to this - "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ". That shameful tree becomes the glory of a sinner; that ignominious tree is the life of a sinner. The death of Christ is the life of a sinner, the life of the church indeed. Now my brethren, we are face to face then, by this Scripture - may it be so by faith in our hearts - with a great alternative. If we have no heart in it; if we say we cannot do this, that we have no heart to do it, and if it never takes place in us, we are not worthy of Christ. If we cannot, if we have no grace to love Christ more than father and mother, brother and sister, husband and wife, house and land, He says we are not worthy of Him. Think of it. How do we stand in this particular? He says, if a man take not up his cross and follow Him, he cannot be His disciple. What an alternative - not Christ and the world; not Christ and yourself, that wicked thing. "Let him deny himself". Now I think I can hear some here say, we wish we might be brought to this. Now I can tell you, you can be brought to it. The Lord Jesus has grace for graceless wretches. He has blood for polluted sinners. He has righteousness for unjust persons. He has power for the helpless, life for the dead, light for the blind, and mercy for the miserable. He can bring us to this. He

has plenty. Plenteous grace; plenteous grace to capture the soul, to attract the mind, to bring the will into submission to His will. Plenteous grace. What can He not do? Happy sinner who, feeling his sinfulness and weakness has a little faith to cast himself unreservedly upon the illimitable ocean of the merits of Jesus Christ. Happy beggar who cannot be put off, seeing the fulness of the Saviour, going to Him and feeling, Lord I can take no denial. There is not a poorer person anywhere than myself. There is not a poorer beggar in the world than I am. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. Go on like this. This is how we must live. Like the swallow catching her food as she flies, so you will catch a little now and a little then, until the full blessing of the gospel comes into your soul. O, blessed sinner, who cannot do without the Lord Jesus Christ. Happy man, who has to say to Him, Lord I need Thee; I desire Thee; and I get glimpses I trust of what Thou art and what Thou hast; what Thou hast done and what Thou art able to do. Well, you will come into liberty one day. One day you will get a glimpse, yea a revelation of Him that will make you say, perhaps mentally, to me - You did not tell us half about Him and I shall agree with you, for I know I can say but little of Him, but what little I say, may He make use of to you, if He can be pleased, so to speak. This is the Saviour, this is the blessed One of heaven. He says, come after Me. Ah, one says, if I don't go rightly, what then? What if the devil is at the root of that? Don't go rightly. Well now, how do you go? Tell me, how do you go? Well, I have to go, if I go at all, I have to go with my poverty. I am not certain about my convictions, whether they are spiritual or natural and I do not know if my poverty is properly felt by me. I do not know anything rightly. Well, my friends, that is no bar. If you have but faith to go like that and tell Him all, what will He do? I will tell you what He won't do and that means the other side. He won't spurn you from His footstool. He won't say, you must not come to Me. He won't say I can have nothing to do with such persons as you. What He will say is this - Come unto Me. Come poor and needy and naked and loathsome and bare. Come with all your ignorance and hypocrisy, your insincerity, your hardness, your bitterness. Come, aged Christian; come, you who wonder sometimes what the end will be; come to this Saviour. But it is difficult and it is impossible without the Holy Spirit. He gives the power. All the motion He gives by springs of fear and love.

Now I must leave off. We have the Ordinance, this beautiful Ordinance, of which the Saviour, instituting it, said, "Take eat, this is My body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of Me." Remember My dying love, remember My dying commandment. This do in remembrance of Me. Take this cup and drink it, for this is the new testament in My blood which is shed for many for the remission of sin. It is a very great privilege to come to this table, the Lord's table. May we be favoured here. May the Holy Ghost be in us. May the Saviour preside. May He take away the shyness that is born of unbelief and say, now eat O friends and drink, yea drink abundantly O beloved.

AMEN.