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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel
Brighton on Sunday morning 28 May 1922

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REVELATION ~~17~~ v. 7

He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is
in the midst of the paradise of God.

One of the most solemn things we can do or say is to make a profession of religion, to profess to believe in God, to profess that we are His creatures and that we are accountable to Him, that we must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, to receive everyone the things done in his body, whether they be good or bad. And this is a personal thing, and every man shall bear his own burden and stand as in God's sight, according to the word of God. It is written "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul" So sinner, you are, as God's creature, accountable to Him, and you will find either in this life or in the world to come that you will be called to an account. If in this life you are called to give an account you will run with the publican, cry with the thief, pray with David, weep with Peter, and find yourself forgiven, having nothing to pay. You will certainly confess all your debt and ask for forgiveness of it, and you will receive it. If in the life to come you are, for the first time called to give an account, what will you do? Your mouth will be stopped, your trembling soul will hear the one word which God has to speak to you, the sentence from which there is no appeal, "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

God speaks in the text to a church and yet also to individuals. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" He that hath an ear is a professor. The ear is the natural given ear, the hearing ear. The Lord hath given it; and it is the ear of the soul. It is faith. Faith is the ear of the soul. Faith is a receiving grace, a listening grace. Faith is a grace that will ever stand up for God, and according to its exercises so does the soul feel. If faith tells you that you, in a thousand particulars, though a child of God, have turned aside, you will be distressed and dismayed until you are comforted. Christ speaks to the church at Ephesus. Christ and His Spirit are one, for it is He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand who speaks to the church. It is He who says "He that

hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. He who would divide Christ and His Spirit commits a grievous sin. He who would divide the Son and the Spirit from the Father commits a grievous sin. We believe in the Trinity in unity, one God in three persons, three persons in one God. In essence, undivided. In persons not differing, but different. Not differing, for they are all one. Different, for they are three persons expressed by their peculiar names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. What Christ saith to this church is first that He knows her works, her labour, her patience, and He approves of them and commends this church because she could not bear them which were evil and had tried them which said they were apostles and were not, and had found them liars. The religious spirit of today, is to mix and mingle everything and everybody that talks about God and the Bible, making no distinction as to evil and good, as between truth and error, and ever to say there is ~~no~~ difference as to man's state, supposing that they are sincere in what they believe, is a breach of charity today. Well, may the odium of it belong to us, and may we be on the side of Jesus Christ, who commends the Ephesian church for trying men who make profession and for not bearing evil. And Christ commends this church also for her patience in that she did not faint in her tribulation. It is good and merciful in Him to commend what He finds right in people. If faith is in you He will commend it. If you are enabled patiently to endure affliction, He will commend it in you. If you love His name, He will approve of it, and let you know He approves of it. If you are enabled to distinguish between good and evil He will bless you for it. Not bless you in a way of meriting something, but bless, speak well of you, that is to say, by reason of these things. It is a great thing to have something in you that Christ commends. O to be commended of God. O for the Lord to look on a sinner and say "I know thy works, I know your prayers, I hear them. I know your faith and how it lives toward Me and looks to Me and leans on Me, and follows Me. I know your patience under the trying strokes of providence. I know how humbly, through my grace, you have fallen before Me, and waited on Me. It is a great thing for Christ, so kindly and condescendingly to commend His own grace. He will call it yours. O woman, great is thy faith" He will give you the victory, and call the victory yours. To him that overcometh. He does all in His people and then He commends it all. Bless His Name, He is so good, He is so condescending to His people.

Then He comes to the church and says notwithstanding, nevertheless, although you have these things which I commend, you have somewhat against you, in my account. You have left your first love, you have left

your first love, What is first love? The love we feel when the dear Saviour comes to us first. The love we feel when He forgives us our sins, when we, by faith, see His glorious Person. When He becomes to us the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, and we sit down under His shadow with great delight, and find His fruit sweet to our taste. When creatures, the dearest and nearest, fall into their proper nothingness as compared with Him. When the language of the soul for substance is

Compared with Christ in all beside
No comeliness I see,
The one thing needful dearest Lord
Is to be one with Thee

First love will make you seek the high privilege of sitting at the feet of Jesus, whom now you know, that you may receive of His words. If He take you into the wilderness after Him, He esteems it a great kindness done to Him. "I remember thee" says He "and the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" That first love, O the bloom of it, the vigour of it, the sweetness of it, the acceptableness of it to the Lord Jesus. I remember this in you, He said. You went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. You ventured everything for Me then. Nothing was too hard for you to endure, nothing too painful for you to patiently wait on Me in. I remember all this. But now you have lost it. "Thou hast left thy first love" Is there one here who has had a first love, who could say Lord I have not left it? Woe unto us that we have left first love. Left that which the Lord Jesus so approves and commends here. Left Him. Left His footstool, His blessed word, His holy ordinances, not in profession, no, we have kept the form up, but left those wonders in the spirit and power of them. Once they were all, now they are a form. Once filled with life and sweetness, now they are a performance, and a solemn thing it is. "Thou hast left thy first love" He says this. If you were to go to your friend and say it and perhaps say it harshly, it would be resented. If the Lord Jesus comes and says it, may you, yea indeed you will, fall flat before Him in humble acknowledgement of it. What then has He to say to them having charged this home on the church? Now He says "Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent" Remember that thou hast fallen from thy steadfastness in prayer, that thou hast fallen from thy prevailing prayers when thou couldst not do without meeting with Me on the throne of grace. Remember that the time was, when nothing would do for thy soul but a smile from Me, a word from Me, a kindly look from Me, remember that. Do you remember it? Does the Lord bring it to your mind? Do you say to Him, Lord I remember

all those good days, and I remember how I have gone from Thee. I remember when the scriptures were wonderful. I am fallen from that view, although I talk about them. I remember when the power of them was with me, and now it has gone. I remember when I walked in the light and washed my steps, as Job speaks, in butter, when the light of God shined upon me and I have fallen from that. He says "Repent" And this repentance is brought about by the holy fear of God stirred up by the Spirit of Christ, by a sense of what we have lost, by a sense of His great goodness and mercy. This repentance is a conversion. Said Christ to Peter "When thou art converted", when I have turned thee from thy denial of Me and of all knowledge of Me, when I have converted thee, then do this "strengthen thy brethren". We need converting. If we are born again, that new life in us will never die, but the turnings from the Lord, falling from first love, need repentance. We need conversion. Some of us need it every day. Every day something new comes, temper rises, impatience prevails, hardness against God takes place, and there is no tenderness for His glory. We need conversion. Repent, and when men repent they are very sorry. When the Holy Ghost gives repentance to the one who has left his first love, sorrow fills his heart. He grieves for grieving one who has been so kind to him, so tender and merciful, so gracious, so exceedingly gracious. He does feel grieved for that. Then he does the first works. He makes application again to the Lord. This is the way he walks now. He needs the Lord to turn to him. She did the first works as it is recorded of the church in the Psalms "Turn us again O God and we shall be turned; save us and we shall be saved. Let Thy hand be upon the man of Thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself; so will we not go back from Thee; quicken us and we will call upon Thy Name." It is a great mercy to be doing the first works, and if we are led to do the first works we shall be tender and fearful, fearful of making mistakes, of receiving wrong impressions, of walking in false light, of standing in our own strength. If we do the first works Christ will be before the eye of faith and it will be with "Remember Thy covenant, remember Thy holy promise" and He adds to this a solemn warning, and even a threatening "or else if thou failest as a church to repent of thy deeds which are not good I will come to thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Did you ever fear losing your church state my friends. It is good to be exercised. God forbid we should lose it. Good to be exercised about our own particular case, but it is none the less good to be exercised about a church state. Clearly in the scripture in these seven letters, sent to the seven churches which were in Asia, it is set

forth that a church may lose its state, its church state. I say again, did you ever fear losing this state? The church of God here. Did you ever fear receiving and holding some error, some heresy, walking in some wrong spirit, holding wrong things, so as to provoke your Lord and Master, Saviour and Friend, Jesus Christ, to say "I wont walk there any longer", that is, removing the candlestick. If Christ goes away, the candlestick, the lamp, has gone, no light. A fearful thing this. God give us a real exercise about it. It is not that I know of any special thing among us that makes me think this is imminent, but I feel in my own soul a concern about it. Recently it has been with me a good deal from time to time and I think it is right for me in my present position to bring it to your notice. It may be God will make use of it, to lay the matter on your hearts, that you may cry mightily to Him that He would mercifully abide with us. O if Christ goes, what is there left? You wont have an appetite if He goes, that will die. And, if there is no appetite, there will be no bread. You wont have light if He goes and if you have no light how do you know where you are going to. You wont have power and if you have no power how will you resist evil? How will you resist the devil? You will have no discernment if your eye is closed. How will you discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not? My brethren I put these things before you. God give you to notice them. If you forget what I have said, may you not forget that Christ in these epistles speaks to churches as churches, not only to individuals. Bless God for an individual exercise, bless Him if our cry is "Lord, do be with me" If individually we can say "Do sustain me, keep me, reveal Thyself in me, help and comfort me as I may need help and comfort. That, may we never lose, as many of us as are blessed with grace. But, added to that, not to take its place, but added to that, may there be the exercise about a church state.

Then again Christ commends this church "But this thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate" Said to be an exceedingly impure doctrine, leading to the vilest practices, and these Ephesians hated this doctrine. This thou hast that thou hatest the deeds, not the persons, but the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. Remember these things and the Lord give them a place in your hearts. Do not think it is unnecessary. Whatever God has seen fit to write in the scriptures ^{is} in worthy of our closest and most prayerful attention and especially to a church as a church. It is good that this should be written and good for the church as such to regard it.

Then comes the text "He that hath an ear let him hear what the

Spirit saith unto the churches and you, being familiar with these seven letters, will find that this word is constantly repeated in them. He that hath an ear to hear, let Him hear" He who has faith, the ear of the soul, let him hear, which means let him attend to what the Spirit saith unto the churches, for what He says is of infinite concern, nothing superfluous, nothing of which you can rightly say, this is not needful. It may not be needful for your salvation, but certainly there is a necessity of some kind that you should attend to it and the necessity here is attend to it as much as it respects a church state. Let him hear. Let him hear. Now Christ approves of a broken hearted sinner. Let him hear how good the Lord Jesus Christ sees it to be that one should love His name. Let him hear how the precious jealousy of Christ is exercised toward a church. Thou hast left thy first love" Jealousy is precious in God whose name is Jealous, and surely it is precious in Christ who cares enough for a church to regard her love and the absence of it. Dear friends what a mercy it is to be particular about this commendation of the Lord Jesus. We are not worthy of it, never can be worthy of a commendation from Christ, yet if it please Him to look on His own gracious work in us and say "I approve of it. I know thy works, I know thy labour to get at Me, I know thy labour to be at My footstool, thy labour to cast thy burden on Me, thy labour to enter into My rest, thy labour to submit to My will, thy labour to be patient in tribulation, I know that." For when as you find the Lord saying to these churches "I know thy works" it is as much as if He should say I approve, I approve of thy labour and thy patience in thy present condition, in thy trouble, and thy tribulation. Do you think the Lord Jesus looks on you with approval? Do you think there is nothing in you of which He can approve? If your eyes are fixed on your unbelief, ingratitude, impatience, pride, conscious of self ends, then you will say I am hateful and must be hateful to Him. If you are blessed with faith and can say "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee" then there is something in you for Him to approve, His own creation, His own grace. I remember thee going into the wilderness. After Me you ran if you might find Me. Prayed that you might find Me. Prayed that I might come to you. And all this labour He approves. Let me put it to you again. Do you think, can you believe there is nothing in you that Christ can approve and speak approvingly of to you? Beware of despising what God loves. Who can ever hate himself too much, and yet the person may be hating himself and find that he is led, led of the devil, led of unbelief, to deny the good work of Christ in Him. Let

him hear the commendation that the world condemns and thou canst not bear them that are evil and thou hast tried them that say they are apostles and are not, and has found them liars who pretend to apostolic office, who pretend to the ministry, and are not called to it and the church at Ephesus put them to the test. It is good to have tests to the minister, good to search into his case. When men rise up, when a man in a church shall let it be known, or it shall become known in some way, that he desires, as Paul speaks, the office of a bishop, he desires a good thing, but the church of Christ should be very jealous, very tender, very careful, about allowing that thing. This was proved in the church of Ephesus. Listen to it. "And this thou hast also that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. The Psalmist had this beautiful thing in him, though the sect of the Nicolaitans existed not by name at least, in his day. He said "Do not I hate them that hate Thee and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." Did you ever count a manifest enemy of Christ to be your enemy? Let him hear the exhortation, having the charge against him which he is not able to deny and would not deny as it comes to his conscience from the mouth of Christ; let him hear the exhortation "Thou hast left thy first love, repent. Let him listen to this. You who say as you sit here, say with me as I stand among you and before you, "guilty, guilty, Lord" O it breaks your heart does it not sometimes when you remember what you once felt, the simplicity of your heart, the warmth of your love, the going out to Christ, the entwining of the arms of your faith about Him, the calling Him the dear names that you did, the willingness you felt to go anywhere and everywhere with and after him, when you felt He was your justification, your sanctification, when you felt that all your sins were put away by His precious blood, and that you knew you were accepted of God. I say, is it not, as you properly remember these things, heart breaking to remember also how you departed, how you grew cold, how you lost your liberty, how sin came, how it prevailed in some particular. Why, I could not have believed when I was in the enjoyment of the first forgiveness of sins and loving Christ and filled with simplicity of mind as I was that I should live to see the day when all that warmth and simplicity of heart and fervour of spirit and running after Christ would depart from my heart. My friends it is a solemn thing. But now what a mercy to have this exhortation, to have it spoken to you. Repent, turn from the vain things you have been following, turn from the wandering after forbidden objects of which you have been guilty, turn from the quietness of mind

which envelops and grips you, turn from the worldliness that has deceived you, turn, turn, poor sinner and you say "Lord turn me and I shall be turned". How gracious of our God to say like this "O Israel, thou hast fallen by thine iniquity; take with you words and turn to the Lord" This is how we repent, by divine direction and leading. Turn to the Lord, and say unto Him "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips". And this is repenting. Yes, After that I was turned I smote upon my thigh. Lord I have been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but thou has smitten, has chastised me, and I have been chastised. I smite on my thigh, I turn to Thee and ask Thee for Thy goodness and love to take away all this my iniquity. How safe a soul is and how safe a church is that thus repents. How good it is thus to repent. May this speak to us as individuals where it is applicable. May the Lord speak it to us as a church as we believe it. It is a greater thing to do this. Let him hear, let him attend. Ah, one may say, that cannot have anything to do with me for I am not in the church. That depends on a great point, whether you are born again, for if born again, then it will be said of Zion "This man was born in her" That is the first thing. Union with a visible church will never give that birth. This man, that man, God will reach them and say they were born in My church, in My Zion, in Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all. Ah John saw a great sight as he relates in this Book. He says "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" That is the thing, to be born there, to come down, for the new nature of God, given to the church, to come down from Him out of heaven to dwell with, yea to be part of and for ever and ever to be in the soul. But then you are not in the visible church you say, May the privilege of it be shown you by the Lord. May you be led to have enough grace and experience to seek union with the visible church of Christ. Ah says one that is not necessary for heaven. I know it is not. The dying thief never joined a church here. He went to heaven, straight to heaven from the cross. But you are living, you are living and blessed with the fear of God, and the life of God. It may yet be shown to you what a high privilege it would be to join to this people whom the Lord regards as a church, not only as individuals fearing Him, but as a church to be commended and to be reproved as He sees fit according to their state. I leave this. The Lord perhaps will carry on something by this word, feeble word of mine. I wish He may. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. May the Lord grant this great mercy to us.