

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 29 April 1923

ROMANS 12 v 1

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

If the Scripture which I have read just now entered into any of your consciences, if you saw your hearts and your ways in secret as set forth in that Scripture, how difficult you may find it, even now, to lift your face up to God, and how imperative will be in your spirit, the necessity for the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. It is extremely difficult for a guilty conscience to stand before God and until, and only when, the blood of Christ appears, and is set forth by the Holy Ghost as the one only plea that God attends to, that brings an answer of peace down, is there any hope. Would you, my friends, be holy? Does conscience say, yes, we would be holy but we know not how to be. Would a poor minister try to tell you how to be? If he attempted it, it would be not by exhorting you to walk in the precepts, not by exhorting to manage your hearts, but by setting forth before you the things, the three points that were mentioned this morning. First, divine calling reaching the heart, the new birth. That is the root of all holy feelings, all godly desires, all spirituality of mind, all uprightness of walk. Second, justification. "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood suffered without the gate." That blood removes sin, whenever and wherever it is applied, and also it breaks the dominion of sin. What takes the dread of damnation and the terror of hell from the mind, removes the power of sin from the affections in respect of its dominion? O, to be justified freely from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. The third thing is union with Christ, a marriage union. Here some of us may sink; here we may hesitate; here we may say we are short. Well, God is good to make people honest and save them from claiming what they do not possess in religion. Many would claim, and do claim, that in religion which is

not their own, while they are quite honest among men and would not lay claim to anything they do not possess. O what a mercy the Lord can bring us into an experimental union with Christ. It is true all the people of God have eternally been in union with Him, but an experience of it, that is the thing. When you pass from under the rod into the bond of the Covenant by union with Christ, then you are holy in your experience. These three things do enter into the vital matter of holiness. They are the root of it, the source and spring and strength and beauty of it. They are God's blessed gifts to sinners. They crucify the old man with the affections and lusts thereof. They cause a person blessed with them to put on the Lord Jesus and not make any provision for the flesh to consume it upon the lusts of the flesh. They put on the Lord Jesus Christ and, as the elect of God, they put on bowels of mercies. O, it is an experience of Christ that will bring us into this holiness. Would you be holy? You must lose yourself, you must die to yourself, you must die at the cross, you must be nothing but a lost sinner and the blessed Son of God taking you up into a felt union with Himself. Would you be holy? You must be justified from your sins. And would you be sincere? You must have the Spirit of grace in you. There is no sincerity in the heart God-ward until He is there. Old nature is a bad piece, rotten throughout, corrupt entirely, hence the deceit of men when they preach God without the Holy Ghost.

Now this being the foundation of all holiness, exhortations to holiness become acceptable; they are understood. Only gracious people can see in the light of the gospel any beauty in exhortations, in admonitions. They are beautiful. Like as when a wise, affectionate parent says to his loved child, the child who loves him, now this is the rule in my house, now the right feeling of a child inwardly says and I want to walk in it. A child of God perceives, when he is blessed in his soul, the rule of his Father's house and his heart says, I want to walk in it, and his cry is that the Lord will help him to walk in it. O but it is not easy. It will be easy in heaven to walk before God, but on earth, in the Church of God, it is very difficult, because there is always an enemy at our side, always a whisperer who would separate us from God, always a corrupt principle that insinuates itself like a subtle air or gas which you cannot keep out. Cork the chinks of the floor as you will, and somehow,

somewhere, the subtle gas will insinuate itself and is it not like that, say what you will, and pray as you will, this foul thing, sin, is in us, and therefore spreads itself about us and through our spirits and feelings.

This morning I mentioned one or two particular points in this sacrifice, this living sacrifice, remarking that it is painful. The beast was taken before God to be sacrificed; his life was poured out and soon that was done. The child of God, blessed with grace and received into God's family, finds that there has to be a continual killing. "Mortify therefore the deeds of the body", and the word "mortify" there is "kill" the deeds of the body. That is what the word is. It is a constant thing. If today we sincerely humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, feel that we can go before Him and that Christ is our Advocate, Mediator, righteousness, life, wisdom, and strength, and that therein, and thereby, the deeds of the body are mortified and killed, it is a sweet moment. O to live like that for an hour is a very high privilege, a very great mercy. To be sincere in your prayers; honestly in the Spirit to say, Lord I want to be right and to live as a Christian should live; to humble myself under Thy mighty hand, to accept Thy dealings with me. O what a mercy. Today you may have had that mercy and sweet it has been to you has it not. You may have felt O, such compunction, such contrition, such unworthiness and guiltiness and sinfulness and the subtlety of sin may come in and cause you to think, now I have taken a step, now there is a victory. Why, dear friends, the old thing is up again and will need killing again. "Mortify the deeds of the body and ye shall live." O, it is a great thing to give your will up, My Lord Will be Will; to give up that perverted, that perverse, stubborn faculty of your nature, the will that you have by creation but that is so dreadfully perverted by sin, and you choose in place of that old will, so persistent as it is, the will of God; to say from the heart in some trouble - "Thy will be done". What a mercy that is. We have a pattern in this beautiful, glorious Jesus Christ. In the garden of Gethsemane He exemplified His Own Word. I have come, He said, to do the will of Him that sent Me. In the garden, when the cup was given to Him to drink, when the near future of suffering was presented to Him, when He knew that shortly the curse of the law, the hiding of His Father's face, the piercings of sorrow, the sorrow of death, when He

knew that all these things were near to Him and felt that agony in His heart that produced the sweat and blood and felt that weakness in His nature that brought an angel from heaven to strengthen Him, then, then He said "Not as I will but as Thou wilt". And can you look on that solemn scene of suffering and self-denial, O child of God, can you contemplate what it cost the dear Saviour of sinners to bring you to a good hope, to open a new and living way for you to approach the Almighty, to give you a solid ground of hope, a foundation for hope, and a title to heaven, and willingly, ardently, persistently, nurse your own will; rebel against the manifestation of God's will concerning you in some providence. Ah you will say, when in a right spirit, God forbid that I should do such a thing.

Walking in this precept is, in the first place, inward and I would insist on that more especially because outward consistency may very well be, with death in trespasses and sins, but this inward sacrifice, the sacrifice of self, the denial of self, O this is close, this is close. What, says proud, selfish nature, give this up? What, lose this righteousness, abandon this will, give up that that is dear and sweet. No I will never do it, says nature. But grace comes and what is promised in the 6 chapter of this Epistle becomes an experience. "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace." And God bruises this Satan under our feet, and we can give up what nature cleaves to. Beware of this; Malachi, by God's inspiration, charges Israel with grievous sins and those sins, not first of all done among themselves and against each other, but sins against God, sins against His altar, against His table. These are the sins that will trouble you chiefly as you may be godly. These are the things that will hurt your conscience as the Spirit shows them to you. O I think if we were allowed to look at those chapters diligently and the Spirit were to shine on them into our hearts and our inward conduct, what shame would fill us, what confusion would cover us, what fear we should feel. They are very solemn chapters and I do commend them to your attention, your close attention. So when you are brought to bring this living sacrifice, to deny self, you are brought to that which is your reasonable service. Christian reasonableness brought to that which a corrupted reason can never agree with, but a Christian reason loves it. By Christian reason I mean the enlightening of the Spirit of

Christ into the mind of Christ bringing that to pass that the Apostle speaks of to the Corinthians - "We have the mind of Christ". It is His mind that we should walk in His holy ways.

Now there are certain outward things about which the Scriptures are not silent and I would just say one word to you here, this namely, whatever the Holy Ghost has seen fit to write in this Book is worthy the strict, constant, and prayerful attention of the people of God, and I am sure no God-fearing person here will say, but I cannot keep these things. Rather he will be saying,

O that the Lord would guide my ways
To keep His statutes still
O that my God would grant me grace
To know and do His will

Does that reach you? Why, that hymn is a good sermon; the Lord make it so to us. Now come to the Church of God first of all. The Church of God is made up of the election of grace who are made believers. A particular Church is a congregation of believers in Jesus Christ who are gathered to the throne of God's heavenly grace by the Spirit and to one another in the providence of God. And the Lord speaks to Churches; solemnly He speaks to them. He finds fault with them when they are faulty. He looks at the doctrines they hold and if any of them are false He charges them with holding what He hates. He looks at the company that they have and keep and if it be not right He tells them of it, and would have them purge out the old leaven that they may be a new leaven and serve the Lord. He looks on their ways and when they are wrong He says, I have not found thy works perfect before God. Then He says, repent and do the first works or else I will come unto you quickly and remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent. This is very solemn. Seven churches there were in Asia; five of them particularly corrupted. My brethren, it will become us and may be useful to us to examine our standing here. I do not know, either in myself or in the church here and in the godly in the congregation of any error of doctrine held. Of any gross impropriety in practice, or any evil company that is sought after and is kept, I do not know, but I do know this, that I myself am liable to a fall. I do know that the Church of God has had many declensions and therefore it may be well if we were enabled to examine our standing and our state

and in doing this there will be something that will be just like this text. I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice. As when a single person goes in secret before God and is enabled sincerely to ask the Lord to examine and search him, so a church may be led by the Holy Ghost in secret to ask if there is any wrong thing that God would purge it away and that He would confirm the people in all that is right and godly. Now this is against nature but it is according to grace, it is according to the holy will of God. Therefore my brethren, this be given us by the Holy Spirit to come again and again and examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, whether we hold anything wrong. It is very solemn to consider this which, as it comes into my mind - it came into my mind this afternoon - I will mention to you, namely that much evil is done by a single person in a congregation. Achan affected all Israel by his sin. A Jonah may bring a storm, a great wind to a people. I need not say again I hope that I do not know of any thing, but I am sure I am not wrong in putting these things before you, that you may seek to come before God in His holy precepts; examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Then in the church we are exhorted to look every man on the things of another, not on his own things. Each is to seek his brother's welfare, to look after the state of his brother. This is in holy Scripture. Also it is said in Scripture, ye need not that I speak to you about loving one another, for ye are taught of God to love one another. Here are God's own words, and as professing His Name, as we believe having His holy fear in our hearts, many of us may feel how short we come in this reasonable service, how short we come with respect to seeking each others welfare and loving one another. In the Ephesians, the Spirit says by Paul - Be ye followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, even as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself a sacrifice for us, a sweetsmelling savour unto God. Mind that; this is respecting the Church of God. Also in the Church it is said, and said in this chapter, this important chapter - Let, it says, none of you think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Faith and humility are here united. If you have a good measure of faith you will have a good measure of humility. If you have little faith you may be proud of your religion. To think soberly is to think of yourself as a poor, corrupt creature, who needs grace constantly to keep him low; grace to pray honestly with

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Make us well our vileness know
Keep us very very low

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O what a grace is humility. "Pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction". Seek then this as a part of your reasonable service, to walk in all humbleness of mind. "Let each esteem other better than himself" O what a blessing it is to have true humility. I have thought sometimes of God's mercy to us here with us, especially when we have had Church Meetings, because of this great thing, we are not afraid to meet each other and that is a great mercy and may it be continued to us. Not afraid to meet each other; why, because through grace there is no quarrelling. O it is a blessed thing when it is as a reasonable service regarded by us as such, that we can walk before the Lord humbly and toward each other in proper humility. "Let each esteem other better than himself". This belongs to the Church of God. A minister is exhorted how to walk; he is to wait on his ministering. He is not to entangle himself in the affairs of this life that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier; that is to a minister. He is to give himself wholly to the things of God as Paul said to Timothy. Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them. Make it your business and give your heart to meditating on these things. And what about the hearers, what about the members of the Church of God. Why, this; submit yourselves; obey them that have the rule over you. Why? For they watch for your souls that they may do it with joy and not with grief. Obey them; no priestly authority is intended here; no lauding it over God's heritage is intended here, for that is contrary to another exhortation in the Scriptures, but it means this, that when the word has authority in it, when it touches the case, when some doubt is removed, some bondage is broken, some wrong thing is discovered and deliverance from it is wrought, when the atonement is brought in the ministry, and enters some guilty conscience, when love is brought and enters into some hard heart, then there is efficacy, and people are not reluctant then to submit to that ministry, to bring their consciences and hearts and affections and lay them, so to speak, bare before that, and this is that part of reasonable service. Christian reasonableness. What belongs to Christ and what comes from Him into His people's hearts produces this, a reasonableness according to the

gospel of the Lord Jesus. And now my friends, there are other exhortations belonging to the Church of God, addressed to her, such things as concern our outward conduct amongst men. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "We are willing" says Paul, "to live honestly amongst men". This is an exhortation and tells how we are to comport ourselves in this world and that, according to the different positions we occupy, the relationships in life we sustain. The husband is to love his wife and not be bitter against her; the wife is to obey the husband in the Lord in all things; the parent is to rule his house but not so as to discourage his children and the children are to obey their parents in all things. Masters, men who employ labour, masters - a rule is given for them. They are to rule in the fear of God. O, the severity of the Scripture against the unjust master. O the solemn word of God against a master who withholds the hire of his labourer. God will visit him. He little thinks when he oppresses a godly servant how that the cries of that servant enter into the ear of the Lord of Sabbaoth and will one day bring down a solemn answer of punishment upon the ungracious master. And servants, these are to obey their masters in the Lord and these are to do what is right. It is a good thing to see, what certainly is to be seen where grace is, that a servant will do his best and while he knows it is proper for him to have a full day's wages, he believes also that it is proper for him to give a full day's service. Grace will make the best husband, the best wife, the best parent, the best child, the best master, and the best servant. Now the ground for these exhortations is what God has done for us. I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. Indulge not the flesh, walk not according to its wicked dictates, follow not its ungodly desires; walk after Christ. That, as I understand it, is the spirit of this exhortation. Bring yourselves to the throne of God's heavenly grace and whatever is contrary to God, whatever is contrary to the doctrine which is according to godliness, whatever militates against the fear of God in the conscience, sacrifice; give up; beg the Lord to deliver you from it. Ask him to save you from living in anything that is wrong; inwardly first, then externally. Inwardly first - yes, your life and my life is first of all what we are in secret, what we are on our knees, what we are when we read the Scriptures; whether we fear God, whether we desire to worship Him,

whether we confess our sins, whether we pray to be enabled to forsake them, whether we long to be united to Christ, whether we long to be cut off and cut out of the old man and the old dead stock. This is the true life of a child of God; what he is in secret. Then what he is amongst his fellows, what he is in the Church. His tongue is not to be his own but to be bridled by the fear of God. His purse is not his absolutely but to be used as God may give him wisdom and discretion for the good of all others when he has more than he needs for himself. His steps are not to be his own but he is to seek to be guided by the Lord. Order my footsteps by Thy Word; let no corrupt design or covetous desires rise up and corrupt and injure this soul of mine. This sacrifice is holy. Then says one, I am afraid I am short; I feel no holiness sometimes in my spirit. A holy thing, according to Scripture usage of that word, is a thing that is set apart, and every child of God answers to that, not in the decree of God only - it is there, O yes it is there - but it belongs to every child of God when grace calls him away from himself and away from the world unto the throne of God's heavenly grace. When he is called to pray, called to believe, and called to hope in the mercy of God and called out of the world. To be called out of the world is to be called away from assimilating with the world. To do with it is a necessity of our daily life; to assimilate with it is a sin, and it is against this sin that we are, through grace, to struggle and labour. So, brethren, may the Lord help us to believe that everything we are led to give up for, and in the Name of, the Lord Jesus, in that there is holiness. "Acceptable" - O this may touch you in your feelings as it does one's self. "Acceptable" - Yes. When, through faith, you are brought to make this sacrifice, this living sacrifice, it goes up to God through, and perfumed by, the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus. Did you ever give up anything for God? Did His holy fear ever bring you to yield up a thing that might have been profitable to you and promised pleasure? That was an acceptable sacrifice. God was pleased with it in the Lord Jesus. If you look at the imperfections that mar everything you do, well you will be distressed. If you look at the short-comings that will mar all your steps and desires and prayers and feelings and everything else, you will be troubled. But if you are enabled, while not losing sight of your short-comings, yet to look to the merits of Jesus Christ, then you will see that there is a ground of acceptance, that there is the reason of acceptance; in no

other place is it to be found. "Which is your reasonable service",
and God has all the heart in it

He requires, pure desires,
All the heart or nothing

and He gets it. And when you can fall before Him; when, if you commit
a fault against another you can own that and confess it; when, seeing
yourself to be less than others you can willingly and gladly take the
lowest place, then it is that there is this acceptable sacrifice. God
keep this big "I" down. God bring this great person into the dust,
that grace may reign, Christ be King, Prophet, and Priest; All in
All; that His glorious Person may be everything, His precious work
save us, His atoning blood cleanse us, His Holy Spirit dwell in us,
His blessed fear move us to clean things, that we may be separated
from the world and walk in all humbleness of mind before and with the
Lord.

AMEN.