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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed Chapel,  
Brighton on Sunday morning 7.9.1924

Song of Solomon Chapter 1 verses 7 and 8

"Tell me O Thou whom my soul loveth where Thou feedest,  
where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why  
should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy  
companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,  
go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed  
thy kids beside the shepherds tents".

The Song of Songs is a wonderful and beautiful part of the holy inspired scripture and to have spiritual experience of this song is one of these especial mercies which God gives to some of His people more than to others and perhaps in this our dark and evil day comparatively few enter into this song. I do not draw your attention to this part of it for any especial acquaintance that I myself, so carnal, have, but because, as it seems to me, these verses do meet the condition of the Lord's people when they are at all lively and if they have not attained to that after which their hearts go. [Here is a request. The song opens with some apparent abruptness. Love does not need, does not make long performances. Love is hungry, love will take a short cut to get to the object of it, love to Christ will always do that and so here - the church speaks at once to Him she loves, who is the object of her faith and her trust, her hope, her confidence and her affection. "Let Him", No need to say who she means. There is no need to say who is this Person spoken to in this form, because there is only one Him to the church. I say there is only one Him to the Church and that is the Husband: As he has only one she, one fairest, one most blessed, and that is His bride, and so she says at once "Let Him come and let Him kiss me" Let Him give that token, common and beautiful and ever fresh, where real, let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth" The request means let the Lord speak to me, let Him come and remove all distance and shyness and confusion and fear and doubt, let Him do that to me which will remove those pains. Hungry love is a pained love when its object is distant and silent. You understand that? I believe a number of you will understand that. God knows the pain of a heart that wants Him and has Him not; that longs for communications and receives them not. "Let Him kiss me" Let there not be a distance between us. Let Him not be silent to me. This was the feeling and the prayer of the Psalmist who said "Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me I become like them that go down to the pit" If you find the Lord silent to you as you are more

or less moved and helped and led by the Spirit you will be jealous, then you will become fearful, then you will search and try to find out the cause or causes of His silence and His distance. Love in the soul is never quiet. It moves differently, sometimes slowly, sometimes with great vehemence, but it always has one direction and that is toward and after Him who is its great object. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth for Thy love is better than wine," and this vehement desire thus expressed is the key as I judge to this seventh verse. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon" You were just now singing "Tis a point I long to know," I wish that hymn were better known by many than it is. I am afraid, and I have some reason for my fear, I am afraid that that hymn is very much out of date and fashion with many people who talk about the doctrines of grace. If you know you love Him then you will thank Him, but if you do not know you love Him what can you do better than go to Him with your uncertainty. Then go to Him with a request to make the matter plain, to clear away doubt, by putting His love into your soul, for that, <sup>that</sup> would be the remedy, for His love made known to you, as being fixed on you, would draw out infallibly, your love to Him. Our love is a poor grace, comparatively, compared with His eternal love. What a spark, what a smoke our poor love is, but when there is that doubt as I have said, the best thing to do is, as you are enabled, go to the Lord and tell Him about it and He can make it plain. Here she, the church, has no doubt about it; she declares to Him her love to Him, and yet she is not satisfied with her present position. She wants to know what apparently she is at present unacquainted with, "Tell me O Thou whom my soul loveth where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon." I feel disposed as I may be enabled to speak a little first of all, of the love of a sinner, of the church, to the Lord Jesus. "O Thou whom my soul loveth". He is worthy of it. The poor smokey love that we have, He is worthy of infinitely more, why? First because He is the Beloved of His Father, the only begotten and the only Beloved of His Father, eternally lying in His Father's bosom, His Father's delight; everything that the Father has is the Son's. The Father loveth the Son therefore He hath committed all things into His hands. The infinite love of God the Father is fixed upon His only begotten Son and therefore He set Him up eternally to be the Head of all creatures, the beginning, the head of the whole creation of God; made Him the head of all principalities and powers and more

intimately the head of the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. So that everything a sinner can need, the love he desires to feel, the glory he would have covering him, the life he would have animating him, the comforts he would have flowing into his soul, the peace he would feel in his conscience, the strength he would know to bear burdens, and the mercy and grace he would have to say "Thy will be done". All these infinite blessings God has placed in His dearly beloved Son. And is not He worthy of love who is loved of the Father and to whom the Father has committed all rule and all authority and power. O if we could just for a moment meditate upon this that the infinite God, the Eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ looks upon His Son with infinite delight and has given to Him an account of this "The Father loveth the Son therefore He hath given to Him everything, committed all authority and rule and power to Him and it is His will, <sup>the will of the Father</sup> that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. My friends it has pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell because the fulness of the godhead bodily is in Him and so the Son is there with all light. The Lord is there with the fulness of life, the fulness of righteousness; He is there to reconcile sinners unto God His Father, there to be to them everything from the beginning to the end.

And a second reason is this, that the Father in this His infinite great delight, His infinite mercy, has sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for the sins of the church, sent Him - "In this the love of God was manifested because He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Everything that God would give and will give to His church He has given to His Son for her. Every blessing that shall ever glad your eyes and hearts you will receive from Jesus Christ, because the Father sent Him to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, says John but for all those who should come after even poor sinners here this day. Well my brethren, it is a great thing for the eye of faith to be fixed on Him whom the Father sent, to whom the Father gave a commandment that He should lay down His life. Think of it.

And the third reason is this that this blessed Lord Jesus freely came. The Lord commends His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly. The highest possible reach and expression of the love of Christ we have in this truth, that He came and said to His Father - "I delight to do Thy will

O God, Thy law is within my heart!" and He knew when He said it, that that will took the form of a commandment that He should lay down His life - "Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life; no man taketh My life from Me; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again, this commandment have I received from My Father", and when Christ was on the cross love was there in its greatest reach, its mightiest movement, its most glorious manifestation. O the matchless love of Christ that brought Him from heaven to the cross and the grave. The matchless love of this Blessed One is such as that when it is seen, then <sup>the</sup> soul becomes hungry for it, and there is a pain in hunger that is not satisfied; a pain in love that cannot find its centre as it would; a pain in delays of this, the answer that love craves, and what a mercy it is to have this love then, in your soul, that you can say "O Thou whom my soul loveth". The searcher of hearts knows how many lovers of the Lord Jesus are sitting here; how many can honestly say to Him-"Our souls love Thee, and loving Thee, we have a wish, and the wish is expressed in the text, "Tell me where Thou feedest?" Love to Christ will show itself, must show itself. Love to Christ cannot be content without Him. You may have lived days without Him but you won't be happy. You may go on months without Him as to manifestations, but you won't be happy. You may cry and shout and He may seem to shut out your prayer, then you will be most unhappy, You may look for Him in the scripture and mourn your blindness because you cannot see Him. You may wait for Him, but if He delays, O the jealous pain that you will feel will be inexpressible - "O Thou whom my soul loveth". Do you ask yourselves sometimes - Did I ever get a visit from Him? Do you say sometimes it is a long time since I heard about Him, heard from Him, since He came near to me. If it be so and you are lively then you will have pain, hunger, thirst. It is a poor religion that does not move us, awful a religion we have that does not move us after Him, and if we have this love for Him the world is spoiled, yes the world is spoiled. There is no attraction in it as love is after Christ. You will see everything will be dimmed and confusion will be on your order and nature will be empty to you and you will enter into the language of the Psalmist who, after chastening because of his rebellion, found that he was with God and God was with him. He said "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee!" and you will feel in your soul, that solemn pain because you have not the Lord with you.

Look at this request "Tell me!" She wants some communications.

She is not happy without them. Is it so with you. Is religion just a moving to the place of worship and away again? A reading of a chapter in the morning and again in the evening and a kneeling in the form without any communications? It is a poor religion, if you have found nothing better than that, a very poor religion, different from this. Ah, she wanted to know where He was, where He fed His people. "Tell me, tell me Lord" This takes us from general knowledge, for we all know generally by the scriptures what the answer to this is, but this is something more intimate - tell me, speak to my soul, leave me not destitute, leave me not without hearing Thy voice, without feeling the power of it in my soul. It intimates this - that the sinner is sending out requests to the Saviour, sending out petitions for mercy, for this particular mercy - "Tell me where Thou feedest". Is it so with you? How many of you have felt this morning that you could not do without the Lord of life and glory, that if you could possibly get Him to speak to your soul that that was everything. It embraced every request you had to prefer before Him, or have you been and are you now content with the form without the power. Let honest conscience answer. Now look at this particular - what she wanted. "Tell me where Thou feedest", where Thou art pleased to communicate that which is to the flock bread or nourishment. Feed Thy flock which dwelleth solitary in the wood, feed this people, Where does Christ feed His people? Not in the world. Come out from among them", He says and "be ye separate;" Not in earthly things. His kingdom is not of this world. "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power, and in the Holy Ghost!" Not in earthly pleasure or things, not in possessions, however great they may be, and however pleasant to those who have them; He does not feed there. Feed Thy flock that dwelleth solitarily in the wood, gathered out of the world and into the wilderness. It is there that He feeds them and what is to be understood by this? He feeds them in and by means of the word of God. He feeds them in and by means of the scriptures. "Do not My words do good?" "Thy words were found," said Jeremiah, "and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;" That is a point, whether you know what it is for any divine truth to come into your hearts with power, and this is a very large field, because we find the word of God going out so to speak into various branches, divine truth expressing itself in various doctrines, as when you come to the apostles word to Timothy, he said, "Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine" and this brings one to speak of the eternal love of God. God speaks

this and if ever you hear Him tell you what your soul requires and enquires after, namely "That He has loved you with an everlasting love," then you will understand a little of what it is to be fed, and of where He feeds you. It is here in the Holy Scripture. He said, as it is written in Jeremiah, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Again in Hosea He said "I drew thee with the cords of love." Let My love down into their hearts and by the power and sweetness of it I drew them to My bosom. So the word of God is made as Christ said "Spirit and life," The flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." So when a word of love comes into a sinner's heart, it animates him, moves every faculty of his renewed soul, brings him into a place of sweet repentance and sweet joy and heavenly comfort, and leads him to contemplate Him whose love is fixed on so unworthy an object, and the more that this love is felt, the unworthier does the happy subject of it feel himself to be, the lower he gets, the sweeter is his repentance, the more pure is his repentance. Ah he wonders and will never cease to wonder as long as he lives whenever he feels it, how the infinite God could fix His free, eternal, pure, blessed love on so unworthy a sinner. "On such love," he says, "my soul still ponder." This is what the sinner wants. "Tell me where Thou feedest." Where Thou art pleased to communicate to sinners what Thou hast to communicate to them and then it comes to this great doctrine - the love of God. Do you wish sometimes you could say "When shall I find my willing heart all taken up by Thee?" A willing heart. I looked at it this morning and wished I could always say it - "When shall I find my willing heart," (It is not willing naturally,) "all taken up by Thee." The love of God. "O love divine, how sweet Thou art." It is sweet, sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Love in its gift, the gift of the only begotten Son. Love in its working, in the working out of a divine righteousness, of the opening of a fountain for sin and uncleanness. Love in its voice speaking so powerfully as that for the time there is no doubt left on my mind as to the sweetness and the greatness of redeeming love. Love in its fixedness, never to be moved, never taken away from an object. The Lord will not cast away His people, because it hath pleased Him to make them His people; and this love is that that God feeds the sinner with; He lets it down. It is, as Paul expresses it to the Romans, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Is this one of those wondrous mercies which your souls are after? "Tell me where Thou feedest". He feeds in and by doctrine, the doctrine of God's free, eternal, electing love, setting up in His own blessed eternity His

dear Son, "Behold My Servant, Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth," and then from Him this flows to sinners and He says "I have loved Thee!" to a sinner, "with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." O the cords of love must be felt as cast around your souls, to be understood. The power, the drawing power, the satisfying power, the sweetness of that love you must feel to understand it. That is one thing, then, one place or doctrine where Christ feeds His sheep. They go in, they find it. They go out and they miss it and they go in again and find this sweet green pasture, and understand experimentally a little of what the Psalmist felt when he said "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters". This is one of the places - the love of God. A large place; plenty of room in it, plenty of sweetness in it, nourishment in it, comfort in it; everything needed in it. Strength to go on, and mercy to sweetly enable you to say "Thy will be done!" "Tell me," says one - "I am not worthy of it!" "I am not fit for it!" Worthy of it, you never can be. Fit for it you may be. What is fitness for this as to experience? A sense of need, of ruin, of utter worthlessness. Well I dare say a good many of you will say at this, if that is fitness for it, then we are fit, and I am with you. We are fit for it, if ruin is a fitness for salvation, if worthlessness is a fitness for the worth of Christ, if emptiness is a fit place for a supply then a sinner can say "I am fit for that, fit for the love of Christ, for the love of the Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. "Point out the place!" as if the sinner should say "Lord point out the place where love is". It is in God. God is love. It flows out of God in vessels afore prepared unto glory. It comes where there is no comfort in this world as to self, or circumstances with regard to Eternity. It comes to those who are hungry for it, God giving first of all the hunger.

"Tell me where Thou feedest" The Lord feeds in and by the glorious doctrine of His death. The death of Christ is to be our life. We live while we behold the Saviour die. We live when feeling the guilt of sin and the condemnation of the law, the atoning work of Jesus Christ is made known in some degree of light and life and power and this is a wonderful thing. In, and by this, access to the Father is obtained - "For through Him we both have access unto the Father by one Spirit." O it is great, very great to get this glorious atonement into your heart and conscience. It feeds the soul, it nourishes the conscience,

putting the peace of God there. It warms the affections, drawing up love to Him who made that sweet and full atonement. It satisfies the mind; there is rest for the mind in the atonement that can never be found elsewhere. It satisfies every craving of the immortal soul. There is enough here; O more than you can take in, the merit of Christ, the favour of God through that merit, the forgiveness of sin through that merit, the purifying of the soul through that merit and the uniting of the soul to God in that merit; all in the atoning blood of Christ. Now how suitable is this to one who, born again, feels his guilt and wickedness. How suitable it is to a sinner who says honestly "I have not a scrap of goodness; I have not an atom of righteousness. I have nothing but unholiness, unrighteousness, wickedness in my nature, sin in my thoughts, in my desires. I have nothing at all but that which God must reprove and hate in myself," and now he goes on to say "I do want that which I see in holy scripture and which I get glimpses of at times; I want the atonement of Christ on my conscience." O what meat is to be compared with this, what nourishment can you ever receive apart from the death of Jesus Christ? That death must be your life; that death is to be the open door in prayer; that death is to be the satisfaction of an awakened, clamorous conscience; that death is to silence every fear of a guilty creature; that death will show the Father's love, the Father's pleasure, the Father's delight, and that death will usher the guilty creature into God's presence, fit him for heaven and take him there. Christ feeds with this; he feeds with this doctrine, gives it out to a sinner now a little and then a little more. The atonement becomes the nourishment of faith. There comes a sweet exciting cord of love, there comes the ground of all real hope, that blessed atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the food of the church. Woe to that sinner who can find food and satisfaction in anything short of this, but blessed is that sinner who feels, wicked as he is, he cannot leave the throne of grace, he must go again and again and again to Him who made the atonement and say "Tell me O Thou whom my soul loveth where Thou feedest." Yea, he may say, "I do love Thee for making the atonement, now bring that atonement into my heart; purify my conscience from all dead works, that I may serve the living God," Now I hope I shall never get away from this. I wish I knew properly, adequately, how to express it. You will never get away from it in your desires as these desires may be moved by the Eternal Spirit, for every day we get new defilement. In all we do we sin and therefore there is a continual need for this atonement.

Once and for ever, when Christ said "It is finished," sin was removed, but over and over again and constantly we are bringing defilement to our consciences and therefore we need new application of this, fresh views of it, new touches whereby we may perceive our souls nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine. This is good doctrine; herein is Christ exalted; herein He is honoured by faith. Here the soul finds the ground on which it may stand, and the door through which he may enter into the presence of God.

"Tell me where Thou feedest." Now I conclude with another word - He feeds at the throne of grace. Thence rays of mercy and of light and of comfort beam forth and reach the hearts of sinners. The throne of grace - one sings "Thy mercy seat is open still, here let my soul retreat, with humble hope attend Thy will, and wait beneath Thy feet." [Poor sinner, look to this throne. Raise thy downcast eyes to this blessed throne; see the Saviour there and hear Him say "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." There is the rest, Himself the throne, Himself the rest, His mouth, the sweetness, as it expresses truth into the heart; there is the rest. "I will give you rest, I am the rest." This throne is where we get wondrous relief. Here the Lord lets us know that He cares for us, numbers the hairs of our heads, won't let fall one without His notice, as a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice. Wondrous is this place, the beginning of heaven on earth, the relief of a burdened sinner, the comfort of one who is in miserable circumstances of some sort or kind. Here God shines forth; here He says "Fear not". Here He gives out a blessing which satisfies. There He stretches out His arm to sustain the weary and the burdened, so that it is a place where He feeds his people.

"Tell me where Thou feedest", where Thou openest Thy mercy and revealest Thyself and Thy intentions and Thy purposes. Tell me where Thou feedest. Is this what you desire to know and do not know? "O" He says "If thou know not O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed thy kids beside the shepherds tents", He will let you know where this place is; not on earth, but in heaven, and down from that place will come the sweetness and the mercy that you seek at His blessed hands. No man ever prayed this prayer in vain. He may wait a long time for a satisfying answer, but he will get the answer sooner or later. Take these three points that I have named wherewith Christ feeds His people; the green pasture of His eternal love, the sweetness

and blessedness of His gracious word, the everlasting gospel,  
and the glorious death of Christ made known by the Holy Ghost,  
in the heart of a sinner. Now these three things will be  
nourishment here and bliss hereafter. The Lord grant them  
to us.

Amen.

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