

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord". According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

11 Peter 1. v.1-3.

It is a solemn venture to announce such a text as this, you may say well, why do you do it? I believe this, my friends, that the lower we sink in a sense of what we are in ourselves, we shall need and seek none less and nothing lower than the eternal God in Christ, and it is most merciful that the Scriptures have united these two together. Especially perhaps that in Isaiah, speaking of the High and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, "I dwell in the high and holy place" as though the Prophet, by the Holy Ghost exalts the glorious Jehovah as high as his powers could and immediately drops down, "With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit". Then again, in the 102nd Psalm, we have this. "HE, that unspeakably glorious God, not only the creator of heaven and earth, but in whom is all the fullness of all things, who is before all things and by whom all things consist, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute". He and the destitute. Ah, my friends, real religion is experimental, but what sacred teaching there is in it and I believe throughout the whole there will be this, a constant teaching of what we are in ourselves and in the ruin of the fall, and who and what God in Christ is, in all the fullness of His grace.

I know there might be some here, and I can sympathise with them who perhaps would be able to fall in with Peter if it should say, "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ", to the chief of sinners "grace and peace be multiplied unto you"; but then, grace and peace cannot be multiplied to anybody else but the chief of sinners, and this Man receiveth sinners, because there is nobody else to receive but sinners. What a mercy to be a sinner by the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us". So that the apostle here is very particular as to the nature of faith. That wonderful chapter that we read is a definition of real faith (Hebrews 11). Faith is not the development of any natural quality or faculty. Faith is the gift of God, it is a grace of the Spirit. It is a faculty of the new man in the heart, a new creation. And therefore, it is of the first importance to examine ourselves as to the nature of our faith. "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us". With the apostles, with the great cloud of witnesses that have gone before recorded in that chapter that we read. Speaking of Abraham it says, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise". Faith viewed the same promise. "That having obtained like precious faith with us". There is a natural faith, there is a temporary faith. A natural faith can be obtained by natural study. There is no reason at all why an intelligent person in studying the word of God but what he may know in his judgement the whole scheme of salvation and assent unto it, and yet be destitute of this like precious faith. Thousands hear, they may write volumes of a religious nature but have no living faith. The description in the 11th Hebrews of a living faith is very important. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and therefore, how important it is to be assured that our faith is of the right kind. There is only one right kind of faith, it is the gift of God, it dwells in the heart, it has the life of God in it, it works by love. "Having obtained like precious faith with us. There is to be considered in faith, the nature of faith

the object of faith and the subject of faith. The nature of faith is that which stands in the power of God, it is only by that faith that we can believe unto salvation of our souls, that is the difference. A natural faith does not make a believer, at least not one who believes to the salvation of the soul. The object of faith is the blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and seeing that it pleased the Father that in His eternal Son should dwell all the fullness, and that the government should be upon His shoulder, the object of faith is God in Christ. The object of faith is the Gospel in all its fullness and life and eternity, and such is the nature of this faith that it brings in the subject upon which it meditates; a natural faith does nothing, is cold, is dead, is logical. I am sick of religious logic. O to have a grain of faith, a spark of divine life in the soul and this living faith will unite a soul to what it knows. Faith is by knowledge fed. Faith knows God with that knowledge that brings what it knows of God into the soul.

"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us". This is a comfort to the Lord's people and I have desired it may be a comfort to some poor seeking sinner, because the nature of living faith is just this, it goes out of self unto its object. It lives, not upon self and what self is or can do, for that has been killed, but it lives upon Christ, lives upon His life. There is a constant going forth of faith in its labours, labours to enter into the things revealed. The Holy Ghost in His revelations only reveals to that faculty of the soul faith. Faith is the receptive faculty of the soul which alone can receive a revelation of Christ in the Gospel, so as to receive the power, the virtue, the benefits, the life of Christ, it is a receptive faculty. O what a mercy to have this faith.

"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us". And if we examine ourselves whether we are in the faith - in it, it will influence the whole of our profession. I have thought of that word in Haggai, he was the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message. That is to say he was not just a messenger carrying a message, but he was the Lord's messenger in it; he was in the message that he carried and if a minister has the Holy Spirit with him, He will be in the message by faith and if you have like precious faith in your heart, in your hearing, you will be in the message in your hearing. There will be a vital connexion between the things revealed in the Gospel and the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul. That is how you will know whether you have obtained like precious faith with us those worthies, and of course, we will compare, or examine ourselves, by that 11th chapter. Whether in any measure we have that faith which does such exploits. It is a faith that moves the soul Godward. It is a power. "By faith, Abraham when he was called to go out into a place he should after receive for an inheritance, he obeyed". He obeyed by faith. We shall never believe, as we have said, in that way to the saving of the soul unless we have a God given faith. He forsook his own country, his own people and went forth not knowing whither he went; and for substance, wherever this faith is given, it will have the same effect, it is separating, it will set a soul on pilgrimage, it will set him after seeking God, "For the just shall live by faith". Not by the grace of faith, but live by what faith beholds; living by its object. Therefore, the first setting out on pilgrimage is a commencement of a life of faith. "Now the just shall live by faith but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him", "but we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but those that believe" - with such a faith as to the saving of their souls. They believe right into the things they hear and their faith brings in the very substance of Christ in the Gospel. So that you cannot have a more blessed definition of faith than in the first verse, "Now faith is the substance - not the shadow, a dead faith may see the shadow, the letter, but "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of unseen things".

The blessed eye of faith can, by the Spirit, see the mystery of the Gospel. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven", and this mystery is known by faith. "To them that have

obtained like precious faith". O it is a precious faith ! and you will reject any other faith. It will give such a jealousy over your own soul and over your salvation and the profession of God's great name, you will refuse everything else. It is a part of the anointing really. The anointing that His people have received is the anointing of the Spirit and the implantation of every grace of the Spirit in the heart. Precious faith. If we have it it will be tried. "The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth". O look at the things that it possesses, it is faith that puts the soul in possession of the Gospel. "The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth", is that your estimation of it ? I can see just at this moment the preciousness of faith because first, it is the gift of God, it stands in His power, and because it is that faith the Holy Ghost reveals everything that pertains to life and to godliness and because of the eternal kingdom that it reveals and brings into the heart. Why, nothing is to be compared with it, and I have thought of this trial of faith, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Christ Jesus". The trial of it is precious. It will be a trial, but through the process you will be brought to agree with Hezekiah, "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit".

But look at the trial of faith. I have noticed how it proceeds from the preceding verses; Peter there speaks of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith," through faith. Faith is a method. There is something precious about faith. Had it pleased God He could have appointed that when He called His people by grace they should have a carefree journey the remainder of their life to heaven, but it was not. Have you ever seen the beauty of it ? You will see a beauty, even in grief, in your own grief, you will see wisdom in your lowest places, in your most terrible calamities. "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein we greatly rejoice". That is, in a hope of that inheritance. But we have not got there yet; "Though now for a season if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation". The purpose is the trial of this precious faith, and such things and such fires as will destroy everything that is not of God. Everything that is not the work of the Holy Ghost will be destroyed, but look at this - "Though it be tried with fire, might be found". I like that. Ah, to see what some of the Lord's people have passed through, even as we read that 11th Hebrews and we see some of the fiery trials that some had as though it would destroy everything; but "Might be found", as though there will be a searching for it among the ashes; and some of His poor dear people that have been reduced to ashes in the fiery furnace, it is very blessed to come into contact with a real grace in the heart and faith in the soul of one in deep affliction; and then it is, as it were, that the Lord rakes about in the ashes of the burning things and recognises His faith. Here it is. "Might be found unto praise and honour, and glory".

What is the praise and honour and glory of this found faith ? Why, that it is of such a substance that nothing could destroy it. "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us". What do you think about it ? Have you any ground to believe that you possess this faith, that you have obtained it ? I wonder what you are saying in your heart. I should imagine that some of you are saying, 'O, I wish I could'. "Faith in the bleeding Lamb". Faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith which brings in just those things that I must possess unless I am lost for ever. But is there an attraction in them ? Now this is a vital point, if those of you who are feeling about in your soul as to whether you have faith, I hope I may be able to speak the right thing, because these things are solemn. The preaching of the Gospel is a heavy matter with me. Well now, those of you who want to know whether you have faith. A dead faith that lives upon the letter of the word, there is no contact between what is read and the knowledge that is acquired with anything that is going on in experience. Is there in you ? When you read the Scriptures, or hear the Gospel, is there anything ? Now be careful - Is there anything in your heart that says, I must have that ? or when the Lord Jesus

is exalted, is there that in your heart that says, O that I knew where I might find Him. Is there a response in your heart to the Gospel? if there is, you have obtained like precious faith. There is no response in a dead faith. "To them that have like precious faith". It is the faith of God's elect; and if you have this faith, if you have this response, if there is that faith in you which has connected your experience, your deep need, your sense of sin and ruin with the Redeemer and His precious blood and righteousness, it is an evidence of your election. "Our Gospel came unto you not in word only". It is a very important Scripture. The Gospel may come in word only and in a correct word but in word only, the paper and the ink, and a man may know the truth as he knows the history of England, but what is the history of England to him? He knows that there was such a King as Henry VIII, he believes it but it does not matter to him whether there was or whether there was not. But O, for that precious faith that unites the soul to a living Christ, it is a faith by which we know we have union with Christ. Well then, have you that response in your heart? You know whether you have. You may not be able to say that you have the faith of God's elect; why, that very word would seem to frighten you, but for the moment you can leave that word out and examine yourself by this, Does the Gospel come into your heart in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance? You say, I lack that assurance, but do you? It may not be the assurance that you are going to heaven, that may follow, but have you not this assurance - and a full assurance of faith it is, that you are assured, as that dear woman, "If I can but touch the hem of His garment I shall be whole", assured of that. If I can touch it, and if that precious blood should be brought into my heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost, black as I am, I shall be whiter than the snow; you are assured of that are't you? If you have not had it you are assured of the efficacy, of the ability of the Lord Jesus, of His merit. You say, but I want Him; blessed faith that wants Him.

"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us". Well, if the Lord will assure you of this it will be a comfort to you in reading the Scriptures, what are you going to find then? perfect saints who never sin, in order to find that you have like precious faith? What about this apostle? You follow him when he denied his Lord with oaths and curses, ashamed to own his Lord because of a wretched woman, but O the Lord said to him, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." It looked as though it had failed, it would have failed, but Christ's prayer was infallible. Ah, if you follow those who had like precious faith, you will follow sinners, not angels, sinners. But -

"Faith in the bleeding Lamb,
O what a gift is this!
Hope of salvation in His name,
How comfortable'tis".

Well, do you feel it? It is a feeling faith. A living faith is a feeling faith, do you feel it? Do you not only need salvation, but do you desire the Lord? Is it Himself? Do you realise that without Him you are absolutely destitute, completely destitute, do you feel that and do you believe that if you could possess Him you would then be filled with all the fullness of God, filled with His grace and truth and life, clothed in His righteousness, saved by His grace? Precious faith.

"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ". Faith cannot influence the righteousness of Christ, but it is the righteousness of Christ that influences faith. I think that Paul, writing to the Romans will give us the right interpretation of this part of the text. "Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" he says there, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, it is the power of God unto salvation, for there is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith"; and therefore, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through a revelation of the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, that is just what faith is occupied in, there is its object matter, there is its delight, there is its food upon which it feeds. "Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Now this righteousness set before faith is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus in His intrinsic righteousness that belongs to Him as the

Son of God; that righteousness cannot be communicated to a sinner. Now this is a mystery and I would speak humbly and simply because it is a rich truth, although the intrinsic righteousness of Christ cannot be communicated to a sinner, yet that righteousness of the Son of God is the merit and virtue of the righteousness that He wrought out. A righteousness that necessitated Him becoming Man, a righteousness that was wrought out by a Man in the fulfilling of the law, in obeying the law, in suffering the penalty of the law. There would be no virtue in all that Christ did if it were not for Who He was. God, God's only and eternal Son, He is the eternal God and the eternal Son in human nature. Great is the mystery of godliness, but O what food there is for faith, like precious faith that feeds upon the Son of God, eats His flesh and drinks His blood by faith. Now you will feel this. The Son of God incarnate is the foundation of salvation, it is the foundation of the church, it will be the foundation of your hope.

Well, this faith, you will feel it, you will feel it in your very soul cleaving to Him. The truth of it. Do not some of you feel this, that if that babe that was born in Bethlehem was anything less than the Son of God incarnate, you would have no foundation. It would be a precious doctrine to your soul; faith alone can believe it and receive it, and build upon it: it is to me. I believe that is how the eternal Son of God's dear Son has ever been revealed to me in my own personal experience. If He were other than that to us, it would not matter what, it would be no use, no use. But O the contact He made, He brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, He brought immortal blessings down; came and took our nature that in the mystery of godliness we might be made partakers of the divine nature. O this is the food of faith!

Is it precious to you? Is Christ precious to you?, if He is you must have faith. O may the Lord strengthen and comfort His poor trembling people and at the end of this day give them to truly believe in such a way, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself".

Amen.

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