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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 29 February 1920

1 Peter 5 v 10 and 11

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto
His eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after that
ye have suffered awhile, make you
perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you; to
Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

The Epistles of Peter are for suffering Christians to encourage them, to prevent them from fainting; to set before them all the ground that God has given in the covenant of grace for hope; hope of deliverance, hope of glory. They are Epistles full of kindness, of promises, and of singularly beautiful revelations. For instance, what poor Christian, suffering as a Christian, distressed and distracted, could think, unless it were revealed to him, that even while he is suffering, the Spirit of glory and of God is resting on him? Who could think naturally that a man in prison, his feet in the stocks, an Apostle though he was, could have there in that very condition the Spirit of glory and of God resting on him? But so it was and he, with his companion, Silas, sang in the prison the high praises of God. And so with all suffering Christians - and you know Peter uses the word "Christian" in these Epistles - with all suffering Christians, this Spirit of glory is. And whenever any measure or manifestation of this wonder is made to a suffering Christian, it fills him with patience. He takes patiently his bitter and unjust suffering and his persecution. He looks forward to the end, believing that his afflictions are not the end. They are not an end in themselves, but a means to an end, that God should be glorified in him; that suffering should do him good, should be better for him than unsanctified prosperity. Well my brethren we in this day have no outward persecution. Whether some of you younger people will live to suffer persecution in any form for Christ's sake, (supposing that you may be made Christians, and I believe some of you are already made such) God knows. But there

is a suffering in the easiest times; there is a suffering even in a condition that looks to the eye full of all comfort. That is an inward suffering and to this there is an end. It is not an end in itself, but it is a means to an end, and one day God will be glorified.

In the verse preceding these which I have read for a text, we are exhorted to be sober; the opposite of intoxication. An intoxicated state of mind renders a person incapable of proper, steady behaviour. The judgment is warped; the eye cannot see properly; the whole of the man is unsteady. Christ speaks against being drunken and sufficed with care. Peter, by the Spirit, says to the saints "Be sober". Cast on God that care that so intoxicates you, weakens you, unsteadies you. Cast it on your burden-bearer. He cares for you. He no more has forsaken you than He had forsaken the three godly noble Christians who were, by Nebuchadnezzar, cast into the burning fiery furnace. As He was with them, so He is with His children still. He looks after them, He cares for them. Says the Spirit here - now cast your care on Him. He is strong enough to bear it and you; to take the care and you with it and carry you both. Strong enough to provide for you in every sense in which you need provision, to sustain you in every affliction, to sanctify to you every trouble, every pain. He looks after you. The Gentiles, all unbelievers, are asking the questions which are vital and important to them - "What shall we eat?" "What shall we drink?" "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But ask you not these questions. Be not so solicitous about such matters, which comparatively are trifles. Seek first the kingdom of God. Seek to have it within you, for the kingdom of God is in a man. Seek His righteousness to be imputed and brought near to you. Seek His presence. And the other things? He will look after them. If God, the Holy Ghost, gives grace to a sinner to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, will He let that sinner perish for lacking temporal supplies? He careth for you in His covenant; therefore be sober. When things press upon you, when the pressure of temptation squeezes you; be sober. When the enemy, when indwelling sin and the devil together threaten

destruction; be sober. When you feel the craft of sin, be vigilant; not careless, not sleeping. Look to your defences, look to your weak points. Your defences are in God; your weak points are in yourself. Look to those defences. You are surrounded by omnipotence, by love, by divine care, by the atonement, by the righteousness of Christ, by the armour of righteousness. Look to that. Oh look to that great Rock on which you are put, fixed by immutable love. Be sober and vigilant, because you are not aware of one great thing, namely that your adversary ceaselessly seeks to accuse you before God and walks about as a roaring lion. He walks about aiming at your destruction. As a hungry lion roars and seeks prey, so does this devil, hating God, hating the Trinity, hating especially, fixing his intense hatred on and against, Jesus Christ. He comes against every believer, every true Christian. He roars and seeks his destruction. Says Peter you know this; it is no time for sleep; no time for idleness of hands. Resist this devil. "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith". Not by the grace of faith, first of all, but in the doctrine of faith. The doctrine of the covenant of grace, of the righteousness of Christ, of the Person and love and blood of Christ. If faith lays hold of this doctrine, the devil is resisted, and truly and successfully resisted. "Whom resist". "Resist" says James, "the devil and he will flee from you". Says the Apostle Paul "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly".

"Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world". You are not the only tempted ones. Temptations here are called afflictions, and they are afflictions. It is an affliction to have fiery darts hurled into your soul like poisoned arrows. An affliction indeed it is to have detestable thoughts cast into your minds against God, against the Trinity, against your interest. Detestable thoughts cast into your heart against holiness, and presumptuous thoughts rising, these too constitute affliction. "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." It has ever been so, and it is that, that no-one particularly will make you feel. David is one with whom you can

walk, and the holy prophets and apostles of the Lord, for these have walked the same way. Still it is so; go where you will, if you find a lively Christian, you will find a suffering Christian. You will feel that you have got a friend, one with whom you can walk. Your faces are in the same direction; your hearts beat after the same Object; your souls long for the same God. Now Peter, having thus exhorted the saints, says - But even if you are weak and unsteady, He, "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile"; after these temptations have brought great suffering and you have endured it; after you have been made so weak by these things that you can scarcely stand; this God of all grace will stablish, strengthen and settle you. That being done, you will sing this doxology - "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

"The God of all grace". What a beautiful word "grace" is. What a heavenly doctrine is the doctrine of divine grace. The sweet, free, eternal favour of God given to men who, in their nature, are no better than others. Who, in their practice, say with others to God - "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." To men who, in common with others, are dead in trespasses and sins. To such people, quickened by the Holy Ghost, grace becomes a charming sound, a savoury doctrine, a heavenly truth, a divine manifestation. Grace, sweet grace.

Grace, 'tis a charming sound
Harmonious to the ear
Heaven with the echo shall resound
And all the earth shall hear

One sings of grace thus. "Come all ye that fear God and I will declare what He hath done for my soul". Paul declared this sweet truth when on several occasions called to it by the providence of God. He declared what an injurious person he was, how he persecuted the church and wasted it. But, said he "As I drew near to Damascus there shined a light about me brighter than the sun, and I heard a voice saying - "Saul, Saul, why persecutest

thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" "The men that were with me" he said "saw indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake with me". This was grace, grace singling out that man to make him an eminent minister. First to save, then to make him a minister. "The God of all grace"; sufficient grace, sovereign grace, invincible grace. Grace to call and grace to glorify. Grace to convict and grace to bring sorrow. Grace to give joy, grace to strengthen, grace to preserve, grace to carry on the work begun and grace to complete it in heaven. Says James "He giveth more grace". What an amazing mercy it is to be blessed with grace! Sinner, your sins will find you out, either here, in mercy, or hereafter in terrible judgment. If in mercy, then you will sing of grace, and bless the God of all grace; not otherwise. The Apostle Paul expresses this when he says - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

Grace there is a charming sound. There it is a heavenly light, seen in the most wonderful beneficent acts of love bestowed upon sinners. Here Peter says, this "God of all grace hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus". Perhaps some of you may say this blessed word cuts you off because, though you have hoped God has called you, you are not called to this. The most you can speak of is that you are called to convictions; convictions are lodged in you. Called to unhappiness, for you see and feel your desperate condition by nature and by sin. You are called to bear burdens that you never had before this call came to you. You are called into a concern which sometimes is keen and sometimes seems to die away, so that you are most unsteady. You are called to pray, as you have sometimes thought, but you are disappointed for you do not get answers to prayer. You are called and you look to Christ, at least wish and try so to do. But no good effect comes, for you are still in bondage. You are called as you have thought by grace, but your heart is hard and you have not that acceptable

sacrifice which God requires and will receive, even a broken heart and a contrite spirit. You are called, it seems, into the wilderness, but there is no rest for you, and little or no sustenance, and you are afraid of dying. Well, consider this - if a man's home is an hundred miles away from a place, when he starts out he does not expect to be home immediately. If he must walk the whole distance, he must have rest here and there. In the way he experiences weariness and sometimes feels impatience. Difficulties may arise; grave difficulties may stand up before him and distract him in his journey. But when he knows, when he realises, that he is travelling to his home, then he has courage, perseverance. The thing that some of us lack is this - we are not sure we are going home. Eternal glory is awaiting every saint, called and quickened by the Spirit, but every saint does not know that his journey will end in heaven. He wants to know it and one day will know it, but at present he does not know it. This may be the case with some of us. We believe we are concerned, we know we are concerned. We are convinced of sin; we are convinced of unbelief; convinced of our wickedness. We see in a measure the wickedness of our nature. We perceive what is within us. We feel the working of sin in its power, in its deceit, in its guilt, in its pollution, and we die often through all this experience. But we do not know where we are going. Do not I speak the experience of some of you? You would give a world if you had it, to be settled on this point, that you are going to heaven. It would seem, as you judge, to make easy all the difficulties of the way if you had that assurance. It would seem to make the cross not only bearable, but a thing in which to glory if you had that certainty in your mind about where you are going. All pilgrimage has an end, but pilgrims see it not always. Pilgrimage has a reward, but pilgrims do not always anticipate it. Present dangers, present weariness will again and again obscure the vision and give a sort of intoxication to the mind, and the soul is much discouraged because of the way. But God, in calling, has a purpose. Yes, God has a purpose in calling a person by grace and it is a great purpose. If, for a moment, we could just obliterate the distance and the time between us and heaven, to which place God has called us to go,

what a sight would be presented to us. But the vision of heaven is obscured. Distance makes it dim to us and troubles and clouds of sins and guilt hide it from our view.

I would like, as enabled, to set before you a little of this great thing, this wonderful end that God has in calling His children. When he calls them it is with a distinct end in His heart, to do them good at their latter end. Their beginnings may be small. The quickening may come and they be ignorant of when it came; of the quickening itself, though they know something has taken place. Their convictions may be deep or not deep, but they will be deepened. Their sorrow for sin and for their estrangement from God will again and again be like the sorrows of death. The pains of their guilt will be like the pains of hell, and they will get such a hold of them that nothing else can be thought of. They would give all their pleasant things to be relieved of their present condition. They are sorry, and yet they are called to a glory that eye hath not seen and to riches the heart hath not conceived. They are called to God and to His eternal glory. O sinner, you wont take the one step that you would like to take as it were, from hell to heaven, in a moment, but you are sure to reach heaven; as sure as God has called you by His grace. Many a weary step you have yet to take, many a trying journey. Many a hunger bitten feeling will be in your spirit. Many times you may seem to be consumed of thirst. The wilderness and its burning heat will threaten destruction. But there is this one thing, and I will try to put it before you for a moment - eternal glory. And what does that mean? Well it means infinitely more than I can speak. But as far as I can speak and have conception of the matter, eternal glory is this. First - perfect righteousness. Yes, perfect righteousness. The law demands perfection. Will God be satisfied with less in the gospel? The law says that a person must be perfect to be accepted. Will the gospel take a sinner, anything less than that, to God? No. "Except" says Christ, "your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees ye shall in no case enter into heaven". This is a grave matter of infinite importance. Therefore look at it. God has called His

children to a righteousness that is absolute. No imperfection will stand in the presence of God. No imperfect creature will enjoy the glory of God. Sinner, consider this, and God make you consider it in a saving way. You must have righteousness or be lost for ever and ever.

It means holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. It was a very solemn rite that was observed of old in making a covenant. It is called "cutting a covenant" because the beast was cut in twain. Between the parts of it cut and separated, there was a passage, and a burning lamp went through the parts, as Abraham saw in a vision a burning lamp. To discover things there must be sincerity, there must be holiness. When the contract was made between two parties, a covenant, then there was a looking, so to speak. The beast was cut in twain and there was a looking into it. Says the Word - "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts". External holiness, if I may use that word, where there is no internal holiness, is of no value. You may be called a saint and yet your saint-ship may cover a devil. You must be holy in your soul. Without this holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Christ has this holiness. He is made sanctification, and He gives this sanctification. When He gives His Holy Spirit He works this in the heart. He gives it.

Now if you have not these two things, if you die without them, you will never see the Lord. A very solemn matter for us to consider. We, who are sinners, whose whole nature is sin, whose hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; we, with immortal souls, hastening to eternity; we shall never see God unless we are righteous and holy. Now God has called His children to these two things. The God of all grace has called you unto His eternal glory, and here is the right and title and meetness. "Made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" in these two things. And these, when given, impart and in themselves do constitute a real Christian experience, for Christ is both of them. "Who of God is made unto us righteousness and sanctification". "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment, that

I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures".

Now how helpful this may be. Indeed, what else can help us in our trouble about sin, our trouble about the deceitfulness of our nature? Why, if the gospel were to set before us that we must weave a robe wherewith to cover ourselves and make ourselves just before God; that we, with our deceitful hearts, must make ourselves quite sincere and holy, separate ourselves from all uncleanness and every improper thing, where could we look? How could we hope? What should we do? But when the gospel, and there is no gospel but this, when the blessed gospel of God's grace is brought, and reveals a perfect righteousness, to which no good works shall be added, to which no deep, no clear experience, can add one thread; when the gospel reveals a holiness so perfect that no feeling of holiness or doing of holy things can add to it; then the sinner in whom these are revealed says - "Here is my hope, here is my ground. Here would I sit and live and move and have my being and die. There may be many deaths, (Paul speaks of being in deaths oft) there may be many deaths between you and heaven. Many hells in your experience; many dreadful feelings in your hearts; many disappointments, grievous sorrows, exquisite pains and sufferings. But God has called to this - eternal glory. These pains and troubles are incident in the life of a child of God. They are discipline; he needs to be disciplined. They are the separating flail of chastisement, whereby the chaff is removed from the wheat. They are the winter frost that nips a growth that needed to be nipped and killed. But the glory waits; the eternal glory awaits every pilgrim, every Christian called of God. "Who hath called us unto His eternal glory".

Now we have a means, or the great Author of this: "By Jesus Christ". God the Father never did anything without Jesus Christ. He made the world by Jesus Christ. He upholds the world by Jesus Christ. He redeemed the church by Jesus Christ. He sends the Spirit by Jesus Christ. Providence is conducted by Jesus Christ. The graves of the saints are opened by Jesus Christ. Eternal

life is communicated by Jesus Christ. God never did anything without Jesus Christ. He never made a Christian without Him. How could He? How can you live the life of a Christian but by Jesus Christ? The saints were called Christians first at Antioch. May we be accounted worthy to bear that wonderful name. And how? By Jesus Christ. By His death, His vicarious death. This is the life, the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal. This is through the death of Christ. No death of Christ - no life for a child of God. It is all by that. You will find the Scriptures laying the stress of everything on that. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly". "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all", we read. He sent His Son to die. O my friends, the more godly we are, the more will the death of Christ be made everything to us. All our hope, all our plea in prayer, all our ground of standing before God, all our hope of success at the throne of grace, all our hope of getting good out of trouble and of finishing well. All, all will be here, placed here - the death of Christ. "By Jesus Christ".

And will not Christ be present when the church is presented to the Father in glory? Yes; He will be there and lead the marvellous presentation of an innumerable company of saints to the Father and present them saying - "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me". Poor travellers, all troubled and weak and weary and worn and hunger-bitten sometimes, these will be in that wondrous presentation, that marvellous company "redeemed, by Jesus blood redeemed". These will sing victory. They got the victory through the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. Who will lead them to living fountains of water, but Jesus Christ? "And the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of waters and they shall thirst no more. And God shall wipe away all tears from their faces". Well, may the Lord help us to hold on by Jesus Christ and to look with longing eyes to Him, for the day is coming when this eternal glory will be entered upon. But meanwhile says the Apostle - "The God of all grace who has called us to His eternal glory, after that ye have suffered awhile". Then we are not to get through without suffering? No, a gospel of suffering, if I

may use such an expression. The blessed Lord and Saviour said to His disciples - "In the world ye shall have tribulation". The flail must be laid on, for "what is the chaff to the wheat", saith the Lord.

There is a great clamour today for what men call a cheerful religion. They must have their social evenings and their clubs connected with their chapels and churches, and all kinds of things to gather and amuse and keep the people together. It will be a great surprise to many to hear the Lord say "What hast thou to do to take My covenant into thy lips, to tread My courts?" Says Christ - You must have tribulation. You must come to Me and you shall come to Me. You shall cleave to Me and find your comfort in Me. You shall find your union with Me made the sweeter, the clearer, by the tribulation through which you shall pass. You shall find the things that hamper you taken away by tribulation. The chaff which chokes you shall be driven away by My fan. The evils that make you doubt your state shall be removed and weakened by My affliction. "In the world ye shall have tribulation". Two heavens are not promised. A heaven to come, with tokens of it, earnest of it, tastes of it, God has promised. Yes, He has promised. And what can we say? What can we say? God is good. Have not some of you found, and I myself must say the same - found a little heaven in prayer, in the smile of God, in the Word of God, in the visitations of His love, in the persuasions of the Holy Ghost that it was well with us, and that we had a Friend in heaven who would never leave us or forsake us? We may well use the words of our good Hymnwriter, Hart

Boast not ye sons of earth
Nor look with scornful eyes
Above your highest mirth
Our saddest hours we prize
For though our cup seems filled with gall
There's something secret sweetens all

and it does; it does my friends.

"After ye have suffered awhile". When you have had these temptations to shake you; when the roaring lion has frightened you; when you have thought he would devour you; when your corruptions have choked you; when your sins have burdened you; when you have had many a slip and many a sense of the desperate wickedness of your nature, and have been brought off from leaning to your own understanding and trusting in your own natural heart; when, by reason of repeated experiences of this kind you are brought to cast yourself unreservedly and absolutely on the rich and free mercy of God in Christ; "After ye have suffered awhile," He shall strengthen, He shall stablish, He shall make you perfect. And this perfection can only be a maturity, a growth, a comparison, so to speak, with the past, because if it were absolute why should you need still to be stablished? Surely perfection must have in it stability and yet a person who is stablished is stablished after he has suffered awhile, needs to be stablished. He shall do this. For you suffering ones, shaken by your sufferings in your spirits, have this yet to come - establishment. Establishment comes, O it comes sometimes, by a sweet visit! Establishment comes by a looking back, a gathering up your waymarks and your stones of help. You can say - "He that has helped me hitherto will help me all my journey through". You look back to some fiery temptation and say - who could have sustained and preserved my life there, but God? You look back on some heavy affliction and can say - who could have helped me through but God? At some sore and pressing need and say - who could have supplied my need, but God? At some sore shaking and say - who could have kept me from falling but God? And you get established thereby. He shall stablish you in the gospel and by it; in the covenant of grace; in the Person of Christ; and bring you to that Scripture - "Rooted and grounded in love". And sweet it is to be so established and strengthened. Faith strengthened, mightily strengthened, so that you can say with one "What more can He say than to me He has said? I have fled to Him for refuge and He has received me and made me know that He has accepted me in the Beloved." Faith is mightily strengthened in that way.

"Settle you". Settle you how? Settle you after your old estate. And you can say - Now I want nothing better than Christ. I want no other than Christ. His bread is my meat; His love is my comfort; His arm is my support; His light shows me my way. His love, I would ever abide in. His merit is my covering. I am settled here and want nothing better, nothing else. The Galatians were not settled. They were soon moved, so soon, that Paul marvelled at it. They were not settled; they were drawn to another gospel which was not another. But the time will come when God will settle His children and they will say - Now nothing else do I want. Cannot some of us say it? We look back to the days that are past, many of them, wherein we were shaken, moved like the tree, the leaf of the tree, moved by wind. But the day has come when we can say - now here are we settled. None but Christ; no righteousness but His; no merit but His; no arm but His; no mercy, no life, no peace, no comfort, but Christ's. We are settled here. And I wish the Lord may look on you who have not come to this as yet, but are feeling after it, and would bring you to it sweetly and comfortably and enable you to walk in the light of His countenance.

Then Peter concludes with this beautiful doxology, that will cause a very sweet echo in the minds of some. "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The Lord's people want to speak well of Him and to ascribe to Him the glory of their salvation. They want to sing - "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father". "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This would not please some of you. If God were to begin to exercise it in your hearts, you would wonder what had happened to you. But what a mercy to be enabled to say - Lord, take the power to Thyself. Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever. Dominion in providence so that we do not want to choose our own way. Dominion in grace so that we shall be receivers of mercy; receivers of Christ who is All and in all. May the Lord pardon what has been amiss, bless the truth and enable us to follow on to know these mercies.

AMEN.