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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 23 February 1927

2 PETER 1 v 10

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence
to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do
these things, ye shall never fall"

The dangers attending the path and the warfare of the people of God are many. They are dangers with respect to their eternal inheritance; that is reserved for them and they are kept for it, but the dangers of the way, the liability to fall, to slide into indifference, to backslide, to grow hard, and cold, and as it were dead, you can only say that you are daily and hourly exposed thereto, and happy the saint who is enabled to hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. The saint is a saint, and the devil can never undo that mighty work of God in the soul, but the saint may fall into mud, may get to a very solemn and serious distance from his God and Saviour and grow hard in some sin and wander wide and get to the ends of the earth and in such cases there is nothing but the rod of correction that is to drive such folly away from such a foolish child. If you run away from God you will find He has stocks for your feet, a rod for your back, reproof for your conscience, and sorrow for your heart. Any wilful sin done by the people of God gets very solemn dealings. It is a trembling word which I read to you, a word that looks at every minister. It makes the ministry very solemn, and particularly a Pastorate, a Pastor. To the angel of the Church at Sardis. It appears that he was in a very dead state, and that his ministry had ministered to the death of the people; he was included in the awful threat. Seven angels and five at least of them under a condemning word, a chastening rod, an awful threat. Here the Apostle writing to the dispersed, that is to the Jews who were scattered abroad at that time - for as you know he was made the Apostle to the circumcision - sets before them the desirability and the blessedness of growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the adding that he here exhorts to respects that growth in grace. Adding virtue to faith and so on. "To virtue knowledge" seems to have respect, not

to time, as if one thing were done at one time and another grace added at another time, but rather to the nature and process of growth in grace, and he exhorts these people so to do. Beside all this, that is after what God has done for you, after His having given you all things by His divine power that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue - all things pertaining to the path you are to tread, the trading in which you are to be engaged for eternity, the difficulties of your way, the power of indwelling sin, and of a variety of evils - after He has done all this, he exhorts these people now to add to their faith virtue. But before that, he adds this to what I have just spoken: "Whereby" - by the divine power which wrought in these people - are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature"; receive the love and favour and power and operations of God in your souls. Partakers of that which is communicable and communicated by the power of God. Mind this, if you do not get communications from God it has an exceedingly serious aspect for you. If the Lord does not convey to you by His divine power some truth, some grace, some doctrine, some mercy, it does not look as if He cares about you, but if He does care about you, if He does love you, He will say something to you. He will give you something; He will convey something to you. One of the most serious and solemn and awful things in a professor is that he does not get things from God. He gets religious notions, makes a profession of religion, but there is not conveyed to Him by the power of God the things which pertain to godliness, and the exceeding great and precious promises. Do you get anything? Does God speak to you? Do you feel His divine power moving, helping, guiding, sustaining and guarding you? And does He convey to you exceeding great and precious promises, that by their power you may receive the favour and love of God as I have just spoken? If you do not may you be enabled very seriously and solemnly to enquire why, and to say, in humble faith - "Be not silent to me lest if Thou be silent to me I become like them that go down into the pit". Partakers of the divine nature appears to mean that they shall receive from God what is communicable. He can never communicate His own eternity and Deity, but He can communicate His love and His favour and He does communicate to His people such blessings; blessing them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ from eternity. He conveys to their souls such blessings from time to time,

and by this we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Why do any of us ever get into the corruption that is in the world? Why do you ever touch the world? Because you have got the lust of it in your nature. There is just that in our nature that agrees with what is in the world, which here is called the corruption through lust. O beware of getting into the world. You have got enough in you to battle with, if you are a child of God, but if you get into the world, get the corruption that is there, added to the corruption that is in your nature, you will have a great deal of sad business when God pulls you out of it. Then he adds, "Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue" - or strength - "and to virtue knowledge" of God, as the Apostle speaks, "called"; "through the knowledge of Him that hath called us". Knowledge, not speculation. Knowledge, not thinking. Knowledge; so that you can say, I know. Sometimes say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day". O my brethren, seek knowledge. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Beware of thinking that because you know something about the Bible you therefore know God. The two are distinct. If you know God you know something about His Word, but you may know something about His Word and not know Him. The knowledge here is a saving acquaintance and a growing in knowledge. "Grow in grace" says this Apostle in this Epistle, "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". "And to knowledge temperance". And do not be intemperate in your judgement of things. It is a very intemperate thing to do, when you are in trouble, to say you will never get out of it; to say that trouble is against you, when it may be sent for your good; to say that a rod of correction is a sword of destruction. It is an intemperate thing in a child of God so to conclude. The mercy is to wait on God and that will bring you to a sweet temperance, a proper judgement, a right balance, a true estimate of things. "And to temperance patience". Patience comes out in tribulation, by tribulation. "Tribulation worketh patience". Patience is waiting on God, keeping His Word - "Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience", kept the word that has tried you, and in your trial you have been enabled to wait on God in patience. As Christ says, "In your patience possess ye your souls". "And to godliness" - godliness among your brethren and your friends, a gracious walk, a humble walk,

and visiting the sick and afflicted, and the widow; one Apostle tells us that this is it: "Pure religion and undefiled", this is the godliness, "is to visit the widows and the fatherless in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world" - "And to godliness, brotherly kindness". "Do good unto all men but especially to them that are of the household of faith". "And to brotherly kindness charity". Such charity as Paul exhorts to in Timothy when he said first of all that prayers and supplications and intercessions be made for all men and for kings and for all that are in authority, for this is good and well-pleasing unto God. Add to all this, charity. Now here is something for us to meditate upon. One says perhaps, now if I get to heaven, I do not much mind how. Our dear friend and brother, my particular friend, long since in heaven, Mr Marshall, whom some of you knew and loved, used to say often to me, I do not want to get to heaven only; I want to have as much of it here as I may, and everyone rightly exercised will say the same thing. Lord, do not let me wallow in mud if I am a child of Thine; do not let me live in any corruption of my nature. I am troubled with corruption, I am afraid often of falling, but do keep me and give me Thyself, Thy presence, Thy power, and keep me in the faith. "If these things be in you they make you that ye shall neither be barren" - like an untilled field - "nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". What connection is there, between these graces and the knowledge of Christ? This is the connection, that they all come from Him; that He is the giver and the worker of them all. Paul teaches us this in the Ephesians when he says, "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk therein". Hart expresses the same when he says

The Christian works with all his power
And grieves that He can work no more

And the Spirit of God in one passage clinches the whole when He says - "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure". May we not be barren in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Beg in all your praying, beg to know Him. He is the root and fullness of all His people, and every grace that is in a saint, every flourishing grace, if it flourish but an hour or two, flourishes by His mighty grace

therein. How beautifully the Lord gathers up all unto Himself in this way. If you do these things, if you walk in these graces, if they be increased in you at any time, it is through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath given by His divine power all things that pertain unto life and godliness. "But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins", when he made a profession, when he left the world, and now, like Demas, he has gone back to it, and forgets all he said, all he professed, all he sought. Gone back. "Demas hath forsaken me", and depend upon it he first forsook God. Professor mind this, O professor mind this. You may have light in the Bible, you may have light in the doctrines, but if you have not life in your soul, then you will find this, you will be a poor, blind creature, and mistake things and if the Lord put not His hand between you and hell you will sink into hell one day. What an awful sinking that will be.

Now the text says "Wherefore" - because of these things that I have said to you. Peter says "Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if ye do these things ye shall never fall". "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure". But they are sure, one says. I believe, one says, in the doctrines of grace; I believe that the Church in Christ will never get out of Him; everything is sure. You speak truly when you speak of the doctrine, but you may speak falsely when you say such things concerning yourself. The Word does not mean make these things sure to God or with respect to Him, but seek to have them sure to yourselves. Nothing can add to the security of the church, but a gracious diligence will be followed by establishment. But how shall I give diligence? What is it to give diligence? Is it to look within? - you may look within properly - but is it to look within, and to see if you have got something good? See if you have got rid of some sins, see if you have turned the world out of your heart? You may do all that and give no diligence in the sense of the word as used by the Apostle Peter. The word by Paul to the same point is this - "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith". So this diligence will have this in it, first of all waiting on God. "Show me a token for good". "Be not silent to me". "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence". Now when a man, a woman, a poor child of God, is exercised about his standing before God for eternity, then you would find, if

you could follow him, you would find that he, as it were, as I have often expressed, lives on his knees, walks on his knees. That is to say, he waits on God. Now this is the thing. You will never rest - if you are rightly exercised - never rest till you find God assuring you that you are His. "Am I His" says the hymn "or am I not". "Tis a point I long to know". And surely a man of God has this hungering for God. "My soul thirsteth for God for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God". Rightly exercised, you wont say, I think; I think I love the Lord, I think I love His people, and therefore I must be right. You wont say that. Love to the brethren is a very good evidence but you will want something beside that. And when you are enabled to give this diligence to which you are exhorted by the Holy Spirit through Peter, it will be this, you will be waiting on God. You have not seen into the Book of Life, have you? You have not read any line in that Book that is in the hands of God; you have not read in it. But you want to see your name there, do you not? And what will tell you, how are you to know it is there? How are you to know that your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life? Only God who wrote it there can tell you. He made known to His servant the Apostle Paul that some whom he names were in the Book of Life and were in Christ before him. But when you come to your own personal case, and say in your own soul, now I believe there is the Book of Life in which are the names of the Lord's people and I want to know if He wrote my name there, that will bring to Himself and move you to ask Him to tell you if your name is there. True election, free election's known by calling. Are we called? Was there ever a time in our life when a change, which we could not explain to anyone, a mighty change, a revelation, as it were, in our souls, took place, when we believed in God, and believed in sin, and believed in heaven, and believed in hell. We may say, yes we think we believe there was such a time, but then how are you to know that was God's work? How many many become naturally alarmed, believing in God, in heaven, and in hell, and that natural alarm does not save them from sin. They get rid of some inconsistencies, wicked things in their lives, but that is not the same thing as being "sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Christ Jesus and called" (Jude 1 v 1) So when one is diligent about his being called this is it, he seeks the testimony of God. O that will make him sure. Now he will say - "I know whom I have believed". I know my convictions were right, at least some of them, wrought by Him in my conscience.

I know I was enlightened to see His character, and to believe in His righteousness and to justify Him in condemning me. I know He did it, you will say when you have His testimony.

When this diligence is in exercise, it keeps us from carelessness, it keeps us from slumbering and sleeping and it brings us off from all human testimonies and props and arms of flesh. It brings us to a particular dealing with God as if there were no other creature. It is just God and your own self. Your precious soul, worth more than worlds, is at stake, and you feel it. Lord, what will become of me if I am not Thine? Hell must swallow me up. Now this, I say, brings a person to a very lively exercise of mind. He wants to know that he is right. It wont be long before we shall be in our graves; this we naturally know. Now when we are exercised, the thing is this with us, shall we be in heaven? Shall we be absent from the body and present with the Lord? Shall we lose the image of the earthy and only have the image of the heavenly? And such questions as these occupy the mind, fill the thoughts, and move the soul God-ward; move the soul God-ward. Happy the man who cannot rest short of God's own testimony. How easy you may get under the preaching. How easy you may get under a belief of the Scriptures being given by inspiration of God. How easy you may become in the doctrines of grace. How sleepy you may become, how satisfied you may become, without God's testimony. We greatly need this exhortation. I need it for myself, and I believe you need it. I am afraid of getting easy myself, and I am afraid lest you should get easy. And if we, His people, a poor little congregation and Church, if we should get easy, if we should get into that state that the Lord describes as being the state of Sardis, having a name to live while yet we are dead, now if the Lord should enlighten us into these things, we shall see the need of this exhortation. O my brethren, listen to it. "He that hath an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches". One cannot look back upon one's own way with anything but sorrow and shame, but it is a mercy to be stirred up, and to be moved to seek this blessed, this soul-satisfying testimony of God. "Give diligence". Ask Him, ask Him. Berridge gives good advice. He says to one in trouble, ask the Lord for His receipt to show the payment good. Seek to know that you were sanctified when Jesus Christ died, as the Scripture says: "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His

Own blood, suffered without the gate." If you have a guilty conscience, seek to have it cleansed by that blood. If you have a wounded conscience, pray with the Psalmist - "Heal me O Lord for I have sinned". And if you have a spirit of worldliness in you struggling for the mastery, beg that God will kill it by His own mighty operation and give you grace to mortify that deed of the body that you may live. The diligence is thus, it is thus described in the Scriptures, and you remember Solomon says - "Keep thy heart with all diligence". Did you ever feel moved by the parable of the virgins? Five wise and five foolish, but they all alike slumbered and slept. Did you ever feel tried by the parable of the Sower? Four hearers, three wrong; just think of that, think of it in respect of this congregation. It is not my judgement and my reckoning. Four hearers and three wrong, only one right. Why, if we believe this, if we get into our own souls a real feeling that we can never live without God's testimony, it will move us to this diligence. Lord, didst Thou ever begin with me? Was I ever enlightened? Was I ever born again? May the Lord help us to walk in this. One says, I wish I knew I was elected; I wish you did. There is a way to it. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Now if the Lord answers your prayer when you say, do tell me that I am Thine, let me know I am right - if in answer to that He lets this fall into your soul by His divine power - "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" - then you would know your election. You would know both in the one word. O, how sweet it would be to you if, in answer to your prayer to know that He called you, He should say - Fear not O Jacob, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. You would get an answer to both your desires in such a word. O what a wonder. "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated". O my brethren it is a solemn thing to make a profession of religion, a solemn thing for us to be here; a solemn thing for us to be in our rooms with the Scriptures, and to kneel before Almighty God, making some sort of profession. Then give diligence to have things put straight with you, things straight between God and your souls; things put straight by Him who alone can put them straight; who alone can assure a sinner's conscience of his part in the Redeemer's blood. What a mercy it is to be in earnest about your salvation. What a mercy it is to say before the Lord,

How stands the case my soul with thee
For heaven are thy credentials clear?

You say, they are not clear. Who can make them clear? God only; only God, only God. It is a great mercy not to be slain by the sluggard's desire - The desire of the sluggard killeth him. He thinks it too much trouble to take his hand from his bosom to convey meat to his mouth. Go to his garden and see how it is overgrown with weeds and briars. "The sluggard desireth and hath not". A good man desires and gets what he wants; he gets the liberty of Jesus Christ by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, and then he knows, then he has some sweet certainty about the matter. It is an awful thing to be going to eternity and also to be going to hell. It is a great thing to be going to eternity and to be taking steps of faith toward heaven. All men are going toward eternity rapidly; some are going to heaven - "We walk by faith and not by sight" - some are going to heaven; some in this chapel are. O happy people, O blessed saints, especially happy and blessed when they can say, now we have got the Lord's testimony. I know one thing you will feel when you get that testimony, you will sweetly repent of all your sins. And another thing is this, you will rise into a heavenly joy, and a rejoicing in God your Saviour. Yes, you will say - My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour . (Luke 1 v 46) I wish we all could shed those sweet tears that the blood of Christ makes, as Bunyan speaks, and if we could shed the sweet tears of repentance as well as of joy in Jesus Christ. I should be sorry to have a religion without repentance in it. It is not a gloomy thing, and the more certain you are of being called by grace, the sweeter will repentance be to you, especially when you find that you have been walking foolishly and gone against your best friend time after time, yea days without number. Now my brethren take heed to this word - "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure", and may that man be before you who lacks the things exhorted to here, who is blind and cannot see afar off, and who answers to the foolish man of Solomon - The wise man foresees the evil and hides himself - he is prudent - but the foolish man passes on and is punished. He does not see God's judgement, he does not feel God's providence, he does not feel the fear that is burning him in some providential trial; passes on heedless, thoughtless, prayerless, faithless, and he is punished. But the prudent man says

Hide me O my Saviour hide

Hide me from my sins and myself; hide me from the wrong ways of the world; hide me from everything that is evil; keep me. "Give diligence". Look at this poor creature, barren, like a field untilled, unfruitful - may the Lord give you to look at him - and then say, now give me this holy diligence that I may make my calling and election sure. "For if ye do these things", if your hearts are in these matters, well exercised, if you cannot rest without God, it will keep you from falling into the world. It will keep you from conformity to the vanities of the world; it will keep you from the foul backsliding and mixing with mud of which Hart speaks. It will keep you on your knees, and keep you in your Bible, and keep you saying - "Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me I become like them that go down to the pit". How stands the case with you, my poor fellow sinner and hearer and how stands the case with me? May the Lord open the treasures of His grace and pour out by His divine power from those treasures, life and grace and knowledge and understanding, that we may walk before Him in the light of the living, and may He graciously send us home with something in our consciences that will bring us before Him in secret; yea, keep us begging and entreating that favour which is better than life.

AMEN.