

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
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2 PETER 1 v 3

"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"

The blessed gifts and the calling of God are said "to be without repentance" and they are here declared to be sufficient for all things that pertain to, are needful for, life and godliness. They are given by the power of Christ. "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness". They are put into the soul, made over as a gift, wrought in the very heart by the divine power under which, in the new covenant, they are brought "to live and move and have their being". There is no religion of any permanent value, or worth, or good to anybody, that is not the blessed gift of Christ, that is not put into the heart by His power. And vital religion is declared in the Scriptures to be, as to its root, a new heart and right spirit - "A new heart and a right spirit will I give unto you". And then that religion needs continually to be nourished, as says the prophet Isaiah: "I will water it every moment lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day". Our dependence on the power of Christ then is established in the truth, in the Scriptures, and is established in every living soul; and as one says

If Thy life was in the root  
Still I could not bear Thee fruit

If the Lord will help me to speak upon this important Scripture, I shall in the first place speak of the things that pertain unto life and godliness, and in the second place of how they are given to us, and this will include both what is in the first word of the text and the last.

"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."

I am first to speak of the things that pertain to life and godliness and the first is this, the gracious gift and merciful condescending indwelling of the Holy Ghost. My dear friends, we are but as dead carcasses without the Holy Ghost in respect of God. We may be whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones and all rottenness, and it is not possible according to the Scriptures to see how a person can, in respect of God, be anything better than that without the Holy Ghost, for we are dead in trespasses and sins by the fall and this state can alone be removed by the coming of the Holy Ghost and by His taking up His merciful abode in our souls. He is called, as you know, "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" who makes "free from the law of sin and death". His indwelling, Christ Himself promised; He told His disciples that although the world knew not the Holy Ghost and could not know Him, they knew Him - "for He shall be with you, and He shall dwell in you". "What", says Paul "know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you?" This then is that which pertains to life, eternal life. It is necessary to life, as to the possession of it by any sinner. You must for ever be dead in sins without this great and marvellous gift and indwelling of the divine Spirit. Therefore, when Christ by His divine power comes with this gift to a sinner, He gives him the life that is needful for salvation, and He gives him the Spirit to maintain that life in all its motions, all its growth and all its risings; all its triumphs over sin and death and hell. This indwelling is therefore most merciful and most gracious and it explains, as nothing else can do, it explains all the motions that a child of God is sensible of in his spirit towards God; the checks he gets in his conscience against sin and wrong things; the sights he gets into the nature of sin, into the evil of transgression of the law. It is by the Spirit of life that a man who has Him gets a sense of the needs-be of approaches to the throne of grace. And the views he has of the necessity of union with Christ for likeness to Him, and union - blessed, sweet, soul-saving union - come by the Spirit of life dwelling in a sinner. These are the gracious motions then, and there is the Spirit of prayer and supplication wrought and it behoves every child of God to notice this, and as he notices it, it will work in him sometimes, amazement, and thankfulness that the blessed God should have bestowed on him - the

most unworthy, the most unlikely of all sinners - so inestimable a gift as this, a gift by which alone he can be made to differ from the world, differ from the world, not only as to its outward practices, but as to its inward spirit and motions and desires. To be the temple of the Holy Ghost, is then, to be a Christian; it is to be one who fears God and whose heart hungers and thirsts after righteousness. Believe me, every view you get of being right with God, every step you take to the throne of grace, every quickening you get in your conscience, every apprehension you have of the beauty of holiness, of the glory of Christ, of the righteousness of Christ, the fountain of His precious merit, you get alone by this Blessed Spirit who has been given by the Lord Jesus, for He says, I will send Him, and He does send Him. "I will send you another Comforter" and that Comforter is none other than the Holy Ghost. Then this is the first thing and it might be said to embrace all things that pertain unto life and godliness. All living feelings of a right kind, all spiritual apprehensions of things, come from this blessed Spirit. What a great honour it is then to have Him given to us! And what a great mercy it is for Him to condescend to take up His abode in such hearts as these! One says

Unworthy dwelling, glorious Guest,  
Favour astonishing, divine

My friends, you have no union with God outside of this. That eternal union that has subsisted between Christ and the Church is brought into being, so to speak, into experimental being, by the working of this divine Spirit and by His blessed teaching. Union with Christ comes from the Spirit of Christ, for the Spirit was given to Christ without measure, and according to the Covenant in Isaiah, it runs this way - "Thus saith the Lord, My Spirit which I have put upon Thee shall not depart from Thee and shall not depart from thy seed, nor from thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever."

This is the great thing then. The Apostle said to the men at Ephesus when he went to them - "Received ye the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" O sinner, it is essential to religion, saving religion, to have the Holy Spirit. It is essential to true conviction, essential to real union to Christ, to possess the Holy Spirit. It is

essential to true faith, for He works the work of faith with power according to the measure of His actings to each soul in whom He dwells. It is essential to all those checks, those gracious checks, heavenly motions that the saints are the subjects of from time to time, that they should have the Holy Spirit. No life without Him; no maintenance of life without Him; no growth without Him; no prayer without Him; no sense of evil, no sense of goodness, without Him. All, all comes, that the child of God has, all comes from this blessed Spirit. Therefore you read so much about His work in the Scriptures. He convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; therefore you also read that He is the Spirit of revelation. The Apostle prayed that the Ephesians might possess Him in that particular - "as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him". Who can express the spiritual views and apprehensions that saints by occasions get of Christ? Christ, whose glories fill the sky, comes down in the light of the Spirit into the souls of His people!

And also you read that the work of the Spirit is a work of sealing - "whereby ye are sealed" - by the Spirit - "unto the day of redemption". It is a blessed work - to seal and shut up the sinner to Christ and to sever him from the world, and separate him from his sinful self. Likewise it is the Spirit's work to take the blood of sprinkling - that blood which "speaketh better things than that of Abel" - and sprinkle it on the soul. Also it is His work to cause sinners to walk in God's statutes: "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes". Likewise all spiritual power comes from Him. He was on Christ as the Spirit of power, and He comes down on saints in the same way in a measure. Christ has Him without measure; the saints have Him in different measures. He comes down that they may, by His power, rise at times, saying: "I will arise and go to my Father". That they may rise in faith and say: "I believe God that it shall be unto me even as He has said". That they may rise in love and not be offended with God's dealings - "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." All these gracious workings in the soul are from this gift of Christ to the soul, namely the Holy Ghost. Now is not this, then, a great gift? And if we can all be made sensible of having received it, and of the Spirit dwelling within us this day, what a mercy and what a comfort it will be to us! O afflicted saint, if you feel anything of movings after Christ, and if

you have got views of Christ such as humble, draw, quicken, revive, and strengthen you, they come from the blessed Spirit. And if you get, in a time of trouble, an open door set before you that no man can shut into which you enter, and call upon the Name of the Lord in the day of trouble, as He directs, it is from the Blessed Spirit.

"According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness". This is the life, the eternal life, that the saints of God inherit - all of them - and in time possess, It comes from the fulness that is in Christ. "I give unto My sheep eternal life", and it is brought by the Spirit of Christ; it grows by that Spirit, moves by that Spirit, increases in all its actions by that Spirit, that no flesh, no proud flesh, shall glory in the presence of the Lord. "That no flesh should glory in His presence".

Now that is the first thing that pertains to life - let me repeat it - you are, and you must remain, dead in sins without this Holy Spirit. It is very solemn. God made us upright and we destroyed ourselves, and in the Covenant of Grace He undoes the work of sin and destroys the work and power of the devil, by the gift of eternal life; and by the gift of the Holy Ghost to each believing soul there comes, sooner or later, such a blessed sealing of the Spirit that he knows that he is made the temple of God!

Now the second thing for me to mention that is on my mind to mention to you, is this - That by the divine power of Christ the Holy Scriptures are given to us. We greatly need mercy to prize the Scriptures. I do not, at this moment, speak about special Scriptures that saints get, perhaps two or three times, each one in his or her lifetime. Some people seem to get a large quantity, and always have them somehow floating in their minds; that I must leave; it seems to me the more solid experience that the saints have of the Scriptures is not quite so common as that. But now I speak first of all of the gift of the Scriptures; and we are told to search them. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." They are the revelation of God's mind, yea of His nature, of His love, of His purposes; they are the revelation of the Trinity; and it were well for us more diligently to search

them, and not just take the Book up and cursorily glance at a chapter or a Psalm and pass by, but to look, as enabled, with prayer, as Hart says

Join prayer with each inspection

It were well for us I say to do this more diligently, more constantly, than we have done. You might perhaps sometimes be amazed if you were to read a whole Epistle as an entire letter, as you would read a letter from a friend - you do not pick out a passage here and another sentence there, but you read it through from the beginning to the end with the signature. And sometimes you might find great good, and blessing and power and help and teaching by the continual reading, the careful and prayerful reading of the Scriptures, the blessed Word of God. Do allow me to say this to you, be more careful, be more diligent, be more prayerful readers of the Word of God, and do not be satisfied by taking detached passages; you may often thereby miss a great deal; but search the Word of God carefully and prayerfully, and remember this, there is nothing superfluous in the Scriptures; remember that the Trinity thought it worth while to inspire holy men of old to write this Book; that God had love enough to His people to make known to them in the Scriptures His mind and will, His love and purpose; to show them therein the hell of sin and the heaven of grace; to show them what brought expulsion from Eden and what opens the gate to heaven! And shall He have given us, at such a cost, in such manifestation of His love, such a Book, and shall we read it with indifference? and take detached passages, portions of it, as if that were all of it? O, it is a great gift to have given to us, the blessed Word of God; He has given it to all nations, and one of the highest honours that has been conferred upon England, in my opinion, is the honour of having the Word, and the honour of being allowed and privileged to scatter it as we have been privileged. Now Christ's power has put the Scriptures in the Church; they are there specially as a gift, and we are told what they are profitable for. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness....." and this is the end, "that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished in every good word and work". And I would that we, in respect of God's Word, were like the "noble Bereans", who searched

the Scriptures daily to see if the Words they were listening to were according to the Scriptures. And Paul, when he announces the gospel which he preached there, used this great word which shows his regard for the Scriptures. "I delivered unto you that which I also received; how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Stress is laid on it.

Jeremiah understood from the Scriptures the bearing of prophecy respecting Israel and her captivity; so did Daniel understand it. And if we were enabled with care, with diligence, to read the Word of God, we may find a great deal of benefit from it. We may find it is better far, so to read it, than to read it in a very detached and cursory manner as if the whole of it were not of importance, as if we can put our finger upon a portion that seems to suit us and there stop. Now I am not against the other part - namely, the giving over to a particular person a particular Scripture; if I were to deny that I should deny my own experience. There is such a thing, blessed be God, there is such a thing as the divine power of Christ giving particular Scriptures to particular people in particular cases, but I do not, as far as my observation is concerned, I do not find that it is an everyday occurrence. The Lord may speak to us in a gracious way, in a way of influence, in a way of shining into our hearts and on our path, in a way of discovering His will to us, by reading the Word when we might not be able to say any particular part of what we read was applied to us. Only we might say, it shed a light upon our hearts, and it showed us a wrong path or a right path; it showed us the evil of sin; it showed us the greatness of Christ; it directed our minds to the fountain of His merit, or it directed us in some way, as to the exercises we were in, in comprehending the things affecting us. We may say that sometimes about the reading of the Holy Scriptures. But there are times in a person's life - perhaps not many, but there are times - when certain troubles, special troubles, temptations, exercises, wants, perplexities, difficulties, get so to speak special attention from the Lord, and some special Word spoken by Him!, and that is a great gift. O if you have had one like that, you have got in your soul what is better than the gold of the whole world; you need not envy any millionaire if you have one word of the living God sealed on your heart with divine power. But you will find it very

different from ever so many words running through your minds and coming out of your mouth. Plenty of people talk about Scriptures coming into their minds, but if you follow them there is no gracious teaching or heavenly effect left. But what I am speaking of is when it comes and does not go - the power, the sweetness, you may after a time lose - but the Word will stick to you; God will never take it away; the devil will never take it away; time shall never kill it! O is not it a gift! Now if you look at it you will see how it pertains to the life of your soul; how, first of all, it has this gracious effect - it makes you cry to God, the blessed God who has spoken to you, whatever the word may be that He would help you to wait on Him in it. It has that effect upon you - it brings you to the Lord; conscience, heart, affections, will, circumstances to which it came, O how all are gathered up to the Lord. You must judge more by the working and effect of a Word than by the mere fact of its coming into your soul. Plenty of Scriptures come into our thoughts - why perhaps I could say I never hardly walk about, never sit in my room, seldom lie awake, but some Scripture comes into my mind - but O, it is when the Lord speaks, when He sets one down right into your heart, when He brings it as a plaster to a sore boil, or when He sheds the light of His heavenly truth and will on some perplexing path, or when He rebukes some mighty sin, or when He gathers you to some closer communion with Himself in, and by the means of, the Word. You may then say, that was a gift by His divine power, and that pertained to my life, that quickened me afresh, that brought me up out from the depths alive, that made the Lord dear, that made me believe I should get through the storm safely, that made me believe that the Lord was near me and would not leave me; it broke my heart all to pieces, made me nothing, brought me straight in will with His pleasure, made His pleasure mine, made me choose His way, made me give myself up to Him, made me resign my will to Him, made me put my circumstances into His blessed hand, made me employ His power; it made all things possible to me, for - "To him that believeth all things are possible". O is not it a gift then that you have had, you saints of the Most High God, when you have had some Scripture made over to you? You need not be troubled if you have not had a hundred more. If you have had one, bless God. But if you have had more than one special trouble in your life, perhaps you have had more than one special Scripture. Whatever you have had in that way, it will live, it will stand by you, you will find what Peter says -

"The Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and that is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you". And as the Lord comes and preaches unto you by the application of some word, you will find that that word will live in your heart, and you will believe it will live for ever. Christ gives this; it pertains to life.

Now sometimes it may be a reproof. O blessed is the man who hears the reproof of life. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise". Ah, I believe the Lord makes His word a hammer at times in the hard heart of a saint, or He makes the fire of it to set alight that harvest that the foolish creature was just about, as he thought, to reap from his "pleasant plants and strange slips". Who can tell, but the men who have had it, what the Word of God accomplishes when it comes as a reproof? Mind what Solomon says: "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise". Ah, I can bless God sometimes that He has ever reproved me, and the reproofs stick in me at times; I mean the things, the words, I had twenty, or thirty, years ago. Some I had at that time, in an especial manner, they stick on my conscience at times, and they talk to me to this day. God's Word abides, and blessed be His Name for giving it to us. Ah He says of some "Let them alone". What a mercy if He has not said that of us "Let them alone".

Sometimes you will get a word of promise; the Lord will tell you what He knows of you. You say, I know He knows everything. Yes, that is very well, but if He comes in a particular way and lets you know that He has considered your trouble, that He has known your soul in adversity, that He has marked your difficulties, and that He will compass you about with songs of deliverance, that will be something more than a general word; it will be a living Word of the living God in your heart! and that will pertain to your spiritual life. The devil may, at that very moment, conflict you, vexing your soul as the adversary, or he may so to speak personally have been at your very elbow when you were before the Lord in your trouble as he was with Joshua, when he was before the Lord in filthy rags, but the Word that came and made you know the Lord's eye was upon you for good was the Word that rebuked the enemy - "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes". Now that is having the Word given you pertaining to life, for the moment it came you found it was new life in your spirit, fresh-

quicken your faith, newly lighting your path, showing you the way to walk - by faith in the bleeding Lamb; committing your way to the Lord; casting yourself upon Him with all your cares. He has given us the Word that pertains to life and godliness. May we then value the Scriptures - speaking of them as a whole I mean - may we value the Scriptures. Never treat any part with irreverence. O my hearers, I speak to you all, even also to you who at present have never felt the power of the Scriptures in a saving way; do treat the Scriptures with reverence. It is God's Word, the revelation of God's nature and will and purposes. It is the revelation of man's nature - a wicked nature; and the revelation of a new nature, even a new nature in Christ given to each person in due time who was bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ! Treat it, O I beg of you, treat it with reverence. You children, when your parents read the Bible every morning and every night, do not treat the Bible with irreverence. And when you are old enough to read it for yourselves, do read it, ever read it, never neglect it. Who can tell how God may use it; how He may drop it into the mind - a holy seed to bring forth fruit, in time, of holiness and salvation? Therefore hold in your hands the Holy Word with reverence and may the Blessed Spirit set it home in your hearts with power. But especially, O saints of God, bless Him for the Word given to your souls in a particular way. You may often say safely enough of certain Scriptures that they have come with power into your mind and exercised some influence - bless God for them. But O, the words made over to you specially, just two or three times in your life - perhaps it may be more - those are the words above all to bless God for, according as they were comforting words, beautiful words, enlightening words to shine on your path that you were walking in, and to make you know that, though it was a path of tribulation, it was a safe path, leading you to the blessed Lamb of God.

There is another gift which pertains to life and godliness, namely, the gift of the ordinances and services of God's house and sanctuary; this is a very great gift. You were singing just now - it had some effect on me while you were singing it; the last verse of the hymn

"This favoured lot my friends is ours"

My friends, if God does send His gospel to a place, to a town, to a village, and by that means gathers people to Himself and gathers them into a congregation and into a Church state, it is a very high privilege. O, if you only look around our beloved country in your mind and as you may know certain places where there are people who have not the privilege of having the gospel of the Grace of God preached amongst them, you may find that you are amongst those who are favoured. The ordinances of God's house are great blessings; Church order is a great blessing; brotherly kindness and fellowship is a great blessing - you are "taught of God to love one another".

Now these are the gifts of Christ. If you look into the Scripture you will see that after He ascended on high and had gifts given unto Him - "He received gifts for men" - we are told He gave "some prophets, some apostles, some pastors, some teachers, and some evangelists and so on. What were all these gifts for? "For the perfecting of the saints; for the edifying of the body of Christ; for the work of the ministry." Therefore these things are not to be used or passed by just as people choose. They are God's blessed gifts and cannot some of us say that we have found that some of the gifts I have mentioned have pertained to our life? Who can say what fresh quickenings, rebukes, instructions, they have received in these ways? You, some of you, may have had a peculiar instance in the ministry - perhaps no special word spoken home, but an influence. Or you may have found at times something more special than that, something like oil poured upon your heart, or shed like light upon your path. This was for quickening was it not? for attracting, for gathering, gathering more closely to Christ, for drawing you out of self more, causing you more to see the beauty and glory of God, giving you to see somewhat in the Scripture where the Psalmist says "One thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life and behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple". All this Christ has given, given for the edification of the saints, the perfecting of them. "For the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ". We are very apt, through our own exercises being so pressing, to overlook these things which the Scriptures contain; and if God has given them a place in the Scriptures, they surely are worthy of our notice - our prayerful notice and careful attention.

"According to His divine power" - whose hands hold the seven stars and whose feet walk in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. (Revelation 1) "According as His divine power hath given us all things which pertain unto life and godliness". Hence in that chapter I read (1 Corinthians 3) the Spirit causes Paul to say to the Corinthians - "For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, Cephas....." - "all things". What were they for? To edify them and the conclusion is - "Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's". So that these gifts of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the ministry, were to edify these people, were for their quickening from time to time. O, if any of you have ever found that God has given you a living word by the ministry, you have had one of the gifts of the divine power of Christ in your souls. If any of you have ever found that Christ has edified you in the ordinances of His house, you have found therein that by divine power He has given you a gift pertaining to your better, or spiritual, life. It is a great blessing to have had that, and we should bless His holy Name for these things. I should not mention them if they had no place in the Scriptures, but they have a place there. I know it has been an evil in my own case when, though particular exercises, I seemed often to have passed by these things which the Holy Spirit has put in the Scriptures. Do not you do that; look at what is put in the Word. If He has given ordinances, given a ministry, given the Scriptures, then prize them, use them, and thank Him for them.

"According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" Our life is in Christ, and these things are sent to gather us to Him. Our righteousness is there and these things are sent to gather us to that. Our hope is there, and these things are sent to quicken that hope, and gather us more to Him, to build our hopes more entirely upon Him - "Who opens and no man shuts and shuts and no man opens".

Now I must leave it for the time. May the Lord cause these things, if it can please Him, to take root and bear fruit in the profit of our souls and the glory of His great Name.

AMEN.