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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 9 September 1908

2 Peter 1 v 4

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"

My beloved friends we shall never be able sufficiently to bless God that He ever opened His mouth to utter a divine promise in the gospel. We shall never be able sufficiently to extol the infinite condescension of the Holy Ghost in causing the scriptures to be written, and filling them, as He has done, with these "exceeding great and precious promises", and, as some of us can but believe, in making some of those promises over to us; pouring heavenly treasure into earthen vessels. I believe these vessels could not bear much of that treasure in their present state; they would be broken. The glory of God is so great, a few rays of it are quite as much as a poor, weak, frail, mortal body can bear. Nor could the powers of our minds sustain much of that glory; that glory that comes through Christ crucified especially.

O, it is a blessed thing to hear God's voice, even as Mary heard it in the garden, taking away all fear, removing all uncertainty as to who He was who spoke, taking away all the doubts and ignorance of the mind, overcoming all the misgivings, and making the soul sweetly and confidently to say, "My Lord and my God!" O, you who have never been brought to this yet, the Lord is able to bring one to it, and I wish He would do it tonight if it were pleasing to Him. Then you would know the truth and the truth would make you free. The liberty of the truth is marvellous liberty; it takes tormenting fear away, it removes the bondage of guilt, it sets an open door before the soul. Before faith things look right, however wrong they may be apparently to the eye of reason. God is right, Christ is right, truth is great, time is short, troubles are for a moment, heaven is sure, under the revelation of Christ, and repentance is pure, with abhorrence of sin and sorrow of

a godly sort; all these things fill the mind where the true liberty of Christ is. Ah, it is not excitement, not something that you fancy; it is from an amazing, holy, humbling power on your heart; Christ coming to fill an empty place. And His glories spread out so, if I may say it, that you cannot see anything else; the very sun itself is darkness compared with that revelation of Christ. And that is so here!. O what must it be to see Him without the veil of the flesh intervening? To see Him, not as through a glass darkly, but face to face? And to know, not in part, but to know even as we are known?

Now these promises are given us by the Lord's power, His glorious power, and His virtue. They are given in two ways: First of all in the Scriptures; they are written here and a blessed Book this is. Well might Hart say to us respecting reading the Scriptures

Join prayer with each inspection

and also

If aught there dark appear

Bewail thy want of sight

These promises are "exceeding great and precious"; they exceed in their nature and measure the conceptions of our minds. Who could have thought, who could have imagined that the Son of God would have come down and taken into union with Himself that sinless body which was prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost. O how great it is, greater than all the sense of unworthiness that people taught of the Spirit feel in themselves. And how precious is such a truth, as revealed in the Scriptures, and seen and received by faith!

The first exceeding great and precious promise was given out by God Himself soon after the fall. In the cool of the day the Lord God walked in the midst of the Garden, and called Adam, and Adam was found hiding himself. The blessing had departed from him, innocence had gone, knowledge of evil had come. He knew his condition, and sought to hide himself. This is the way with every poor creature who is convinced of sin. Now he knows evil, not generally, as everybody may,

does know it, but he knows it immediately, so to speak, as in the presence of God, in the sight of the glory of God's justice. And that is why people often cannot bear their early conviction of sin; they cannot bear the presence of God in them, because of His glorious justice.

Now God came to Adam when he was in this deplorable state and hiding himself. He drew out his confessions, although he met Him with some excuses and tried to blame the Lord for his fall: The woman which Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat." Then the Lord gave out that first promise; O, what a promise! The Seed of the woman - Jesus Christ - is to bruise the head of the serpent, the devil. That promise contains all the other promises of the gospel. O, it is Christ who is promised! The Apostle Paul in the Hebrews tells us this: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil". He destroyed his authority, not his being; his usurped right over the people whom Christ redeemed - "that He might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage". Ah, and if any of you feel bruised under temptation, God shall shortly bruise Satan under your feet; and the reason of it is this, that the first promise contains this great matter - "It shall bruise thy head" - that is, the Seed of the woman shall bruise the devil. And when the Lord said, "It shall bruise thy head", it took in all the schemes, intellect, wisdom, counsels of Satan; as in one place you read of "the gates of hell" - where the counsels, plots, and schemes were all laid. Now, says God, this Seed of the woman shall bruise thy head, take away everything, and break up all these projects of ruin, and of engulfing in eternal misery, My people.

This is the promise, and it is an exceeding great one, it is precious; and if you are housed in that there is no place in hell for you. If you are embraced in that, the love of God has embraced you, the goodness of God has surrounded you, the kindness of Christ has encircled you, the goodness of the Spirit has encompassed you, and eternal habitations are prepared for you. A place in that promise, O what a place it is! O what a heaven of saving grace is in that first

promise! If we had the eyes to see it, the hearts to investigate it, we should find it just the power, word, hand, and love of God let down from heaven to the very gates and jaws of hell, to snatch the whole election of grace therefrom and carry them all into heaven! Well, this is an exceeding great promise - exceeding all the sin, all the death, all the fears, all the bondage of all the people who are interested therein. And God gives this not only in the Scriptures but He gives it to His people. Every encouragement the Spirit drops upon a seeker's soul, every touch of God's goodness that attracts the sinner, every sense of mercy, every time you get access, every feeling of quickening, every revival of your faith, every time the world drops its hold and loses its charm, every time Jesus more attracts you, and His grace seems to be a suitable ground of fruitfulness and life into which you would be planted - all these mercies come out of that big promise of the Seed of the woman: "It shall bruise thy head".

Now what a mercy it is to get this really given over, given out from God's own mouth, as to its substance, into your soul. O my friends, God is a good God, and His voice is a wonderful voice, full of majesty, full of power, and all kindness to sinners. He says to a poor seeker, You shall find. That sinner has a promise, therefore, on his side and, as to its substance, in his soul: "They that seek shall find". Who can fail with such a promise on his side? It sets the face to God and keeps it to Him. It tells a sinner what he wants he shall have; that it is to be had out of the fulness of Christ - free pardon, free justification, free and full sanctification. Every promise, every blessing necessary for this life and that which is to come, God has wrapped up in this great promise. Exceeding great and precious is the promise of Christ the Seed of the woman.

You will find the same promise in substance is in the Scripture again where we are told that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5 v 11) And how do we know that we are interested in that life, that we have a place in that great promise? Why, by fresh quickening and sweet renewings. O how dull and flat some of us get almost every day, as if sometimes the very things we have most delighted in have no sweetness, but are like the white of an egg to us; and so we should remain but for the renewings of the

Holy Ghost. Ah, He has promised us eternal life, and He gives out of that blessed promise new quickenings and renewings of the mind, renewing faith, drawing out the soul's hunger and thirst, and making us lively. Yes, hunger makes people lively, hunger makes them alert, makes them seek; hunger-bitten souls cannot be satisfied and sit or lie down where they are; but if they get a word about bread, a hint about the goodness of God in Christ they seek it. That is a fresh quickening; it is the renewing of the mind. We are very apt to overlook this, some of us. Between biting hunger and a feast of fat things it may seem that there is nothing at all; whereas there may be very much, as when a man in his soul gets a fresh attraction; when he gets some renewed feeling that God is good; when on some occasion he has - to him - a new wonder, a view of the freeness of grace; when he gets some sweet, inexpressibly sweet, sense that Christ has pardon, goodness, love, mercy to bestow; is not that something? It is short of what is wanted, but is it not something?

Sometimes a new life may come into your soul by a vision of Christ's greatness and glory. I tell you what will put the world out - no matter how bright it is to you in some part of it - Christ's glory coming down in your soul, "Thy God, thy glory", made known in your heart will do it. I think if ever a poor creature did love this world intensely, I did, and I saw certain things so beautiful, so attractive, that my whole being was set upon having them. But I know what put the whole light of these things out - I do not mean that I have never seen them attractive again. Whenever the glory of Christ rises upon the soul and faith gets a view of that glory, whatever is bright in this world, attractive to the mind, likely to satisfy and be a resting-place for the intelligence, or anything else - no matter what part of you is drawn - I say the glory of Christ will just put the whole light out, and you will say

Thou O Christ art all I want
All in all in Thee I find

Now I call that a fresh quickening. I know that if it is not a satisfying, it is a sweet drawing; you may not get out of it what you want - your thirst, your hunger, may not be fully satisfied - but O, you will say, "I should like to live under that light, in those rays".

Just as now, on a stormy day, when the sun refuses to shine through the clouds, and we feel the wind and the damp, we feel, now if we could but once more get into the rays of the sun, how glad we should be, so when you have had Christ near you, and been under His sweet, warming rays, you feel, now these sweet rays are gone, I would like to get back into them. Well, the promise is a promise of life; it is an exceeding great promise; it exceeds these, our changes; it will outlive them too. And it is a precious promise because the Lord has added this to it: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you". Now this is the blessed promise, the promise of eternal life. When this warms your heart, and you have the liberty and power of it in your soul, you wont want to be a day younger than you are; you wont want to have the past of your life before you. No, there is something attractive in eternity when Christ is near the soul. It is not for me to speak lightly of departing this life; to leave everything tangible and launch into an unknown world is not a little thing; but I do say that Christ's glory on your soul will just make this to you, that you wont want to be a day younger than you are.

There is another promise - O it is an exceeding great promise; it stretches beyond all time, as the one I have just mentioned does - and it is this: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". Sometimes you may seem left, seem forsaken and alone when these short visits end. So you may feel now and again that His communications have ended. But the promise is, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". And this is made good to people. O, why have we not failed? Why has not faith given out? Why has not love wholly died? Why has not appetite fully gone from us? Why have we not turned our backs on the Lord entirely? Because He will not let us!

Midst all my sin and grief and woe
Thy Spirit will not let me go

It is a great thing to find the Lord pulling you to Himself from time to time; and it is a sweet thing to find Him coming to you from time to time. "I will see you again". "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". Now you may say, some of you, that you have not His presence; how then can you have an interest in that promise: "I will never leave

thee, nor forsake thee"? The presence of Christ is known in two ways

1 When His Holy Spirit is working in the soul, when His life moves in it, when a man cannot be without the Lord then the Lord is in Him. "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us". And if the Holy Spirit moves in you, operates, draws, attracts, what is it but an evidence that the Lord Jesus Christ is in you as your life? He is in you in His love, though not in the working and sweetness of it to your sense; and He is in you in His righteousness, and in His atonement, for God could never come to a sinner and dwell with him and in him apart from those great matters. This is one way in which the presence of Christ is to be regarded. In eternal love He comes to His people, and in the sweetness of the workings of His Spirit in them He is present. Every new born soul has in him that that is communicable of God - the divine nature, and that is no less than the life, or grace of the God-Man, Christ.

2 Well, but there is a sense of His presence sometimes which is what people want and hanker after, and the hankering after this that they have makes them very apt to think that they have not His presence at all, when they lack that sense of it that they wish to have. O, and it is good to have His presence, you cannot express it! It is to feel He is with you as the sun is with the earth, as a parent is with a child, as a covering to you, as your Righteousness, your Friend, your Elder Brother; that He is with you as a Prophet to reveal His Father's will in you, and as a Priest, the High Priest of our profession, enabling you to go to God in that one offering which He made of Himself. It is to feel He is with you in His love, shedding it abroad in your heart; and in His peace, extending peace to you like a river, and making you understand that no sin that you have done, and no corruption which you possess can keep Him away from you, because He delights in you and in your society! Well, who could understand that naturally? It is a great promise: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" It is one that God has made over to some of us by His great power, and it is according to His nature and power and glory and virtue that He has given us these promises, as the Apostle Peter says.

And O, my friends, what a promise is the promise of supply. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus". We shall be needy people as long as we live. He who gets beyond need in this life gets into an awful state. People of God have that sense of need kept alive more or less by the working of the Spirit of Christ, and they are poor, afflicted, emptied out from time to time. Ah, that is so, that if you have got a need and God supplies it, you just live on it for the hour, and think, now I am well off, but when the hour of need is gone, the supply seems also to have ceased, and you think, why I must have been deceived. But why should you? The devil will say, you are a hypocrite, you said God supplied your need and now you are as poor as ever. But what is hypocrisy? It is a conscious evil; it is a person saying he is what, at the moment, he knows he is not, and that he has what, at the moment, he has not. But when you felt the Lord with you, were you not speaking the truth? Ah, but here is the thing to learn - every need must have a fresh supply. If you had a need this morning and got a supply for it, and you should have a fresh need this evening, the supply of this morning wont do for this evening. It must be like the daily manna; day by day the manna fell around the wandering camp. "My God shall supply all your need".

This is what God does; He giveth out fresh communications; grace is poured into His lips, and He speaks that grace out into people's souls, and how sensible they are of the supply flowing in; as the Church saith: "The voice of my Beloved! behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills"; so that people do know when the Lord comes. If He is behind a wall, they understand somewhat of His presence. O, has He ever let the savour of it come into your souls? "My Beloved standeth behind our wall; He looketh forth at the windows, showing Himself through the lattice". If that is so drawing when you do not feel Him coming in, what is it to feel the effect of His presence! "My God shall supply all your need" - all your need in providence; people cannot need more than He has to give. You cannot need all the cattle on a thousand hills, nor all the gold and silver, yet the Lord has all of them; the cattle on a thousand hills are the Lord's, and all the gold and silver belongs to Him! Ah, there are but few and small needs compared with His fulness. He has promised all this - all the supplies we stand in need of. Therefore

He says to His people, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it".

Now these promises that I have mentioned are just two or three out of a Bible full. O blessed be God that ever He has opened His mouth to speak promises! O that I could celebrate His goodness in opening His mouth to speak promises into my soul! O that we all, who have had it, could thank Him for it. Think of it, one word is life to the soul! And, so to speak, it pledges God to that soul. He pledges Himself when He comes and sends His words. He heals the sinner when He sends His word to him; He strengthens him when He sends it; He gives it him as a girdle wherewith to gird up the loins of his mind and be sober and hope to the end. Think of God giving out such things as these!

"The voice of the Lord is powerful", and Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice". Ah, some of us would know it again if we heard it tonight! You can well believe what Mary must have felt, the sensations that filled her whole soul, when Jesus uttered her name. It was not merely her name, it was the voice that uttered it; O, it was the power that went into her soul with it! And beloved friends, when you have got something like that you will say, the half was never told me of what Christ's voice and love are. How it does sound through the soul! Love divine, pardon full and free, the voice of Jesus gives. If He does not always give as much as that, He does communicate encouragements, powerful, sweet encouragements to His people. Therefore they are brought to feel from time to time "How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" Said the Psalmist to Him, "O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" Where has He laid it up? Why in Christ, where it pleased Him that all fulness should dwell.

These promises are exceeding great and precious. They are exceeding great; they exceed many things; they exceed our conceptions. We are very limited, and Christ said, by Paul, "Ye are straitened in your own bowels" "Ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss" - this is how we are

straitened. O my friends, if our askings were made on the ground of His promises, if we had faith at all to ask just as He has promised, what a difference there would sometimes be - at least in my askings. I do not wonder that the Lord should say that we are straitened in ourselves. One sight of our corruption in the light of the Spirit, if the Spirit goes no further than that at the time, is enough to make us sink, and feel that we must be silent. But one sight of the blood of Jesus, O if it goes no further than that at the moment, is enough to make us ask all that God has promised in Christ. Though we confess, and must continue to confess, that we deserve the lowest hell, a sight of Christ's blood will make us ask for the Lord's sweetest heaven! You know what I mean, some of you. You could not keep silent before the Lord under the sight of the blood of Christ. So the promise of an atonement, the promise of a Saviour, will exceed all the conceptions of a man's own mind, and all the thoughts that he will have, when he is under the workings of legality. It will exceed all the thoughts that he has as he views his guilt and his sin.

Would that the Lord would make my heart enlarged to ask those things which He Himself has so mercifully promised. But the devil will not let you go long without disputing things, for as sure as you get some enlargement of spirit in respect of the promise in Christ of eternal life, the old enemy, that crooked serpent, that cruel devil, will come and tell you that you have been too bold; and then perhaps he will drive you to your knees - making a mistake, as God makes him do; for "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" - he will take you to your knees asking the Lord to forgive you for being so bold, and speaking so boldly. And then the Holy Ghost helps you to ask still more. Well, this is because the Lord's promise is so full; it exceeds our conceptions, exceeds all that we think as we are poor, sinful creatures. "Exceeding great" - greater than sin, greater than guilt, greater than all the worldliness, greater than a man is able to take in. You and I could not take in much of God. I am certain of this, that the mortal frame could bear very little of God's greatness and love, and Christ's greatness in dying, and the Spirit's greatness in teaching and quickening our souls. A man must die to be able to bear the glory of God, as he must die to speak of Christ. You may have felt your frame affected by trouble; when you have been under conviction, you may have felt it has weakened your body; but O, if you have seen

"the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", you have seen that which has affected you even more than the trouble. My beloved friends, may the Lord make me speak words of soberness and truth, and I believe I so speak when I say this. Christ's glory, how great it is! and it will come down sometimes by the Word into your heart, or without the Word, and sweetly, suddenly catch you up in its own enfoldings, and gather you so to speak in your spirit to where the Lord has put His Name, even to His temple, that temple which the Lord hath pitched and not man, and there you worship; there you are included in that blessed word in the Revelation, "measure the temple and the altar and them that worship therein" - you get the measure of it, and are square with God's rule and measure; and you worship in His temple, clothed in His righteousness, cleansed in His blood, blessed with His love, and things are straight with His word.

O, it is a very great promise, that "God has promised us eternal life and this life is in His Son." And is it not precious? You who have had His mercy unto eternal life manifested to you, did you never sing that word in substance

Yes, Thou art precious to my soul
My transport and my trust
Jewels to Thee are gaudy toys
And gold is sordid dust

Christ is precious to every believing heart. "Unto you therefore that believe He is precious". There is nothing to compare with Him.

Compared with Christ in all beside
No comeliness I see

Wisdom is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her - that is Christ. And this every soul knows who has in any measure the glory and preciousness of Christ revealed to him by the Holy Ghost.

"Exceeding great and precious promises" God has given out. O, He is a liberal God. I have thought, what would more set forth God's

liberality than the summer sun scattering from early morning to late in the evening his light, his heat, beautifying every object you look at, and making fruitful everything that has a root? O, what a beautiful thing the sun is! You cannot look at a hill in his light and not see it shining in his beauty. That hill is different in our eyes from what it is when the rays of the sun are not upon it. So, when Jesus lets down on your heart a little of His beauty and glory and greatness, then you say, "He is precious to my soul, and makes me see things differently. In His light I see them as they should be seen - the world as it is, and Himself as He is in a measure. Eternal things as they are; Time as it is; Eternity as it is".

But here is an ocean and I am lost. I wish I were in it; yet even a drink of it is wonderful! O if you get your ankles in here, just into this living water, you will want to go further; and presently you will find strength and will want to swim. You wont want to come back to the bank . You will never forget the Spring - the Jesus you looked at, the God that blessed you, the love that was so sweet, the strength that was communicated to your soul; which are all contained in these "exceeding great and precious promises".

AMEN.