

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 29 March 1922

TEXT: II PETER 1 verse 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 Holy Ghost in the earlier verses of this chapter exhorts the saints with respect to their inward walk. I say their inward walk, for they are exhorted to give all diligence, and to add to their faith, virtue and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godliness, and to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. If these things be in you they will bring forth fruit in your life. It is a great thing to be careful of your inward walk, of the condition of your souls, before God. You may be very particular about your external conduct, and you cannot be too particular, but you may, at the same time, be very indifferent to your state before God. There are some, of whom we read in the chapter, with words softer than butter, but who have murder in their hearts, and it is a great thing to be favoured with a broken and contrite spirit. Seek rather to have a broken heart than to have soft words.

Faith, when it grows, always grows in one direction. It always grows Godward as He reveals Himself in Christ. You will find that in your own souls, that every time you have real moving faith in your souls, you will be running after God, as said the Psalmist "My soul followeth hard after Thee". Time things lose all their improper importance; care does not corrode the mind; unbelief does not prevail to our confusion and hardness. There is a growth Godward; there is a taking root downward when faith roots itself in the Person and blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. And the Apostle says "He that lacketh these things", the virtues to which the Lord's people are here exhorted, "is blind and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged

from his old sins." He is blind, neither sees himself or God properly, cannot see afar off. He cannot see the cross of Christ; he cannot see a gracious, sin forgiving God; he cannot see the Holy Ghost as a teacher, a helper a guide. He is blind and cannot see the blessedness of being right with God and the glory of being justified by Christ's righteousness. And the savour of the grace of the Spirit in the soul, he cannot perceive. "And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins". Forgotten the profession which he made and by which he was purged from all external evils. Forgotten, as it might very well be in this case, that he was an idolator. Forgotten that, even though a Jew, he was far off. Forgotten all that he professed. If you take this to be a mere professor, as seems to be the case in the intention of the Spirit, then what a solemn thing it is that is before us. Who knows what will become of us, as we are professors. Withered branches are dreadful things. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away". Men gather all such branches and they are burned. May we not be of this character.

Then comes the text. Wherefore the rather, all the more as seeing a case of this kind, all the more, brethren, may you be stirred up to diligence, to give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if these things, this diligence to which you are exhorted and the adding of the virtues also, if these things be in you, you shall never fall. If you do these things, to which I, Peter, a servant of Jesus Christ, exhort you, you shall never fall. It is a great mercy to have a right spirit to apprehend what is intended here, to feel led to observe what Solomon says - "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." He who is indifferent to his own heart is in a sad case. He who minds not what motions are there, is in a sad case. You may be very meticulous about your words, very careful about your steps among men, but what if your heart be altogether wrong?

Let us look then at the things to which we are exhorted to give diligence, in the first place, and then notice, in the next place, the effect of having in us, and doing the things, exhorted

to, namely "ye shall never fall". And what is intended by this so sweet word, first of all, give diligence to make your calling and election sure? It seems that ordinarily in the scripture, election is put before calling. It is so, because it is regarded in such scripture as the first of all reasons why there is a christian, either in heaven or on earth. All must be traced up to eternal election. In this place, calling is put first, apparently, if I judge rightly, because it is to the alive the Apostle is led to speak, to people who presumably are elected, have been called. Let us look then at this, your calling. It means that work of God which is effectual in the heart, which is irresistible, invincible, that can never be overcome, but overcomes all opposition which it may meet with. Give diligence to make this sure. Sure, not to God. This is the foundation the Apostle speaks of "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His". No cloud of doubt or uncertainty is in the mind of God as to who belong to Him and who do not. The elect are before Him, the reprobates are before Him. But this is the point - Here are people, people of the dispersion, scattered abroad. Here are the Lord's professors standing in the church, having got a position in the church of the living God, and now, says Peter, there is much growth yet to be attained to, and attend to it, attend with all your heart and mind. Give diligence to this particular point about your calling, the source of it. This is important. Called to be saints by the God of all grace. All religion that does not originate with God, that is not the fruit of the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, must fail, must fail. "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up". Jude speaks of some being without root and twice dead, plucked up by the roots, their profession root being only just in the earth and not planted there by God Himself. Your calling, as to its nature. And in this there are some points which exercise the Lord's people which I would wish just to notice, points about which I myself have often been exercised and am still. Let me name one that might not be an exercise to some but is no doubt an exercise to others, namely, the time, the time when the great change came, when the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost came. There might be a great difference on this

point as to the clearness of it as between the cases of Saul of Tarsus and of Lydia. Saul was suddenly struck down and the time never left his memory, and the work of God never left his heart, and you know how he refers to it - the day when as he was approaching Damascus, the Lord met with him. But Lydia's case, as far as the record shows, is very different. One does not know, of course, because the Lord has not recorded it, whether or not she could put her hand on the time when her heart was opened, but the truth of the case was this - her heart was opened. Now you may be exercised on this point and it may be a means of good to you, those of you whose time of regeneration is not apparent to yourselves, though clear to God. You may not know the time. It may have been with you, as with others, that you gradually came to believe there was a God in heaven and, believing that, you came to believe that you were sinners. Now there was nothing marked, as to time or operation just then, but though now you are cloudy perhaps to the time, you may be able to say "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see". I did not know that I was a sinner, for I did not know there was a God. Now I know both. Now I see by reasons which are lodged in my heart and conscience, that there is a God and I see in the light that teaches me, there is a God, and that I am a sinner. You may be concerned about the means. Some can distinctly say what means were used. This minister or that minister, this scripture or that scripture God was pleased to use and honour in your quickening and conversion. Some are clear there but others are not so clear. You may find your souls truly put to it at times to see whether you ever had, with any special, any distinct power, any scripture or whether any minister was ever used to lodge either conviction in your conscience or drop comfort into your heart. You may be troubled about the means, you may be troubled about the continuance, and, to your own apprehension, the lack of growth. It is in the nature of all living things to grow. In everything, in which there is life, there is a growth, and you may say - Well I believe that as a principal, but my belief of it troubles me for I do not perceive a growth in myself. What you were years ago perhaps in your experience, you must own you are that, and a very little more, if any more, today. What you knew of sin, you know now, hardly more. What you knew of prayer then,

you seem to know little or no more now. What you knew or apprehended of Christ, you may seem to know hardly any more today. And this lack of growth may trouble you, and well it may. If the natural man grows from the child to the youth, and from youth to manhood, shall a child of God be born and never grow? Shall he know his emptiness and never have a supply, his weakness and never feel the strength of Christ? Well this may concern you. It does not cut you off, but it may concern you. And the Apostle says to such - give diligence to make the calling, which in some ways may be very doubtful to you, sure. And there is another great reason for doubt as to this matter, which I will name. That is to say, the more or less continual falling into some sins. O this is painful. I speak too painfully of this. You get a lift, you get out of the dungeon by the goodness of God, you get some help here and some help there, and back you fall into the old state of confusion, darkness, deathly feelings and there appears to be no abiding. "Abide in Me" says Christ, and you will say I do not know what it means. "Continue instant in prayer," says the scripture, and you say I fail there. "Walk in love" says the scripture, and you say I scarcely know what love means, much less can I lay claim to walk in it. O the failings, the fallings. It is difficult. It may be to you, as it is to myself often, difficult to hold your face up as a professor because of your shameful defeats and perpetual failings and fallings. Blessed be God if the failings are not external, but the inward coming short, the failings here and there and the falling away from a gracious exercise, how painful all this is.

Now, says the Apostle, give diligence to make this calling sure which to you is so doubtful, which does so hamper and weaken. Give diligence to make it sure. On this I would make two remarks, first what is the diligence to which we are exhorted? It is a diligence of faith. No soul exercise, no fervent prayer, no mighty cry, no urging your case before the Lord, without faith. He who has true faith, when it is exercised and standing in the power of the Holy Spirit, is moving all the time Godward. This, as you may know, some of you, leads the sinner to put his case, with all its aggravations as he may know and feel them, before the Lord. His lacks, his short-comings,

his failings here and there, he will not hide. As he has faith, he will lay them bare in confession before the Lord. As faith looks to Christ's fulness of grace, to the blood of the everlasting covenant, to the throne of God's heavenly grace, to the promises which are made to poor helpless sinners, faith, I say, as seeing these things, then urges them on the Lord's notice and begs to participate in them, prays that they may be fulfilled in the experience of the soul, that God would speak and teach and move and act, that He would bring in those things which faith sees to be in Christ. This diligence is a feeling that is expressed in the prophecy of Isaiah. "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed from the pit". And diligence here has the idea of making haste in it, making speed, lest you should not be found right, lest you should be a withered branch, to be gathered by men. Give diligence on this account. Children must grow, and as in nature, so in grace. "Grow in grace" says the Spirit by this Apostle in another place "and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". Do not you want clear, clean work? Do not you seek to have matters put straight between God and your consciences? Do not you want Christ to be formed in you, the hope of glory? Do not you pant, sometimes, for the knowledge of Christ as your own, that you may say "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is Mine?" Do not you long sometimes to say for yourself "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste?" O brethren, it is a great thing to be clear here. A great thing to be owned of God, and to find you are owned by the Lord Jesus Christ, so that He says to you "Thou art Mine" and you, in the power and glory of that love, say to Him "Thou art mine". "The Lord is my portion saith my soul". Are you exercised about Eternity? Do timeless things occupy you at times? Is union with Christ before you? Do you realise that either you are saved or lost, that either you are justified or condemned, that either you are going to heaven or to hell? If so, then says the word - Give diligence, and let that work, which you profess, that religion which is on your lips and which is more or less in your walk as an external profession is made. O do not these things exercise you and are you not anxious to have the matter settled? "Lord,

say unto my soul I am thy salvation" and bring me into closer union and into intimate communion with Thyself. Give diligence. The time may exercise you as a temptation. The enemy may come and suggest to you that, because you cannot put your hand on the time when God met with you, therefore He has not met with you. What a fallacious argument. The Lord keep you from being distressed by it. Or, the means which may not be clear to you, which God used, may be a temptation. Because you have not had such and such scriptures, the enemy may say you have had nothing. Well, if it be so, suppose now for a moment you are not clear about the time, that you cannot put your hand on the means, and say - then God came and by this He came. Suppose it to be so, what then? Give up, says the enemy. Does the scripture say that? No. It says "Give diligence", beg of God to clear it to you. He can do it. Suppose one should say now I can go to the day when God stopped me, I can tell the scripture by which He stopped me. It might be true, but the person in saying it might be proud, spiritually proud, might be asleep and dark and distant. It is good to be clear on these points, if the Lord will give clearness. But, if it please Him to withhold that clearness, it is no ground for despair. Pray, pray, pray; give diligence; make the case known; take your anxieties to God; beg of Him to shine on that work which He has commenced and to increase it and to give you so as to realise union with Christ as that you may say - Now I know whose I am. "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". And when you get that testimony it will give you clearness in the thing that is so important, to make your calling and election sure. Now to whom is this certainty to be given? Why, to the enquirer, to the soul that is giving, through the Holy Ghost, diligence in the matter. It is a testimony that the sinner seeks from the mouth of God, the witness of the Spirit. As we sometimes pray in one of our hymns

The witness that I am Thy child
O Jesus to me now impart
The pleasing sensation will yield
Unspeakable joy to my heart

And so it will, whenever it comes. Blessed soul that waits on God with the energy of faith. Blessed sinner that can say "Christ only I seek" Blessed is the man in whose heart is the longing to have God, God in Christ. God for a Father, Christ for the elder brother, and the Holy Ghost for the witnesser and the sealer of the soul unto the day of redemption. What joy it is when one can say I am the Lords. Is there anything to be compared with it? Those who have had the testimony. know that there is no earthly good that can be compared with that, no sensation of pleasure of this world of an earthly kind that can be mentioned by the side of that, especially when it grows to that holy and divine sealing of which we read in the scripture - "After that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise". Ah, and it seems that part of that sealing is expressed in the Romans where Paul says "The Spirit also beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ". The diligent soul is made fat. The sluggard perishes - he desireth and hath nothing; the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. Therefore may grace be given us to press our case before the Lord that He would say to us - You are Mine, You are Mine. I have redeemed thee. Come to Me. Give diligence. It will do you good. I know but little of this, but the little I do know enables me to say it is a good thing, a blessed thing, to be earnest in your spirit, to be hastening that you may be loosed from the pit and not perish and that your bread should not fail. A good thing to be asking in the word of Christ "Abide in Me" and when you feel that you do not abide in Him. Then to ask that you may have union sweetly felt with Him, and power to walk in Him and abide in Him.

And, if we are called and know that we are called, then there will be some fruits following. If we know that we are the Lords, while that powerful knowledge is in us, we shall love Him. We shall be clothed with humility, we shall be bathed in repentance and sweet, thankful contrition. We shall want to know Him every way possible. We shall want to honour Him in life and in death.

Then says the Apostle - "and election". This is a point which, at some part of their life, one would say every child of God is concerned about. Election is God's act and if it be God's act how do you know, how can you know that He has elected you? This is a great point. It is an act of God from Eternity. How can it be known in time? How do we know there is a God? Because He has revealed Himself. How are we to know if we are elected? By God telling us that. "Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love". Then you will know it. Now says Peter be diligent about this. It is a great thing to believe in the doctrine of eternal, personal election, and when it comes to your own case, a great thing to believe, and for yourself greater to be told by God's own mouth that He did, in eternity, elect you. Some ministers tell us we ought not to be exercised about this, but the scripture clearly is against them. If there were no other verse in the whole word of God, this is against them, for evidently the Apostle Peter puts this as a matter of exercise - Be diligent about it. The testimony of a thousand godly people about your being Gods could not and ought not to satisfy you, until you have one testimony, and that is the testimony of the Holy Ghost in your heart. How the Lord shall do that, give you that testimony, is with Himself. By a word, He may tell it you; by a doctrine; by an inshining; by a communication; by union felt; by communion enjoyed. By one means or another He can do it. But to have it done, that is the thing. O to know that God looked on us in eternity, before we fell, and gave us to His dear Son as part of His body, part of His church, part of His very self as the Head of the church. And what is this diligence here? Is it not seeking the face of God? "If we have the witness of men, the witness of God is greater". If your friends who know you well, and to whom you may again and again express some of your exercises, so as that they receive you as a child of God, say to you you are right, the Lord blesses you, we can see that clearly, well it is good to have their testimony. But the best thing is to have the testimony of the Holy Ghost. And, if we do not get it all at once, that is to say, if we are a long time before we arrive at this, still to be enabled to seek it is a mercy, a great mercy. A miracle of grace may be done on one who has long waited for it. A man on whom Christ did a miracle was

about 40 years old, and you may find yourself growing old in exercises. Still wait on God. There is a divine sovereignty in this, the gift of assurance, the gift of the witness of the Spirit. It is given to some early, and others late, but this is the point before us as says the Spirit by Peter "Give diligence", be earnest about this matter. It is not a matter of indifference whether God the Holy Ghost is moving. Give diligence. Ah, Satan aims at sending us to sleep. If we are born again he can never kill the life that God has given but he may, by divine permission, lull a poor child of God to sleep sometimes. He may sleep on improper grounds, rest on improper reasons, and go to sleep. But if the Holy Ghost stirs that soul up within again, with the added guilt and trouble of having slept, he will be giving diligence to this point.

Tell me Lord and make me feel it
I am Thine for ever Thine

Now my brethren may the Lord stir us up to this, to seek to know whose we are, whom we are serving, and where we are going. It wont be long before the end comes. It wont be long before the grand division is made between the sheep and the goats. May it please God then while we are here to so exercise our hearts as that we may cry mightily to Him that He would say to our souls "I am thy salvation". "Fear not I have redeemed thee thou art Mine." Sin is against this exercise; self-love is against it; the devil is against it; reason is against it. The whole bent and trend of our fallen nature is against this exercise, but the Spirit of God here speaks of it and says to all the people of God, brethren, seeing that some never attain to this, seeing that some hang about and are outside, notwithstanding their profession, and that they bring forth no fruits of grace, let this the more exercise you to be diligent that you may know in your own consciences and hearts for yourselves that your calling is of God, that sovereign grace did come and prevail and that you may know, by divine testimony, that the Lord did eternally choose you as it is in the Epistle to the Ephesians, before the world began that you might stand holy and without blame before Him in love. Election is a beautiful doctrine to me. Sometimes it has

had only love and compassion in it. And, dear friends, there is no mercy like the mercy of election. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy".

Then says the Apostle "For if ye do these things ye shall never fall". As long as you live, as long as you live in these exercises, you shall never fall. May a child of God fall? Yes. Not finally, not into hell. No, never shall that be said of any born again. A person interested in the Lord Jesus is not liable to condemnation. One for whom Christ died is not liable to the curse of the law, for Christ was made a curse for him. But that same person is very liable to fall into some sin. David fell; Peter fell; Solomon fell. O how many many of the Lord's people have fallen, but the falling to hell shall never, never be known by any child of God. If ye do these things an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So clearly this has reference to final perseverance. That one to whom the Holy Ghost is given, and who is led by the Lord to a diligent search after Christ, to a gracious enquiry as to whether he is chosen unto salvation, such a person, while thus exercised, is kept, kept by means of that exercise, kept in the fear of God, kept waiting on God, kept looking for the coming of the Lord, and he shall, at last, have what he feared missing, what sometimes he was enabled to hope for - an abundant entrance ministered unto him into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

One more word. This seems to me to point to a growth in grace, and we are, in the scriptures, informed that in the church of Christ there are three cases, rather three conditions of growth. In every case there is life. There are little children, young men and fathers. Little children are the people who are more recently blessed with grace, to whom the Holy Ghost has come, who are born again, and who have had some revelation of God, for their sins are forgiven. That is a great point. Little children know the forgiveness of sins. May the Lord help us to look to this and cry for them. Young men, who are strong in the knowledge of God, and fathers, who know the Lord. As we grow in years, may we grow in grace, grow in the faith of Christ, grow in

earnest desires after Him, grow in separation from everything that is evil, and especially separation from self. And where this growth is, there is the glory of the Holy Ghost, the glory of His mighty operations, the glory of communion with Christ, and the glory of knowing God the Father, who is in Christ reconciling us to Himself. Now for whom are the ordinances of Christ in the church? They are for little children, young men and fathers. For these the ordinances are. They are given that the people of God should walk in them; they are given for the obedience of children. Therefore may the Lord help us to regard these. They are given for children to walk in who have the testimony of God in their consciences and know something for themselves about the Lord. Here may we be enabled always to stand, that the Lord did give this holy ordinance of believers' baptism to be obeyed, regarded, as His word. He said "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" So it is our privilege again this evening to attend to it in the case of the one who has been, as we believe, blessed with the love of God and the grace of Christ and some knowledge of Christ by revelation. Such is the privilege and may we prize it. May the blessed God help us through for His own name's sake. Give diligence, dear friends, according to this exhortation and the Lord grant His blessing upon each soul favoured with the life of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.