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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS
Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday evening 22 May 1927

2 PETER 3 verses 17 and 18

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

It is perhaps beyond our conception, the bliss on which our sister has now entered. To see the Lord by faith here is very wonderful, but faith never gets a perfect view of Christ. A true view, indeed, faith gets, but not a perfect view. To be where the Lord is, to see Him as He is without the weary veil of the flesh between, must be an added bliss arising from an added knowledge of Him. And yet she is not perfect. No soul, spirit of just man in heaven now is perfect. The saints await their bodies and when the resurrection shall come and Christ shall have the purchase of His blood with Him, then the eyes that wept for sin and looked through the mist of tears sometimes on Him, will see Him as He is and the body will be like the Saviour's body. It is written - "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." But this we do not understand, cannot in our present state. It is written - "We know not what we shall be but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is". What saints have gone to heaven from this chapel. What numbers have I buried; more godly people from this chapel in heaven than there are attending it now, yet there are some present who are going to be one day "Absent from the body, present with the Lord". No more sin; that is an attraction unspeakably powerful at times to a spiritual person that he will be far from a world of grief and sin and that, to speak in the language of Dr Goodwin, all the croaking toads of his sins will fall away. O bright prospect, O glorious prospect, to be with the Lord for ever. Now the Apostle Peter tells us in the text that we know

some things before and that the knowledge of them should produce caution in our minds and move us to beware. "Lest we, being led away with the error of the wicked". Error foretold, damnable heresies and unbelief in the subtle form, saying, since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were. We should beware lest we should be carried away, led away, by the error of the wicked and fall from our own steadfastness. About this verse I made some remarks this morning. To be a steadfast believer is to be a blessed person. How frequently some of you may feel that your feet are ready to slip, that you are not steadfast in believing, that you differ very seriously from Abraham in his blessed condition. Though full of trial he was strong in faith giving glory to God, not accounting that death in any form could affect the promise which God had given to him and the covenant God had made with him. May we be made steadfast in believing, giving God credit for faithfulness, for love and for power when everything in creation shall say the performance of the promise is impossible. What matters it to God that death should intervene between a promise and its fulfilment? What does it signify to omnipotence that there should be natural impossibilities, any number of them? O, but to see the appearance of impossibilities is very powerful, weighty, influential. Faith says, there is nothing at all in these apparent impossibilities. Unbelief makes much of them. Faith makes nothing of them. Abraham counted, esteemed, and believed that God was able to do what He had promised although death was between. Do you say, how can that promise that I had long ago be fulfilled? Such and such difficulties stand between. The Lord enable you to beware of the error of the wicked in that particular. They said of old "Where is the promise of His coming for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were". No appearance of God working; no appearance of His coming to make good what He has said, That is the vile spirit of unbelief as if distance and time and nature and devils and men and death itself could in any way affect the faithfulness and the love and the power of God. O, but we need a strong faith to believe so. Not to be influenced by appearances, not to be carried away by death itself into an unbelieving state, not to be allowed to give up the promise on which we have been brought to rest, that is a great faith. And we are very liable to being carried away with the error of the wicked, that error perhaps being particularly in this chapter intended - Where is the promise of His coming?

The last verse says - "But grow in grace". It may not be unprofitable for us for a few minutes to consider the word "grace". Ordinarily we speak of it as being favour; God being favourable to a person, entertaining favourable thoughts concerning a person. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end." With favour God compasses His people about as with a shield. It is a gracious intention in the heart of God, a merciful purpose concerning the Church. It is the goodness of God manifested to the Church in the gift of Christ for her and in the gift of grace to Christ for her, for He gave grace before the world began to His Son, "Who", as it is written by the Apostle Paul in another place, "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began". That is the grace of God. It is in its fulness in the Lord Jesus. In its power it is in Him; in its fulness. As it is life, it is in Him. As it is light, it is in Him. As it is God's full intention of mercy, it is in Him. As it is all that is needed for the salvation of the soul, of the Church, it is in Him. Absolutely, perfectly; no lack there. Whatever lack of grace we may complain of there is no lack in Him, no scant supply. God gave liberally when He gave Adam, our father, a good estate of uprightness and a perfect home in Eden. That estate was soon squandered and poverty came to all of us, chiefly the poverty of death, for there is no poverty can be compared, for evil, with the poverty of death. And the next estate that God gave to the Church was in Christ. No more to be trusted to her keeping, she is to have the enjoyment of it. The life and the pardon and the justification and the sanctification and the preservation, all, all she has of her enjoyment and eternal bliss, but in the substance, in the fulness of it, it is in Him. Grace in God becomes operative, active. It became so in the counsel of peace. It becomes manifested in the coming of Christ, not to mention the many instances of God's appearance in the days of old. It became, above all other things, active in the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, in the gift to Him of the Holy Ghost, in the offering up of Himself without spot to God, whereby He obtained eternal redemption for us. Operative it was in the resurrection of that blessed Lord Jesus and in His ascension into heaven, and His prevailing intercession there. Grace in the Father,

grace in the Son, grace in the Holy Ghost. This grace we are here exhorted to grow in. It is a soil full of sap, fructifying, making fruitful every plant that the heavenly Father has planted. Hence it is said to the Church - "Ye are God's husbandry". It is a great thing to be in grace. Now the Apostle, by inspiration, says to these people of God of the dispersion "Grow in grace". There are two things in growth, that is to say, there is a growth downward; there is a growth upward, and these both belong to this word. Grow in grace downward, take root downward. True faith will always be striking its roots into grace, into the favour of God, the Person of Christ, the redemption by Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the sanctification which is by Christ, the presenting of the Church spotless and blameless to Himself. This, this is what faith will be doing, striking her roots down into Him. You will never bear fruit to the glory of God if you do not grow downward into grace. This is a secret business. Men may not see it, cannot see it. Nobody can enter into those secret motions of your souls, those motions of faith toward the Lord Jesus in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. How you, in secret, go to Him, lay before Him an evil case, confess to Him all the sinfulness of your nature, and the many, many turnings away from Him of which you are guilty. While so doing, that faith in your soul will be striking downward and drawing virtue from Him so that you shall not die. Now this is a very important part of vital religion, very, and it takes in many things which perhaps, at the first sight of a word may not strike us. It takes in I believe this, first. You grow in conviction of what you are in the Adam fall, in your own persons, in your own depravity, and in the motions of sin. If you compare your convictions at the beginning with what you, today, feel, those of you who are at all established, you may perceive the growth. At the beginning the pure conviction of the Spirit was Godward, as it is called repentance toward God. But was it not very much mixed and perhaps sometimes covered by legal fear, terror, dread of the Almighty, and looking to what you deserved, even hell? Later, and coming even to this day with yourselves, you may find that the convictions which you had at the beginning, but were mixed, now are not so mixed, but are more pure as it respects the character of God, the hatred of yourself, unaccompanied, because the gospel has appeared to you, unaccompanied by legal terror and dread of damnation. Growth? There is a growth in grace, a taking root

downward into the very grace of Christ, into the efficacy of His precious blood, into the sufficiency of His justifying righteousness, into the power of His arm to save, into the sweetness of His love to bear with you. There is more loyalty to God, if I may use such a word, in your convictions now than at the beginning - loyalty there was at the beginning but not in the measure - and not now mixed as at the beginning. Grow in grace. Another thing, that faith that you had that was honest, now encouraged and now discouraged by a little light and succeeding darkness, that faith that was swayed sometimes very seriously to your own feeling by the uprising of some sin and the eruption of evil in your heart, that faith is not so swayed today. You understand - it is not because sin is less odious to you, not because its nature is less vile and dreadful to you, but because that faith in your heart honours the atonement and you are not swayed away, removed from the hope of the gospel as you used to be. There is more true dependence on the Lord Jesus, a going out to Him in the acts of faith which, for want of a better word, perhaps I might call simple. Simple, not in the sense of being easy, but of being unmixed. A going forth to Christ, a saying - though I am vile, and have no hope of being less vile in myself, and though the corruptions of my heart do not grow less and they are as active as ever, yet I do look to the grace and the blood and the righteousness of the Lord Jesus brought to me by His good Spirit more and more and so I can say - but all this will not do; my hope's on Jesus cast. (Hymn 311) There I rest, there I hope, there I hang and I am found in my spirit running to Him from time to time a lost person, feeling that I am His. This is different from the beginning. The Apostle says, when I was a child I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child. When I became a man I put away childish things. And you say in your soul that is something like yourself. The transient view you got of Christ affected you, but the more believing and abiding views you may now have of Him establish you. There is a kind of loyalty now to Him that was not with you in the beginning. At least, if it is not different in kind, it is different in measure. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee" is the language of faith even in him who, in the same breath, said "I was as a beast before Thee". The two go well together; that is, self abhorrence and exaltation of Christ go well together. Faith puts you down as to self, lifts you up as to Christ. Grow in grace. And I may say the same

with love, that grace that is to outlive both faith and hope. Love to the Lord Jesus, love to the Father in Him and love to the Holy Spirit come from Him. It is a great thing to love the Lord. One may say sometimes, do I love Him? It is so difficult when sin is rising and working, driving. When the enemy comes and confuses you, when you grow weak through the indulgence of some evil thing, it is very difficult to find pure love to Him in your heart. But when through repeated visitations, touches, operations, inshinings of the Lord you can say again and again, He is precious to my soul, He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Jewels compared with Him are gaudy toys. Gold compared with Him is sordid dust. "But grow in grace".

Now a few words here. This will bring the person so blessed to a greater sense of dependence. "Thy whole dependence on Me fix". Christ had something in His mind which Peter did not fully understand perhaps when He said to Peter - When thou wast young thou girdest thyself and wentest whither thou wouldest, but when thou art old thou shall stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now it may be applied to the Lord's people. They are energetic, some are, when they are young; very confident in some particulars. They may often have said, I could not do that, and I would not do the other thing. They may have been stumbled by some older believers and have said we could not behave in that way and if you sift the spirit that prompted such expressions you would find that it was a good deal of dependence on themselves. They could not. There was not that knowledge, that deep knowledge of self that will bring the person who has it of from all that "cannot" of dependence on self. Now later the same person says I am liable to that; I am capable of the other. What is there that is evil that I could not do? And some exhortations which, perhaps, in earlier days appeared to have no meaning to such a person - an exhortation of this kind; "Lie not one to another" - may come to have a deeper meaning than was suspected and the child of God thus led on says, now for safety, for a godly walk, for a right spirit, for a proper control of my tongue, and of guidance for my feet, I must depend wholly on Him who has said - "Cast thy burden on the Lord". "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it". If that is so with any of you, is it not a coming into this word - Grow, grow in grace. Rooted, as Paul says in one place,

rooted and built up in Him. Rooted and built do not seem to agree in the same place, but if you look closely into the matter you will find that there is a very close agreement. Rooted in the foundation, fixed in it, a part, an integral part of the building. Rooted in Him, grounded in Him, built up in Him, growing into Him, growing in dependence on Him. Depend on Him, thou canst not fail. Grow in love to Him, embracing Him, saying again and again in spirit to Him,

I love the Lord with mind and heart
His people and His ways
Envy and pride and lust depart
And all His works I praise

There is a growth of expectation. Expectation is grounded on promises, engagements given and made by the Lord. Do not go on generalities. Bunyan says we may be lost in generalities. If God speaks to you, makes over any word to you, you have in that word a ground for expectation. You can expect something from Him who has promised something to you. This, I think, is clearly illustrated in the case of David, to whom God made promises of a great house and a house for a great while to come, David, receiving such a word by Nathan, goes unto the Lord and says, Thou hast said such and such things and therefore Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee. The prayer related to the promise, had an eye to what God had said, and expectation arose in the believer's heart, and he could say, do as Thou hast said. My brethren, what has God said to you? Tell Him of what He has said. Put Him in remembrance of what He has said. Expect all that is in the promise. And yet you cannot - who knows how much is in a promise. If you have had one fulfilment it is capable of many more fulfilments, but hope all that heaven has good.

Now this downward growth, this dependence, this love and all I have mentioned will bring forth fruit upward, and it will be seen. If you are truly humble you need not tell people you are. They will find it; they will feel it. If you have a strong faith now and again you will so, as it were, naturally and simply speak of it and bear fruit, and that word in John spoken by the Lord will have an effect upon you. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye

be My disciples." Do you follow Him? It means separation from the world. It means separation unto God in all things. It comes down to this - "Whether we eat or whether we drink do all to the glory of God". Cleaving to the truth, holding fast that which you have which you have received from the Lord. "Hold fast the form of sound words". It means walking among the people of God in a becoming manner. Loving the brotherhood, fearing God, honouring the king. It means giving everything that is due to your neighbour and it means, in a word, being like the Lord Himself. Be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect. "Be ye holy for I am holy" is His word by this Apostle. It will come into the Church of God. "Let each esteem other better than himself, in honour preferring one another". When bidden to a supper take the lowest place, and you will be bidden to go higher. It comes into all the offices of the Church. The deacons are to use their office well and ministers are to give themselves unto the word and to prayer that their profiting may appear. Grow in grace. Grow in care? lest you should be defiled. Grow in a desire not to mix with mud. Grow in the grace of God and the fruit of it will be seen.

I must pass on to notice the next clause. "And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This brings us to the foundation, to the ground of our hope, the door of our access to the Father, the ground and reason of our praying for pardon and for justification. It brings us to Him who is, in His Person, the express image of God's character, the brightness of His glory. To Him who is a perfect representative of His Father to the Church and a representative of the Church unto God. He does represent His people to God even as He represents God to them. To know Him then is here spoken of. Grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may easily grow in notions of religion, but here is something different. Grow in knowledge. This may come very close to some of us who feel and confess that we are very ignorant. Ignorance of God is terrible; ignorance of God is terrible. The knowledge of Him and of His Son whom He sent is life eternal. What a mercy it is to know Jesus Christ. I have often attempted to set before you this great mystery, the Person of Christ. The constitution of that Person is worthy of all the consideration you may be able to give to it by faith; all the meditation that you may be enabled to give to it. The constitution of Christ's Person, which means that the only begotten Son of God took up

into union with Himself our nature without sin. "The children being partakers of flesh and blood He also likewise took part of the same that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage". Seek to know this Person. The more we can meditate and believe in this blessed Lord Jesus the better for our souls. We shall be more and more detached from the world and attached to Him. To see how God has set Him forth, what He is in Himself, and what was given to Him. Seek to know this Person.

Then to know why He came, why He became a Man, came into this world. It was love that brought Him.

For love of whom? Of sinners base,
A hardened herd, a rebel race;
That mocked and trampled on thy blood,
And wantoned with the wounds of God.

My dear friends, if we but knew the coming of Christ, the reason of His coming, the end of His coming, If we are enabled to meditate thereon, it will be for our great advantage. Ah the spirit of meditation is a good spirit. Said the Psalmist - "My meditation of Him shall be sweet". It is sweet to think of Christ coming into this world to be made sin that His people might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He came for that very purpose. Meditate thereon.

In the knowledge of the cross. The shame of the cross hides from nature the glory of it. The shame of the cross may be likened to the badger's skin that covered the beautiful coverings of the tabernacle. There is a glory, a beauty, a blessedness in the death of Christ that only faith can see and embrace and love; that all the sin imputed to Him He made an end of; the curse of the law due to the Church He bore. He was made, Christ was made a curse for us. That all the anger of God against His people found a place in Him and was exhausted, so to speak, in Him. Here is the cross, here is its glory. He made an end of sin, He brought in everlasting righteousness. Grow in this. Grow in the knowledge of His resurrection and what that accomplished. He was set far above all principality and power. Look

at the contrast. While a Man under sin, the God-Man, only weakness appeared in Him to men and now see that same Person, who was crucified through weakness, King of kings and Lord of lords, raised and set far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named. There He is. Grow in knowledge of this, for it will say to you, these devils of sin in your nature, and this heresy in the world and these false professors that plague the church, these are all under the control of Christ. He knows them; He sees their every movement, listens to all their schemes and all the counsels in the gates of hell and none of them shall prevail. In the knowledge of His intercession in heaven. He ever lives to intercede and therein, according to that Scripture, lies the ability in Christ to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

And lastly, "To Him be glory both now and for ever". Ah there is a glory in Christ that is absolute, but there is a glory ascribed to Him that is not absolute here; will be hereafter; it is not absolute here. It is intermittent, very intermittent. O, that we could live honouring Him, and ascribing all honour and power and might and blessing and riches and glory to Him for ever. Glory to His Person, glory to His work, glory to His death, glory to His resurrection; only glory. To Him be glory both now in the church militant, now in an afflicted sinner, now in a believer who says, I cast my care on Him, I triumph and adore. Glory now in a fire. Yes, glorify ye the Lord in the fires. Glory to Him in tribulation, since He comes and helps us to bear it. Glory to Him when we are low and in a low place, for He says - Lift up your heads for your salvation draweth near. My friends, we have more reason to rejoice than we have to be sorry. The reason for sorrow lies, not in affliction, but in sin. The reason for rejoicing lies, not only in our experience, but above, far above that, in Him who has obtained eternal redemption for us. "Amen". Can you say it? Has lordly self been put down and Jesus lifted up in your conscience and experience? Then say "Unto Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." May we be a Christ glorifying people for His Name's sake.

AMEN.