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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
by Mr J.K. Popham on Sunday Evening
14th September 1930

Text 2 Peter 3 verse 18

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.

Nobody can say amen, as it is placed in this text without the Holy Ghost, for it does not allow any glory to man, and nobody can deny himself without the Holy Ghost. This text tells us of exceedingly important matters, growing in grace is a remarkable thing. It means an increase, it means a movement, it means a development. That is to say, no true Christian remains always an infant. Some of you, whom I watch, I have known for a long time, and you appear not to move. I do not say you do not move, but to appearance you do not, and that for you is very solemn, and for me painful. There are signs, but should there be no reality, the Lord give you mercy and strength, like Paul, in the chapter which I read to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:". (Philippians 3 verse 8). I wonder sometimes, if I shall die before seeing the desirable growth in some of you. I pray for it many and many a time, in the night when perhaps you are soundly sleeping.

Is there a growth? Do convictions grow that Christ is necessary? Does faith grow, going out to Him? O blessed is the sinner, who has life and who grows, real growth, of which I made some mention this morning. Do not be ambitious, to be seen of men as to your religion, as those that, "love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." (Matthew 6 verse 5). Such street corner praying ends in self-glory. Secret prayer ends in divine answers. Do not make a noise in religion, the scripture says of Christ, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." (Isaiah 42 verse 2). O if you can get into your prayer closets, if you can pray when you are moving about Brighton. If you groan on your beds, if sin is bitter, if Christ appears to be desirable, and you have some sense of the suitableness of Him, that will issue in good.

Nothing can stop the growth of a root, a living root, if you look at the poor trees that are planted in our smoky towns, and watch to see that, after a time the pavement stones will be uneven and broke. What is the cause? The growth of the trees root. If you have growth in your soul, there will be many a breaking away from the world. "Grow in grace".

The Lord give grace in this respect, it is a great thing to understand what grace is, it is God's eternal love, it is the incarnation of the Son of God, it is the vicarious death of Christ, it is His burial, His resurrection, and His Ascension into heaven. That is grace, grace is the Holy Ghost, coming, moving, teaching, guiding, quickening, reproof, chastening, and manifesting the Saviour. O what a bright sort of religion some people have. Ah but unless there be the motions of the Spirit, and the consequent motions of the soul Godward, there is nothing good. Growth in grace is, more and more esteeming the Saviour, cleaving closer and closer to Him, and letting everything go for His sake. Feeling that there is not only no life without Him, not only no justification without Him, not only no sanctification without Him, but no conformity to Christ. No communion without Him, no communications from Him, and no communications sent to Him. Growth, O it is a wonderful thing.

It is natural, there is a natural growth in all living things, and it is natural in a spiritual religion. There must be fruit, the work of faith is a fruit, the labour of love is a fruit, patience in tribulation is a fruit. Love to God, love of holiness, forsaking all known sins, these are also fruits. Love to the brethren, and where there is opportunity, washing the disciples feet, (but there is not much of that today), and gratitude are fruits. Unthankfulness is a sin, marked in the scripture, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankfull." (Romans 1 verse 21).

The fruits of the Spirit also include resistance to sin, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit." That is true in all real experience, but that is not all, "and the Spirit (lusteth) against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Galations 5 verse 17). Paul tells us what he could not do, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Romans 7 verse 17). He also tells us another thing, "Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ," (2 Corinthians 2 verse 14). and "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord " (Romans 7 verse 25). "The Spirit lusts against the flesh," struggles, strives, endeavours, moves, but is always victorious eventually. Have you got any fruits? I do not mean that you will show them to anybody, but they will be there, and you wont say, look at these fruits. You may often be saying, I am a poor barren creature, and you may honestly say, when you have done this or that, we are unprofitable servants. Still there must be fruit. It is not easy for one to say this, on account of ones own barrenness, but truth is truth. Love to the brethren is a fruit, love to the truth is a fruit, cleaving to the Lord of life and glory, and following Him is a fruit.

O brethren look at this solemn scripture "Grow in grace". Now you children in grace, there is a word of God which speaks to you, and about your state, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" (2 Peter 2 verse 2). God has provided this blessed book, in it is revealed the gospel, the word of truth, the word of life, what a word it is. Desire it, do you desire it? O, you say, we know it, but what do you know of it? The form, that is good, but the Spirit is the real thing, the unction of it, the life of it, the sacredness of it, and the power and sweetness of it, controlling, comforting, reproaching. Casting down and raising up, in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Do you say you have none? if you are born again you will have some knowledge.

There are two grand points, or rather objects in saving religion and true knowledge. They are, knowledge of self, which is not easy or comfortable, not lightly learned nor held, but necessary. Joseph Hart puts it well for us:

What comfort can a Saviour bring
To those who never felt their woe ? (Gadsbys 89 verse 4)

Now how did you get your religion professor? how did it come? when did it begin? what was the beginning? did it come with joy? Some people receive notions of religion with seeming joy, but they do not continue, when trouble comes, when the sun burns them, they are scorched and withered. How did your religion come? Did you like the doctrines that you were brought up to hear? Did you like the Bible? Do you still like the doctrines and the bible? You may, and yet be lost. How did it come? Did you get some confidence? How did it come, and of what sort, was it that you were right? Who gave it to you, and what does it do for you, does it humble you? True knowledge that God gives to a sinner of himself, brings him into the dust, and he says "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6 verse 5).

Now do people grow in this? Yes, I thought and felt more than sixty years ago that I was a sinner, and that I was lost, but if anyone had said to me then, later in your life you will have ten times more conviction and knowledge of your lost estate than you have today, I feel I would not have believed them. But today, it is so, I was not half a sinner then, as compared with now. Mercifully not in open wickedness of life, but in conviction, serious solemn conviction, penetrating night after night, and day after day. It grows, and this is preparatory, to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Secondly in the knowledge of His Person, "For in Him dwelleth, all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2 verse 9). In whom is eternal life for the Church, in whom is infinite merit for sinners, in whom is righteousness for the guilty, pardon for sinners. O what a Christ, what a great Saviour, and nobody knows much of Him comparatively. The man who has had the clearest revelation of Christ, has not had much, compared with what he yet has to receive. Now Paul tells us of this, in his own experience, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after," (Philippians 3 verse 12) and, "For we know in part," (1 Corinthians 13 verse 9). It is part indeed, and a greater part is yet to be had and enjoyed, but to know His Person! O, if we can answer the question, "Whom do ye say that I am?" (after hearing all the conjectures of men concerning Him) "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (If you can say as Peter did, you have got that knowledge, as Peter got his.) "For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16 verses 15-17).

O it is wonderful for a sinfull man to learn some spiritual truth, something concerning the Person of the God Man, Jesus Christ, and to know why He is Jesus Christ. What brought Him into the world, what moved Him to take that body formed in the virgin Mary, by the Holy Ghost. What moved the Eternal Son of God to veil Himself in the Infant Jesus, love, unmerited love, sovereign grace, infinite goodness and kindness to sinners. And as the Holy Ghost performs His covenant work in a sinner, there is a growth in the knowledge of His Person. And as we know His Person more and more, we more and more prize Him.

O could we but with clearer eyes
His excellences trace,
Could we His Person learn to prize,
We more should prize His grace.
(Gadsby's 803 Part 1 verse 7).

I hope the Lord will not allow us, as a little church and congregation, to sink into a kind of easy indifference, a comfortable, respectful, cold profession of His Person, without panting to receive access to Him. He is to be known, and as Peter says "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". What brought Him from the throne to the cross? Love. Think of Him as Almighty God, hanging on the accursed tree. What placed Him there? Wicked hands, one may say, but what gave these wicked hands the power to crucify Him? "The determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," (Acts 2 verse 23), who gave a commandment for Him to die.

"This commandment have I received of My Father." (John 10 verse 18. The death of Jesus is of such infinite worth, and such eternal necessity, that the saints of God, under the teaching of the Spirit do want to know Him more, and can sing, and they do sing (as you did just now)

O could I know and love Him more,
And all His wondrous grace explore,
Gadsby's 771 verse 3)

There is none like Him, when David asked the Priest if he had a sword, he said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that give it me." (1 Samuel 21 verse 9). That was the sword that cut off the head of the giant, who had defied the armies of the living God. When you see Jesus, if I may illustrate what I am saying, by that. When you see Jesus the Son of God, and the Son of Man, one Person bearing your sins "in His own body on the tree," (1 Peter 2 verse 24), then you will say. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." (Song of Solomon 2 verse 3).

And you will love Him, you will love Him and cleave to Him, and "commit the keeping of their souls to Him by faith in well doing." (1 Peter 4 verses 19). You will prize Him then, in the growth of this grace. The Apostle tells us about it, he said "I count not myself to have apprehended: (I have not fully apprehended) but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". (Philppians 3 verses 13 &14). And also "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (verse 12). Which I understand to mean, now I only know a little of Him. And who would say anything but that I only know a little of Him, and I want to know more, and to enter into this, why He took notice of me, why He would redeem me, and why He would give His Spirit to me, to teach me my ruin and need of Him. And because I cannot do this as I would, or attain to this as I would, I press after it. I press toward the mark. Paul was apprehended of Christ, as he drew near to Damascus. Then Paul was caught up into the third heaven, and saw, "and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."(2 Corinthians 12 verse 4). Yet he says, I only apprehended a little of Him, but I want to apprehend more, and to apprehend the great, the kind, the loving, gracious reason He had, to lay hold of me.

To take my sins, and bear them, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galations 2 verse 20). To shed for me His blood, and by His Spirit to bring His grace to me. This is what he wanted to know, and that desire moved him, it was an incentive to his pressing on to know the Lord.

To grow in the knowledge of His precious blood. There never has been since the fall of Adam, and there never will be, a pure conscience without the blood of Christ. How many of us have felt that blood purifying our conscience, and felt that we could say, out of the experience of the power of that blood, I am clean, I am accepted in the beloved. It is a great experience, if you get it once or twice in your life, you would say, O what a favoured creature I am. And yet we need that every day, for each day brings a need for that cleansing, for there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not. Some of you, if not every one in the chapel, have sinned since you entered the building. Have you had no wandering thoughts, no wrong desires, no empty curiosity, nothing carnal, since you came here this evening? No inattention, no wishing for smoother things, and if you say we are guilty, then what can cleans you? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing but Thy blood, O Jesus!
Can relieve us from our smart;
Nothing else from guilt release us
Nothing else can melt the heart. (Gadsby's 746 verse 2).

When this is from time to time experienced, then there is growth in the knowledge of the atonement of Christ. All you can then say is, I knew I believed many years ago, I thought I got a sight of the extent of it, of the power of it, I felt a little, but not as now. When first pardon was had, it was wonderful, but when pardons have been multiplied, when transgressions have been blotted out as a thick cloud, and sins removed, when God has passed by and again and again not stirred up His anger, but remembered and forgiven us, that has brought an increase of knowledge in the power of Christ's blood.

Grow in the knowledge of the power of Christ's resurrection, the power of Christ's resurrection is infinite. It raised Him from the dead, He "was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4 verse 25). There was that power, when a sinner is born again, it is by virtue of the power of Christ's resurrection. When he rises from the death of guilt and sin, and enters into liberty, this too is by the power of Christ's resurrection. When he riseth from fretfulness, rebellion, hardness of heart into submission to the will of God, it is the power of Christ's resurrection.

When he walks in the liberty of the Son of God, and all the garments of death and of the grave are taken from him, and there is no hindrance of that kind, then the power of Christ's resurrection is felt in his soul's experience. Grow in the knowledge of this, it is very wonderful to find it working, and commanding deliverances, working upon your spirit, giving peace, and speaking comfort into your soul, and flowing as a mighty river from the resurrecting power of the Lord Jesus. The Church was raised when He was raised from the dead, and she rises from time to time in her experience, when He puts forth that glorious power.

Omnipotence made the worlds out of nothing, the same power which was wrought in the Saviour when He raised Him from the dead works mightily and makes all things new in the experience of the people of God. And it was this, that the Apostle, as I understand it, in that passage, aimed at, that just as Christ's resurrection divested His sacred body from all death, from everything connected with death, so when His blessed power is exerted in a sinner, that sinner rises from every kind of death for the time being, and he walks at large and is at liberty. This was Paul's aim, is it yours? is it mine? will nothing do short of this for us?

Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and on this point, one word more. Grow in the knowledge of your union with Him. Union with Christ is a scripture doctrine, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." (John 15 verse 4). Union with the Son of God gives many blessings. Union with the Son of God works holiness, "Ye that love the Lord hate evil:" (Psalm 97 verse 10). "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord for ever." (Psalm 93 verse 5). Union with the Son of God brings peace, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you:" (John 14 verse 27). Union with the Son of God brings separation from the world, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are Thine." (John, 17 verse 9). And, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me out of the world." (John 17 verse 6). This is something very solemn, very different from an easy religion, very different from a carnal confidence. It brings a sinner near, it brings him into some feeling of that scripture, "A people near unto Him." (Psalm 148 verse 14). Then this people who have this union will not do, what is said in the Psalms, of the saints, "That he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of thy holy temple." (Psalm 65 verse 4). Now dear friends this is what is set before us in the text. Grow in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is a very important word, and I would press it on your attention, have you an interest in it?

Does it attract you, and move you to say, Lord grant me grace to walk in that scripture? You may say you have not much grace, and that is very likely to be the case, it is the case with most of us. We have very little grace today, but there is a fulness in Christ. If my comfort depended on my believing that I have much grace, I should have no comfort, but if comfort depends largely on viewing by precious faith, the Son of God, and seeking to draw from His fulness, then there is solid ground for comfort, and solid comfort too. "But grow in grace," may the Lord forbid that we should be content with what we have attained to. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." But I follow on to know the Lord. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth." (Hosea 6 verse 3).

And now let us notice briefly this beautiful doxology, "To Him be glory both now and for ever, Amen." I wonder how many of our hearts are in union with this, not our lips but our hearts. "To Him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever." (Revelation 1 verse 6). The glory of sovereign love and grace, and the glory of regeneration. Called to be saints, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1 verse 23). What an amazing thing, Paul says to the Ephesians, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (Ephesians 2 verse 1). And now blessed with grace, different from what you were, and made new creatures, and the glory of this belongs to Him. What an amazing thing, for a man born in sin, to be born again, and to have a new nature, a new heart, this brings an amazing change, for which the glory of God must indeed be praised. It brings a change of appetite, a change in affection, a change in ones views, what once you looked at with pleasure now you gaze on with loathing. What once you followed, now you turn away from, and what you hated you love to seek. "Unto Him be glory both now and for ever."

The glory of omnipotence, He made the world and upholds the universe by the word of His power. He makes a Christian, and holds him up, it is a great thing. He holds your attention to Him at times, He holds your heart to Him, He holds your will to Him, and He holds your spirit to Him. He holds convictions in your conscience, He holds comforts in your hands, and love in your heart flowing down in streams of consolation at times. O do you love to honour Him? Can you say I would honour Him? I would lift Him up? I would have Him first and last and all in all to my soul? There is none like Him, none to be compared with Him. It is written in holy scriptures, that the Church ascribed all fairness to Him.

"Thou art fairer than the children of men:" (Psalm 45 verse 2). Fairer? O none is fair compared to Him, Who is He? The Son of God, and the Son of Man. Not two Persons, but one Person. What has He in His heart? Love, So then the sinner says "To Him be glory". It is then we ascribe glory to Him, speaking well of Him. When Paul says, God blesses His people, he means that God gives something to them. When he says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 1 verse 3). He means, he speaks well of God, he honours God, that is what the word really is, it is speaking well of Him. Do you speak well of Him? Do I speak well of Him? Job did, though he was much provoked by his misunderstanding friends, yet he said "the thing that is right," (Job 42 verse 7), of God. Do we? It is a great thing to say the thing that is right of God.

Can you say, He was right when He troubled me? Job said He was. He blessed God when every thing was stripped and taken away from him. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord". (Job 1 verse 21). He spoke the thing that was right of God, "To Him be glory," both now and in the Church. Glory to Him in the Church, because He made the Church. The Church is what Christ makes her. A city of truth, and glory be to His wisdom in so ordering things, glory to Him in causing that scripture to be known in experience, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8 verse 28).

Have you no good word to say of Him about that? O cannot some of us say, the most crooked things, the most painful things, the most mortifying things, the emptying things, have really turned out to be the best for us. Christians grow often by being troubled. Then when they find the Lord has blessed them, in and by their troubles, they give glory to Him. They grow by oppression, and then they give glory to Him. The more the Egyptians oppressed Israel, and "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." (Exodus 1 verse 12).

The more you get troubled, the more God blesses you, and then you bless Him. "To Him be glory," both now in the time state, when things are imperfect, when experience is so shallow, when matters are so painful, even then glory be to Him and for ever. Literally, the day of eternity that is to come, when we enter that day, some will bless Him, who are now groaning. Some of this congregation who are often full of trouble will glorify Him through eternity. What of the rest? what of you who are not concerned now? If you remain as you are, you will never praise Him in heaven, for you will never get there.

But if the Holy Spirit, should mercifully deal with you, to convince you of sin and forgive your sin, then you will say to Him for ever and ever, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen". (Revelation 1 verses 5 & 6).