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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Wednesday evening 18 December 1929

2 Peter 3 v 18

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to whom
be glory both now and for ever Amen"

The doctrine of salvation is an eternal, a perfect matter. In the heart of God, in the purpose of the Trinity, salvation was settled, no additions, no diminutions; just one great work of God. The Saviour, a perfect Saviour of His body, and she, united to Him, is perfect, complete, without blame and spotless in God's sight. This doctrine we see in the Scripture; it has pleased God to reveal it in the distinctest terms, so that only people who are blinded by the devil can really doubt that this doctrine is proclaimed, revealed and settled in heaven, and some here know it. God's people know it and a great thing it is to have it revealed in the heart. Hold fast this my dear friends. But salvation, as in the heart, as the work of the Spirit in this wilderness is, to the subjects of it, often a matter of great question. Serious doubt, difficulties innumerable, mountains, valleys, floods, flames and devils are between the saint and heaven, and a body of sin and death, the chief of all difficulties to them, is with them. It is felt; the weight of it, the filth of it, the guilt of it, the trouble of it, the difficulties arising out of it, the saints of the Most High God know. And this salvation is set forth very distinctly in Holy Scripture and every saint more or less distinctly from time to time comes to know and set his seal to the truth that the salvation of God's people is a very close thing. They are saved as by the skin of their teeth; scarcely saved. "If the righteous scarcely be saved". That is a great word. They are threatened on every side; destruction is with them, in them, about them, and a roaring lion goes to devour them as God may permit him. And the Lord said by one prophet He would take out of the mouth of the lion two legs and a piece of an ear. There

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is no death really can seize and hold a child of God but many deaths are threatened, many deaths are felt, and so it is difficult, very difficult to get to heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a child of God to get through this life and each one knows it in some way and it is very wonderful and beautiful to observe in Scripture how the Lord has met the cases of His people. You cannot come into a difficulty, or a trouble, or a temptation, of which the Scriptures have not something to say. God is not silent in His word with respect to the trials of His people in the wilderness. Providence is very trying to them in some of its ways and the scoffers are a trial to them. Unfulfilled promises are a trial; expectations damped, not destroyed, but damped again and again, are a trial; uprising of lusts become a trial and the people of God do increasingly, I judge, find that word very important - "If the righteous scarcely be saved". The Holy Ghost meets some of the difficulties in this chapter with which the saints are beset, confronted and troubled. There were scoffers and these scoffers impinged on some Scripture and, pointing to its non fulfilment, troubled the saints. They troubled the Thessalonians in the same way; they said the day of the Lord was near, that is His second coming, and troubled the people of God. Here the same thing in another form troubled the people of the dispersion - "Where is the promise of His coming? Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were". "Where is the promise of His coming?" And the Apostle says that they are willingly ignorant of one thing which, while it is fundamental, is also at the beginning and the middle and the end of things; willingly ignorant of this "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day". And some of us have been at this business - "Where is the promise of His coming?" We hoped, as the disciples said, we hoped, but we are disappointed. We thought God told us something and now we are afraid He did not. We thought He made us a promise but there is no fulfilment of it. And so faith is tried, hopes are disappointed, dashed, broken, as it seems. "Where is the promise of His coming?" But the Apostle says this, and O if we could but remember it when we are troubled in this matter - "One day is with the Lord as a

thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense; judge Him not by time. "Your time" Jesus said to His disciples "is alway ready; My time is not yet". You have got something to look for; you say well I did build hopes on such and such a Scripture which came to my heart as I felt, but now I do not know how to hold it because all my hopes are dashed; there is no fulfilment of it. Now judge not the Lord by sense. Judge Him not by reckoning which is natural. This is a day, and that is a day, and as days pass and multiply and there is no fulfilment of the promise, therefore, (that is the devil's conclusion and that is the conclusion of unbelief), therefore we are wrong. No, says the Lord, judge the Lord without judging Him by time. Judge His eternity; think of His eternity; think of His counsels that cannot be broken; they stand fast for ever. Think of this, that to Him there is no time - one eternal "now". Then He says we look for something, we are looking for something; Christ is to come. "He will come a second time without sin unto salvation". He has created Jerusalem to be a joy and rejoicing and though she is depressed now and in darkness and confusion, though there be difficulties in the way, apparently endless and insurmountable, "He will come the second time without sin unto salvation". And this salvation is ready to be revealed in God's time; ready in His hand; ready, as completed; ready, needing only to be applied and revealed. "Ready to be revealed at the last time". And from this hope, that cannot be broken, the Apostle by the Spirit deduces something. If you look for that new heavens and new earth promised; if your hope be in God; if Christ is the foundation; if He is the centre; if He is the circumference; what manner of persons ought ye to be. Ought you to live as if this were your rest? Ought you to live as the Gentiles do who have no hope and are without God in the world? Should you so live? This is what the Spirit says by Peter - "What manner of persons ought ye to be?" which means, as I understand it, that you should be different from the world around you; that your conversation, your deportment, should be in heaven. Paul said that the conversation or life or deportment of the Philippians was in heaven. "Our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour". Has this no weight,

no influence with us - "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holiness. Think of it - "in all holiness", in all godly conversation or life. Does this reprove the carnality of any of you? Does this reprove the wordliness of any of you? Does it ever bring a feeling of shame to you?

Now, says Peter, Ye therefore, seeing ye know these things before, seeing that you are looking for new heavens and a new earth, seeing that God is the same, that one day with Him is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day, beware lest ye also as others being led away with the error of the wicked fall from your own steadfastness. A very great word this "beware". Beware, poor saint, for there are dangers about you, dangers within you. Beware lest you should be influenced to turn aside. And that steadfastness of faith that you have had and may be feeling even now, again and again fixed in Christ, the hope that you have, as an anchor being cast within the veil; seek to hold that fast, lest, if it be otherwise with you, you be led away with the error of the wicked, saying - "Where is the promise of His coming?" That is an error, a grave error; it is putting time to God; it is limiting His promise; it is fixing a boundary for Him and if He does not come, then that boundary stands, and will be proof of failure. This is an error, and we should, by grace, so regard it.

Then the text. But on the contrary - "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever, Amen". I wonder if this word tries any of you; if this word moves you to look within; if it discovers barrenness, no growth, makes you fear that you will be a cumberer of the ground. It may have that effect; I have found it so. "But grow in grace". Well if you are tried that way, may the Lord help you to look at this Scripture, a gracious exhortation, not affecting eternal safety, but greatly affecting steadfastness, stability, and walk; greatly affecting it. Take grace in two ways as it is here spoken of - "But grow in grace". Take grace objectively, that is to say the grace of God, the grace of the Father in choosing a church, a bride for His Son;

that was grace. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Holy Ghost celebrates, exalts, lifts up, opens out and expands wonderfully the grace of the Father. He falls to this great business of blessing God the Father. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that ye should be holy and without blame before Him in love." And concluding that wonderful sentence He says for the glory of His grace He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Now this grace of God in choosing sinners, in determining that they should be without blame before Him in love issued in that pure river of water of life clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Do you find your spirit, your faith, ever going out to this, as if you again and again should be saying, if God has not chosen me, what ground have I? Faith casts here, holds here, waits here, on what God Himself has done. Salvation is here. One great man said salvation is built on distinctions in the Trinity and the distinctions in the Trinity are distinctions of persons and these persons distinguished in the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, have each a great and distinct work. And that of the Father was to choose, and the choice is a double one, so to speak. It was the choice of a husband; it was the choice of the bride. And the choice of the husband led the eternal Father to give His only begotten Son and not spare Him. Now do you find yourselves casting anchor here? "On such love" have you said

On such love, my soul still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?

Grow in that grace; hang more about it; look more to it; a bottomless ocean, a river, pure river of water of life clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. O if the Spirit should lead us to this fountain of life and goodness in God the Father; feeling, as we do increasingly, our utter

death, wickedness, guiltiness, corruption and helplessness, what a ground we have in which to cast the roots of faith. Grow in this great grace, the object, the ground, the beginning, the fountain of all goodness.

And the second Person, the Lord Jesus, God's eternal Son incarnate; He is the object of faith. Grow in grace, this grace. Weakness in self, guiltiness in self, hardness of heart, utter helplessness and every evil felt, will be sanctified by the Holy Spirit in this particular way, that Christ will be increasingly necessary, increasingly precious, so that the sinner can say he has no help in himself. He has sought it well, but now he runs to this one Person who is exalted above all principality and power, the Lord Jesus. How stands the case with you here? There is a real progress, not fleshly sanctification, but a real progress of the life of God in His people. They faint again and again, hardly able to pursue, but He, the Lord Jesus, appears and pours His life in fresh streams and supplies of it into their fainting hearts and then again anew they cast anchor here; their faith comes here; here they would live; here they would constantly abide. Grow in this. He is to be increasingly precious. John uttered an important and great truth when he said of Christ - "He must increase, I must decrease" take root downward. O dear friends in the Lord this is the growth the Apostle here would mean. Grow in grace, in the grace of Christ. In the Corinthians the Spirit says by the Apostle Paul - "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might be rich". That poverty was all for His saints. The wealth of His life and the wealth of His death, the wealth of His righteousness, He would give to His people. Durable riches and righteousness belong to Him. Grow in this grace. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" says the Apostle Paul in his benediction. The grace of His Person, fairer than the children of men; the grace of His death, efficacious to the removal of all sin that was laid on Him by His Father's hand; the grace of His precious atonement; the grace of His righteousness; the grace of His death and burial; the grace of His resurrection and

ascension into heaven and intercession there. And fresh touches, new views, given of Him by the Holy Spirit, fresh need felt in the soul, will cause the soul to cast an anchor here or to strike the roots of faith more deeply into the grace that He has, the grace that He is. Grace and truth came by Him. So that an increased knowledge of sin and of self will, as the saint grows, and as the life of God proceeds in His soul, be found to be the only ground, the only ground, in which a sinner can thrive. Do you grow this way? Is this Man made more precious than gold to you, than fine gold, even than the golden wedge of Ophir? Is it true of Him to you as Peter expresses it? - "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious". None but Jesus should ever be the plea and the hope and the strength and the comfort of His people. Here we have no continuing city. "Man being in honour abideth not". But there is one place, and only one, one Person and only one, in whom a sinner can find an increase of godliness, an increase of strength, an increase of wisdom. "But grow in grace".

Now the second view of grace is this - grace considered subjectively, that is grace in the soul. And this is by the Holy Ghost. The Apostle speaks of the faith of some growing exceedingly; a great thing. "Lord increase our faith" was the prayer of some. And it has been the prayer of a good many of us, has it not, many and many a time? When trouble, when sin, when the devil, when circumstances, have brought to light the little faith we have, how we have understood the words of Christ - "O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Now this is a wonderful thing to have faith in the soul, the planting of God, growing, increasing, by the power of the Spirit of God. Needs increase; weakness increases; sense of ignorance. I believe I may say this with respect to some of you, sense of ignorance increases; therefore the need of supply is, opening up of Christ, expounding what He is; why He came; what He did, and where He is now, and what He is doing now. And as these things are done in a sinner by the Spirit, faith sees, O sees, more than he can ever need in this life, more than he can ever take in. O what a Christ He is, what a Christ He is. Infinite love;

infinite merit; infinite compassion; infinite goodness; infinite justice; infinite faithfulness; all Christ's. And as faith gets a view of Him from time to time, it is so drawn out that it grows; the sinner grows that way, sick of self. Tired of trusting in self, yet ever prone to it, the sinner goes out to the Lord and seeks to embrace and hold Him fast, saying, "I will not let Thee go". "Entreat me not to leave Thee". One would say, speaking of the Apostle Paul, that when He was first called and began to preach, there was a wonderful liveliness and strength and power in his soul. Later that was more. In heavy trouble with respect to the thorn in the flesh, when the Lord Jesus was pleased to speak to him those great words - "My grace is sufficient for thee", he said - "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity". Now it was when he was troubled in that sore affliction that that growth took place in him, and you would say again probably that when writing to the Romans he expressed his own experience coming to this issue - "I thank God through Jesus Christ." I am a poor creature; I fail, I come short; I fail to do what I would; I do what I would not; I find there is a law in my members and it wars against the law of my mind. I am like two men, one pulling one way and another pulling another way. I cannot do what I would; I do what I would not. Now he comes to this point - "I thank God". He was enabled to glory in his infirmities and thank God for a victory. "I thank God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And he was growing; he grew in that way. When the Apostle Paul writes as the Apostle of Jesus Christ he writes perfectly; he writes infallibly; no error at all. But when he speaks of himself as a Christian man, he says, I cannot do the good I would; I am driven to do the evil I would not. O how necessary then was the Saviour to him. Now you will find this, as you grow older; each child of God has to find it; that there is an incessant increase of two things in his experience - an increase of evil struggling, wriggling, deceiving, violently working, hindering him dashing him to the ground, and making him wonder what will become of him, and then, on the other hand, a faith that grows, that says sometimes to the enemy, speaking with him in the gate - "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I

fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me". So may we grow in the grace of Jesus Christ; grow with respect to His Person, more and more precious; grow in faith. And then, with this growth of faith, this increase in your soul, you will find hope more bright and lively, you will believe more what Solomon says - "The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever", "There is an end and thine expectation shall not be cut off". In earlier days, at least with some of us, it was very different. If we were on the mount, we could sing, and we did sing. And when we got into the valley and into some hole or pit or prison, then hope was dashed, and we were very apt to think and believe that we had been deceived. Now, though we are troubled as much as ever, or more, through grace those of us who are old are not quite so troubled about the hope, not so distressed about our expectation. We are looking for the end, and even can sometimes say, we shall not be disappointed; we shall get through

".... David's Lord and Gideon's Friend,
Will help His servant to the end "

It is a word you can use occasionally - that the Lord who has started a blessed work will finish it. Faithful is He that hath called you; He will fulfil what He has commenced in you. Well it is a great point this and there is a growth here. You can look back perhaps a few years and say I used to be very tossed about by that and by the other thing, and now, though I get that and the other thing, I am not in the same way troubled; I cannot give my hope up; I feel I must hold it fast, that is, hold the Lord, who is faithful. That is the point - "Faithful is He that hath promised who also will do it." Hold fast here dear friends. The grace of hope is better than a thousand worlds; the grace of hope looks to God; it looks for the fulfilment of His word; it hopes all that heaven has good. Great indeed it is; not like the writing on the sand; not the building of castles in the air; but a solid resting of the soul on the faithfulness of a promising God; the naked promise that neither time, nor sin, nor trouble, nor exercises of mind about it, shall invalidate; a

valid promise. Dear friends, a valid promise; and hope created by the blessed God in the soul looks for the fulfilment. It lifts up the head sometimes and says - Salvation is nearer now than when I first believed. O it is a bright prospect that sometimes you have in your souls, is it not, enabling you to say

Yes, I to the end shall endure
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.

Grow in grace; hang fast to the Lord Jesus. Take His blessed word and plead it before Him and before His Father. "Thou didst say". You will find sometimes you can go like that, look to the past and say, when the Lord started me I was like Jacob, I said, - If God will be with me. Now you can say to Him "Thou didst say"; "Thou didst say". And so hope has grown; 'tis more steadfast; 'tis more fixed on the Rock; 'tis not dashed about as it were, and as it used to be. You are not without trouble, never will be; but you say, I am not so moved as I used to be.

Grow in the grace of patience. "One day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day". Wait patiently for Him. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait I say on the Lord." Now a waiting person is a person who has something he is waiting for; something put before him; something, of which He has received a testimony in his conscience, in his heart, and he is looking for it. But it is delayed, does not come as he thought it would. I believe God's people make great mistakes with respect to their anticipations both as to time and manner. Why, probably some of you who have had gracious promises, "exceeding great and precious promises", when they first came, you were looking out for fulfilment at once. Now you say, I cannot do that. I am an impatient person, but I would fain always be living in this - "Let Him come when He thinks best". "All kind and all wise, His season is best". That is true. Grow in grace, the grace of

patience. "Let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing". Haste grasps at all; haste rushes here and there madly, thoughtlessly, aimlessly. Patience to the Lord God waits at His throne, hopes in His mercy, and commits the thing to Him that is waited for. What are some of you waiting for? One says, I am waiting for pardon; another says, I thought the Lord promised such and such things to me and I want the fulfilment of them, and am waiting for the fulfilment of them. Grow in patience; grow in this grace of waiting for God. He cannot come too late; He wont come too soon. His time is all just fixed; our time is alway ready. A minister feels this; he would fain after preaching find fruit, like to see something after every sermon he preaches. He may not get much. Now you may find your souls panting after the fulfilment of some promise. Grow in grace; wait on God. Was not this before the mind of the Apostle when writing this chapter. He said scoffers say - "Where is the promise of His coming?" You, my brethren, he says, are looking for something; now wait for it. Remember this fundamental; remember this that must accompany you all your journey through; that "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day".

Grow in humility. Grow in humility; grow down in your own eyes. Let it be a downward thing, again and again. "I" says John, "must decrease". O this wretched self; this important, lordly self; what trouble we have with it, and what pains the Lord has taken with some of us to continually be pressing it down, "and He shall not fail nor be discouraged". But grow in humility. 'Tis a beautiful grace; it does make people so little in their own eyes. They are satisfied with God's dealings with them; they are content to be what He would have them to be and where He has put them, and to carry what He has laid on them, seeking that He would give them strength continually to bear. Grow dear friends in humility. The grace of the Spirit, as it is with you, will always press down the old man and exalt the Lord Jesus.

Then grow in love. Love is the one grace that will never

die. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity". Hart says that the only change that that can sustain is to increase. May it increase here. Grow in this blessed grace of love. You wont be offended with Christ whenever love is in exercise. "Blessed is He whosoever shall not be offended in Me". As long as love is with you nothing offends you. "Great peace have they that love Thy law and nothing shall offend them". Then you love God's Word in the spirit of it, feeling the truth of it; you are not offended with anything. You can bear injuries, bear trouble, believe all things, hope all things, and never behave yourself unseemly. It is a great grace and Peter says "Grow in grace"; this grace in the soul, enabling you to "love the Lord with mind and heart, His people and His ways."

Now my friends, this is a great word then, grace, taken in two ways, objectively and subjectively. Grace in God and grace given to a sinner. Grace in various forms, faith and hope and patience and humility and love; it is all grace. Grace in the fountain; grace in the streams; grace in the Head and grace in the members. Grace in providence, with providence; grace everywhere. Grow in that. And this means one important thing; you will grow out of conceit with yourself. Self-love is as it were crucified, trampled under foot. Self-importance? Well it is gone for the time. Self-will is crucified; the deeds of the body are mortified.

"And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". We do need this. When we know a little of Him, we are strong. Every little increase of knowledge of Christ is an increase of strength in the soul. It turns the back on the world and the face to God; it kills the old man in some particular. Knowledge of what is right will make you follow that which is right. Knowledge of God, wise, gracious, omnipotent, faithful; and Christ is all this, because He is God. Grow in the knowledge of Him; of His Person, of His work, of His Word, of His promise, and of His work in providence. Do you seek knowledge of Him? Do you seek to know Him? Think of what He says concerning knowledge

"This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

"To Him be glory, both now and for ever, Amen". Did you ever want Christ to be glorified? Down self has gone if you have had that feeling - "Let the Lord be glorified". May the Lord help us to say it feelingly.

AMEN.