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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Sunday evening 31 October 1920

2 PETER 3 v 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."

We noticed this morning that this Epistle and the preceding one are Epistles of remembrance in both which Peter stirs up the pure minds of the people. It is good to remember things which are of importance, to remember God, to remember that that great principle, that first principle and last principle will outlive time. "Be not" says the Apostle ignorant of this one thing, that with the Lord a thousand years are as one day and one day as a thousand years". Remember that, remember it in your troubles, remember it when you are impatient to get out of your troubles. Remember it when the tempter says, there is no help for you in God. Remember it when your unbelief limits God. Remember it when He delays to come, not coming until the fourth watch, letting you toil all night, leaving you to be threatened with a watery grave. Remember God, remember His eternity, remember that He changes not, and remember Him in Christ in this great particular, for He is, as the Apostle tells us in the Hebrews - "The same, yesterday, today, and for ever." This, remembered by faith, will steady you when you are disposed to be like a drunken man, reeling as a man surfeited with care. It will steady you in an hour of temptation; it will correct your foolish thoughts; it will keep you from thinking that God is such an one as yourself. It will teach you something of omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, eternity, immutability. "Be not ignorant of this one thing." A first principle applied may often be of great service to faith. "Be sober"; be sober about God and then be sober about yourselves. Be sober with respect to providence. Remember that it is in God's hand. Be sober about changes. Remember that they do not come of themselves. About afflictions; remember that they do not spring forth from the dust. It is good to remember this, that is to say, be not ignorant of it. This Epistle is full of exhortations and I ventured to remark this

morning that an exhortation is a beautiful thing when it is fitting. There is a incongruity, there is an imbecility in an exhortation to a man dead in trespasses and sins to perform the function of spiritual life, but, granted spiritual life, there is a beautiful fitness in an exhortation. If you are adopted into God's family, how becoming it is that your heavenly Father should say to you, "Walk as dear children". If Christ is your Redeemer, how becoming it is in Him to say to you, honour Me, follow Me; I have made you free, be not servants to sin.

Then the Apostle speaks in the verse before the text to these strangers. You know these things, you know that heresies shall come, that of your own selves men shall arise and bring in damnable heresies and, as you know these things, beware lest you, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. Do not forget Paul's word - "Evil communications corrupt good manners". "Awake to righteousness and sin not". There is an influence in sin, a kind of atmosphere which, unless the Lord enable us to be very particular in our heedfulness about us will do us much harm.

Now the words of the text come - "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", and I ventured to make one observation about grace, namely that it is the grace of God in His wondrous love and matchless gift, even the gift of His only begotten Son; that it is the grace of Jesus Christ - "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty might be made rich." It is the grace of the Holy Ghost who comes to regenerate, to convince, and Dr Goodwin has a striking word about this grace of the Holy Spirit. He speaks of it as an amazing thing that the Holy Spirit should condescend to come and rake into the dunghills of our hearts. It is grace in Him to tell a sinner that he is a sinner, to tell a sinner about God, then about Christ, and when the man feels his guilt to lead him to the fountain of the Saviour's infinite merit. To grow in grace is to grow in an experience of this. God's people are not cultivators in this respect; they are cultivated. "Ye are God's husbandry". They are planted in this wondrous soil, and they grow. It needs a good God to do this, a God of love and mercy. Do not envy the mushroom growth of professors; look well to the root. Go to that

chapter in Matthew's gospel which is, as I remarked the other evening, a chapter of secrecies. Do your alms in secret, pray in secret, do all things in secret; lay up in heaven a treasure. Do it not ostentatiously; mind too rapid a growth. It is not seemly in nature for a child to speak as an old man. So in grace it is not seemly for one newly born to speak as one who has lived forty or fifty years in the grace of God. Speak as you feel; do not reach to things you have not been led into. Never venture to speak of anything as yours which you have not received from the Spirit. Honesty is a great thing. Being planted in this wondrous soil, says the Apostle, now be particular about the growth. And how will this be accomplished? Only by the prayer of faith. As sin is felt faith must go to the Redeemer. As unrighteousness is perceived faith must go to His robe. As pollution is felt, faith must go to His grace for sanctification. As temptation comes, faith must go to His power for support, and as you are held in affliction, faith must wait on God for deliverance. "Grow in grace". Grace is a charming sound, grace is life, grace is peace, grace is victory. Seek to be planted here my friends. Seek to hold on here. All else must go. Your life must go; unless you hate it and lose it there is no being found in Christ. Self and Christ will never go together here. You must lose your life to find it in Him.

One may say in the next place, grow in grace in respect of those graces of the Spirit which are so recommended. "Add to your 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 For if ye do these things ye shall never fall." The Apostle connects them with that verse which follows immediately. "Giving diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these ye shall never fall". It is great to have faith and it is great for faith to grow. Faith in some of us is very little and well may the Lord Jesus say to us "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Bring forth your strong reasons why you should doubt. Bring forth the briars and thorns of your wickedness. What will God do with them? "I will go through; I will burn them up". "Let him take hold of My strength and make peace with Me, and He shall make peace with Me." It is good for hope to grow. Hope grows when the sun shines, that is, when Jesus smiles, when the love of God is felt. When the Word is powerful, when

some promise is made over to the soul, hope grows. And hope grows in adversity too. Remember this, hope is for the future. Present enjoyment and hope of enjoyment are not consistent. What you have you cannot hope for. "What a man seeth why doth He yet hope for? but if he hope for that he sees not then does he with patience wait for it." Hope is for the future. Hope is for a dark time. Yes, a good man once said to his soul, after he had expressed his fears and doubt and dismay, "Hope thou in God" - He changes not; you have changed from comfort to trouble, from strength to weakness, from light to darkness, from access to shutting up, but hope in God; He changes not - "for I shall yet praise Him". It is sweet when love grows, love to Jesus Christ and His. Happy is the man who is not offended in God. "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." It seems that John Baptist was offended in Christ for Christ had allowed him to be put in prison and had not visited him, as it would seem, for a time, and John's strong faith, and strong preaching, and strong testimony gave way to doubt, and the doubt was a torment to him, it tortured him, and so, with his tortured heart he moves, he sends two disciples to Christ and they are to ask Him this strange question, strange as put by one who had seen Him and had testified of Him, who had seen the sign that God the Father had said he should see - "Art Thou He that should come or look we for another?" And the Lord Jesus gave him no immediate answer. He worked and then He spoke - "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard, how that the blind see, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Blessed is he who can abide and hold fast and wait and follow on even when no bright shining is enjoyed. And this love will go, not to Christ only, but to all His children and especially to those you know. If you love God who begets His children, you will love all who are begotten of Him as you may be brought into contact with them. Yea, you love the Scripture characters, David, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Apostles; you love them in their testimonies.

"Grow in grace"; seek to have more than you have got. Seek to have more than at the present you possess, more than you enjoy. No man of God will ever say that he has got so much he has room for no more. Every good man is covetous - "Covet earnestly the best gifts". Every good man looks at what he has and, although he may say, as to the

nature of it, it is immense, yet, as to the measure of it, he may say it is very small. He has not much grace, not much prayer, not much faith, not much hope, and too little love. What then? Shall he be content? No, he says I would have more. And how does he find more? By prayer and supplication. "But grow in grace".

And secondly, "And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The religion that God gives to His children is a religion of knowledge. This may put some of you to it. You may be confessing often and truly that you have little or no knowledge of God and yet I will say and maintain that the Lord's people have a religion of knowledge, and it is not good for the soul to be without knowledge, Solomon tells us. They know God and a very solemn thing that is, to believe in God, in that awful Being in whom we live and move and have our being. To believe in His eternity, immensity, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, justice, goodness. It is a great thing; it is wonderful to believe in God - there are as many miracles in Brighton tonight as there are true believers in God; it is not half as common to believe in God as it may seem to be - if you can put your hand on your heart and in the presence of God protest that there have been moments when you have felt some true, and seemingly, to yourself, powerful impression of the true God on your heart, and have had no doubt about His being God, a personal God, a glorious God, the sight of whom withered you because of your sins, convinced you of your sins, and made you realise, as far as you could realise, that you were a poor, miserable sinner, removed to an infinite distance from Him. Not simply a distance of creatureship - for in that there is no shame - but a distance of sinnership and in that is infinite shame. And as men grow in this knowledge - and I am disposed to say that I believe every child of God does grow in this; the older he gets the more at times he realises the greatness of God; I have thought sometimes, with respect to myself, now that I am an old man, if in my beginnings I had had this impression of the majesty and glory of God that nowadays I get occasionally I would not have dared to open my mouth to anyone about God or about my belief in Him - it is a very solemn thing to believe in God. You will believe in heaven if you believe in Him, and you will believe in hell if you believe in Him. But there is something more here than that. That is true but there is something more. "In the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ." He is God but He is a Saviour. I say this my friends to you, there is something more here. "A just God and a Saviour". Infinite wisdom and infinite love are here. These make the truth so sweet. "A just God", who must kill a sinner. "A Saviour" who saves a sinner. "A just God" who necessarily hates sin, but who freely saves some sinners. And grow in the knowledge of Him. I can but hint at things; the matter is infinite. I can but just hint at this. Grow in the knowledge of His Person.

O could we but with clearer eyes
His excellencies trace
Could we His Person learn to prize
We more should prize His grace

There is the Person of Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, the very Son of man, One Person. The very Son of His Eternal Father and that holy child born of the virgin Mary, these constitute the mysterious, glorious, blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To look on Him is to look on the way to heaven. It is to look on the Mediator who takes up bad cases, and brings them off well. To look on Him is to look on the High Priest of our profession. To look on Him is to look on One who is infinitely pleasing to His Father, and in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell; the fullness of love, electing love; the fullness of a vicarious merit; the sacrifice of Himself. The fullness of infinite goodness, the fullness of free, eternal justification, the fullness of sanctification. Who can adequately express what Jesus Christ is in His Person. My brethren, seek Him, seek to know Him. The Scripture exhorts us to it. Seek to know Him, grow in the knowledge of Him. The more you know of Him the more you will hate yourself. May you know what it is to be poor and yet to be rich beyond all words, yea all conception. Seek to know this Person. He will cover you, He will love you, He will embrace you, He will teach you, He will supply you out of His Own fullness. He will guide you with His Own wisdom, make you holy in His Own holiness, justify you in His Own righteousness. He will bring you at last to be with Himself. O seek to know Jesus Christ. If you get a touch be thankful for it. If the Spirit moves you be thankful for it, but do seek to know Christ. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus

Christ whom Thou hast sent". Said the spouse - "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth, but I found Him not". He does not ordinarily allow people to find Him on their beds of idleness. When He will be found of you He will fetch you off such a bed if you are on it and He will give you earnestness, He will give you life in your prayers, and vigour in your faith, and give you to follow Him and brave all that the watchmen may do to you, even the tearing off of your veil. Such an indignity as that and all other things you will face and bear in order to find this blessed One. You will pass everybody by, even the watchmen, that you may get at Him. Is He thy desire O sinner? Then follow on.

Grow in the knowledge of His precious work, His blessed atonement. O what a work was the work of Christ on the cross. The greatest activity of the Lord Jesus Christ during His sojourn on earth was on the cross. There was His love, there was His goodness, there was His power; there was His suffering all brought to a climax. There came justice and demanded satisfaction. There came holiness and demanded to be honoured, and there came mercy and longed for a vent, and truth and demanded to be bright and kept bright, and righteousness. And Jesus realised in Himself every demand and offered Himself vicariously to the Father. O this alone will bring you peace on earth and afterwards the plenitude of heaven; nothing else. All else you will find to be rags and pollution and condemnation. This will be to you life and peace and heaven. Do you hope in it? Does your faith go to it? Is it your plea when you pray? Is it that that makes you say, Amen, when you have prayed. Do you name this Name to the Father? Do you bring this work to the Father? Do you urge it on His notice? Do you make a plea which God Himself is not able to reject? Grow in this, follow on to know this, poor sinner. The day will come when you will say I have found that peace I long have sought - might it be even now - when you will say I have got that that my heart can only just hold, it is so great, so wonderful. "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." Well dear friends it is wonderful to know the atonement. The atonement atones. That is no atonement that does not bring the peace of God into the conscience and secure the person from perdition. This does; this does all that can be needed, all that can be asked, and more than can be held here. I do

not believe our bodies could bear very much of the glory of Christ's death. The glory of Christ's death is the Father's delight, the Father's satisfaction. Everything that Deity could delight in is here in the death of Jesus Christ. Everything a sinner can need for eternity is here in the death of Jesus Christ. He purchased the Church with His Own blood. He cleansed her sin; by dying He put it away; He made an end of it. And when a thing is ended it is ended. It is ended like this with regard to sin - I have cast thy sin behind My back into the depths of the sea. There is an oblivion, wondrous oblivion. God Himself takes a human infirmity and applies it to Himself in respect of forgiveness. When you forget a thing it does not exist to your memory. It is as if it were not. And when the Lord forgives sin He says I will forget it; I will remember it no more. "Their sin and their iniquity will I remember no more". I will never bring it up again. Not one of your sins shall ever be mentioned to you through the blood of Jesus Christ for that cleanseth from all sin. Grow in the knowledge of this. My beloved friends you can need nothing better, nothing more.

Grow in the knowledge of union with Him.

O let a lasting union join
My soul to Christ the living Vine

There are two men in the Bible mentioned and it is as if there were only two and indeed, as heads, there are but two, Adam, to whom we all have union by nature; Christ to whom His people have union, God giving it to them, and He says Himself - "I am the Vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine, neither can ye except ye abide in Me." Abide in Me and I in you and you shall bring forth much fruit. "And herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit". Union with Christ, it is intimate. It is unspeakably intimate. The most sweet, the nearest, the dearest, the most intimate union that exists on earth is the marriage union, and this is used by God Himself. Says the Apostle Paul, I show you a mystery, I speak concerning Christ and the Church. "Lord" some say at times

..... make the union closer yet
And let the marriage be complete

Grow in this. "Grow in grace" in the knowledge of Christ as being the living root for your soul. As you grow in the knowledge of union you will grow in the experience of communion. Communion is a mystery and it is a mercy, and it is a truth in experience. Communion with Christ is receiving Him; it is Christ receiving you. You receive His benefits; He receives your complaints and your love. He receives your confessions, and He gives you His forgiveness. He receives your troubles and works mightily for you. He receives your acknowledgement of your weakness and He gives to you His strength; of your blindness and He gives to you His light; of your emptiness and He gives to you out of His fullness. Dear friends, Christ loves an empty place, for there is room for Him in it. You may be a great deal too full for Him but you cannot be too empty. You may be much too strong for Christ, but you can never be too weak for Him. And grow in the knowledge of union.

Grow in the knowledge of His Priestly office. It is a great office and so an absolutely necessary one. There was never an approach of a Jew to the Almighty but through the agency and work of the priest, and that is a gracious and striking, a clear cut type and the antetype is Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our profession. Be diligent in the case of leprosy. Be diligent in looking at your cases. Says Moses, be diligent in leprosy. Look at it and when you have looked and looked and looked till you are sore, parched and faint then go to the Priest; He must look at it; it is His, the decisive judgement; He will tell you when you are clean. Go to this Priest. However bad the case is, go to Him, and the more you know of Him in His Priestly character the more hopeful, the more comfortable you will be, and by occasions, sweet occasions, the more joyful you will be. You will be strong by seeing Him, so strengthened as at times to rejoice that, weak and wicked though you are in yourself, you have a High Priest, an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. A great Advocate, sweet and glorious. True this is to every child of God that he is not to go in his own name or person, but in the Name or Person of the Lord Jesus.

And grow in the knowledge of the power. True religion is a powerful thing, very powerful. A little faith is wonderful in its power; it can move mountains. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard

seed ye shall say to this mountain be thou removed and cast into the sea, and it shall be done." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name I will do it." Your faith will lay hold of omnipotence, hence that word "To him that believeth all things are possible". Your faith will, by sweet power in your heart, laugh at impossibilities. There are no impossibilities really to a child of God, for there are none to his God, and this is why there are none to him. All things, all your troubles, great though they may be; your necessities, many though they may be; your wickedness and your temptation and the things that befall you, none of these are impossible to Christ. "Behold" says He, "I make all things new". O what cannot Christ do? Grow in the knowledge of His power. It is sweet to feel it. May we feel it. O yes, you will feel it if you are the Lord's. Sometimes in His word you will feel it. It will come sweetly and suddenly; it will fit into your case. So it will fit into your case as that you will say, nothing could be more suitable than this. Yea, you may even feel perhaps that it is as if the Lord just put that word in the Bible on purpose for you. It is more sure than if your own name was there, for there are many other people with your name perhaps. But O when He says, sinner, this is yours, sinner, this is yours; when He says "I have loved thee" and speaks it with power, you know it. So also in all His dealings. "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power".

Seek to know His patience, His lovely, saving patience. He is patient with us. We can scarcely bear one another sometimes. We may be very contrary in our dispositions to our nearest and be very trying, but here is One whose patience is infinite. What a mercy it is that Christ is so patient. "The God of all patience." When one wanders, when one limits the Holy One of Israel, when one turns aside here and there, His patience is lengthened out.

Grow in the knowledge of Christ. As I have said, I can but hint and that is all I have done. The Lord give you to fill up for yourselves. May the truth expand by the Holy Spirit's teaching in your hearts. These things concerning Christ, and all the things that belong to Him make for our peace. Look at the characters, at His Names and seek to grow in knowledge of them.

Now lastly and very briefly "To Him be glory both now and for

ever" both now and to eternity. Glory; let us give Him the glory of His Person and never detract from that. He who denies the Deity of Christ detracts from the glory of Christ. He who denies the virgin birth as the Scripture declares detracts from Christ's glory. Give Him, O brethren, give Him the glory of His Person; Almighty God made manifest in the flesh; Almighty God once sighing human breath now breathing that, without sighing, in heaven. O, the Person of Christ for ever glorious. Give Him the glory of His precious work, that all sufficient work that He did on the cross when He made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness. Give Him the glory of it. Commit your poor souls to Him; commit your ways to Him; acknowledge Him in all your ways. Acknowledge Him to be all you need and more than you can hold. Acknowledge Him to be everything to you, "The chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely". Acknowledge Him in providence when He gives you your bread to eat and your raiment to put on, and all the friends you have. Acknowledge that He does all this. Acknowledge Him in troubles, that they do not spring out of the ground. Acknowledge Him with the hope that He sends trouble to you because He loves you. He wont let a child of His destroy himself. He will give the faithful wounds of a friend and lay on the chastening rod that shall drive folly from the heart. Give Him the glory of this, and the glory of His love, so free, of His righteousness, so sufficient, of His intercession, so prevailing. Give Him all this glory. "To Him be glory both now and for ever" and can you say "Amen", does your heart say "Amen". If so, the Lord accept of it.

AMEN.