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SERMON PREACHED BY MR. OLDFIELD, AT GOWER STREET CHAPEL,
LONDON, ON 26th APRIL, 1891 (Morning)

Text: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (II Peter 1.3).

Simon Peter. Some of you may remember that on Tuesday evening I spoke from the first verse of this chapter, and then noticed Simon Peter, as he calls himself: Simon, the name his mother or his parents gave him; Peter, the name the Lord gave him, signifying a stone, a name characteristic of Himself, who is a tried stone, a foundation stone, a sure stone, a sure foundation, and those who believe on him shall not make haste (Isaiah xxviii,16). A father often likes to call a child after himself, and a child often loves to be called after the parent. It is just the case in God's family. God always calls His people after Himself. God's children love to be called after God's name. Here is God's name - a Stone. Peter rejoiced in this name; he delighted to speak of it, and, as we observed, it was the name the Lord gave him, a stone, a living stone. That name he gave to all God's family in writing to them. They were all stones, characteristic of the Lord Jesus Christ (II Pet.ii.5).

A servant and an apostle. - He was a servant; that was his position - a servant chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified unto the Lord's service, satisfied with it, blest in it, and glad to be an apostle. An apostle, who is an eye-witness, receives his commission from the Lord Himself to preach; and, if we cannot presume to call ourselves by this name in the sense in which they were apostles, yet, as we observed, all God's servants must be eye-witnesses and ear witnesses too. They must have a sight of Jesus by precious faith; they must hear His voice; they must receive from Him their authority to preach. If men do not thus receive it, He will not set before them an open door. They may go on for a time, but their preaching will not be owned and blessed by God. But if the Lord intends them to go forth, He will open a door, and no man can shut it. There is another thing: God will open a door in the hearts of His people to receive the ministry of such; and they will hail with pleasure and delight their appearance among them as the servants of the Lord, and "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thess.v.13). With those who enter the service of Christ, they do not know another master, and when in their right minds they do not want another, either in time or in eternity.

There is an everlasting service here, for Jesus Christ is an everlasting Master. One who enters His service is His servant for ever and ever. And not only a servant, but a son. Oh, yes, a son! God's children are sons as well as servants.

Like precious faith. Peter knew it was not any use to write the things about which he writes to any other persons but to those who had obtained like precious faith. Not what the world, or professors, call faith, but what God calls faith. Faith is a fruit of the Spirit; it is the work of His own hands; Christ is the author and finisher of it; it purifies the heart and ends in the salvation of the soul. It dwells in the same heart with love and hope. O, to possess this like precious faith, and in its strength! Yet little faith is like it in its nature; it is of the same quality, it comes from God.

Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. - And the righteousness of God demanded the righteousness of our Surety, which He has rendered unto His Father. And through this righteousness which Christ wrought out in His life and in His death, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. iii. 22) is found the glorious channel of faith and every other gospel blessing. To these persons Peter writes and greets them very sweetly and blessedly.

Grace and peace be multiplied. - Not given, for it has been given; and he does not say added. Oh, no; but multiplied. This is a very strong word. You may add ten and ten together, and they make twenty; but multiplied together they make one hundred. And so Peter says, "Grace and peace be multiplied." He means what he says too. The trials, sorrows, and afflictions of God's saints are not merely added at times, but they are multiplied. God seems, as it were, perhaps one day in the week, to cause His saints to pass through ten times more trouble than in another, and sometimes a hundred times more trouble than on another day. Oh, then, how immensely his troubles are enlarged, and so there is need for grace and peace to be multiplied. I could speak of my troubles being multiplied at different times in various ways. Just recently they have been multiplied. A daughter of mine, and an only daughter, although she has had an affliction from her birth, being deprived of the use of her right arm, God in His providence has smiled upon her, giving her His strength, and putting it into the heart of some kind lady to educate her. She made considerable progress, and it appeared for a time that she would take everything before her, for she was always successful in all her examinations. But now there is a breakdown: at the present time she is

speechless; she cannot sit, she cannot stand, not yet speak a word, not even yes or no - at least, hardly to be understood. Oh, dear friends, what a trial I may say that has been to me during the last fortnight. Then here is trouble multiplied tenfold in a little time. Then God lays His hand of affliction upon His people and multiplies affliction at any time; and He who multiplies trouble and affliction can multiply grace and peace. Peter knew what God's saints would have to meet with in afflictions, and so he greeted them like this: "Grace and peace be multiplied." As your afflictions abound, as the troubles of your heart are enlarged, may your peace - or, rather, God's peace in your soul - be enlarged! He knew that one would counterbalance the other. Have not some of you found it so, when God has been pleased to manifest His love and mercy in many ways, both providentially and spiritually? And to this we come

Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.- Now this is how God multiplies grace and peace, through the knowledge of God, through bringing His poor people unto the knowledge of Himself and His dear Son, Jesus Christ. And so we come to the text.

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

In looking at these words, I would direct your attention to:

- I. Life
- II. Godliness
- III. Divine power
- IV. All things pertaining to life and godliness.
- V. Through the knowledge of God
- VI. God's calling.

I. Life and godliness. God is the Giver of all providential mercies, or the things pertaining to his life, but I believe that the apostle is here speaking not so much of this present life as of the life God puts in the souls of His dear people; and He puts life and godliness together. Ah! and they are together manifestively more or less; they cannot be separated one from the other. Life is like the root and sap of the tree, and therefore life is the root and sap of the tree of godliness. Seeing that godliness is the branch and root of the tree of life, then if grace is in your heart and mine, there is life in us; and if grace is in us, the tree of godliness is in us. Christ is the tree of life, and through the tree of

life there is the tree of godliness.

1. Now a word or two about life. Light and life are indispensable to a feeling religion. One may have a religion and not have the life of God in his soul. The Pagan, the Papist, the Arminian, and sometimes the dead Calvinist - all these have a lot of religion; but, oh, dear friends, it is like the religion of the five foolish virgins. There was no apparent external distinction between them and the wise virgins until night and darkness came on. Then light was requisite, but the foolish found they had no oil in their vessels; they had nothing to guide them in darkness, nothing to comfort them in real trouble. Ah, what a necessity is light, or the life of God, in the soul! What is any lamp of profession without the life of God in it? Why, you might have, as Mr. Warburton says, a silver-mounted lamp, very nice to look at; but at midnight, what is it? If but a yard or so away, you might think it was a poor, dark, dingy-looking thing. The vital question then is, Have we light in our vessels? It is not, What sort of a vessel? but, Have we light in it? A child of God sometimes feels himself to be a broken vessel (Psa.xxxi.12). A broken cup may have a cavity or hollow place in a part of it, which will hold a little oil. Better, then, to be a broken vessel with a little light or oil than to be entirely destitute of it. Light is an essential thing in true religion.

2. Knowledge of God. - There can be no knowledge of God without life. God does not give knowledge of Himself without first giving life. We read: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Jn.xvii.3). Not only life eternal, but life eternal that they might know - which means, if I understand it, that it is not possible to know God, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, unless He has first given us life. And what is the first work of God in the heart of a sinner? I believe it is quickening - the communication of life to a dead sinner from a living Saviour. Ah, it is a living one that is brought under the law, brought to know God's truth, to know the true God, brought to know Jesus Christ whom the Father hath sent. Oh, how needful, then, is life! A man may know a lot of things, and yet not have this indispensable thing, divine life. He may be an Arminian, A calvinist, or anything else; what is it all without the life of God in his soul, the quickening operations of God's eternal Spirit, and the living power of Jesus Christ? Hence you find living people are concerned about living things. "Ah," they say, "I know the doctrine, the promises, the precepts, the exhortations; but am I the character?" And who can satisfy them that they are? No one but

God; and it is by His Spirit that He satisfies them that they are the character.

3. Joy in God. - Life is indispensable to spiritual enjoyment. One may have a lot of enjoyment, but yet not have a particle of spiritual enjoyment. The stony ground hearers received the word with joy, but it was not spiritual joy. The Pagan, the Arminian, the Roman Catholic, the Wesleyan, and other people are all pleased with their religion, and there is a sort of enjoyment in it, but it is not from God, not from heaven. These people can run here and there and find joy; they are very zealous characters. But God's people cannot run anywhere; if they get into such a condition, they cannot remain in it, but are led to trace their joy to the life of God, for which they plead.

II. Godliness in exercise.

The apostle speaks not only of life, but also of godliness - not only of godliness as the root and sap, as I have called it, but of godliness as a branch and fruit of the Tree of Life. What is godliness?

1. Prayer. - Do we know a little about this branch of the Tree of Life? Are we the subjects of prayer? True religion, so far as we are concerned, begins with prayer. I know it began with prayer in my soul. Of course, originally it begins with the work of the Holy Spirit. One quickened by God the Eternal Spirit is a praying one - perhaps not in public. One does not begin to pray publicly; one does not begin to pray in the hearing of man if his character is right. No; he begins in secret - where no eye can see but God's, where no ear can hear but God's. And this proves the reality and truth of it.

2. Praise. - There is not only prayer in the experience of a child of God, but, sooner or later, there is praise unto God.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

If he has but the least hope in God's mercy, the least glimpse by the eye of faith, of a precious Saviour, the least degree of love shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, it has a diffusing effect upon one's heart and soul; and it produces, more or less, all praises to that God from whom all blessings flow and have flowed. From praise there will often arise a profession of God's grace, and sometimes there will be

3. Preaching of the gospel. - In some instances this will be so. And then, there will be pleasure also in

4. Hearing the gospel. - In so doing the Lord meets with them and the Lord blesses them.

III. Divine power

1. Not in man's power to give. "His divine power hath given." No less a power can give the things that pertain unto life and godliness; and, therefore, if God does not give them, them, they will not be given. Where can these blessings be obtained that some of your souls are hungering and thirsting for? Can I give them? Can those sitting with you in the pews give them? They have not them to give. If they have got them for themselves, they cannot give them to you. The wise virgins had sufficient oil for themselves, but nothing to give away to the foolish. Not more than they wanted, but just enough for themselves. No power but God's can give us what is needful for life and godliness, for no other power has them to give. It is a gift of God.

2. A sense of need and poverty. - God's power can make us willing to plead for them. But, oh, how unwilling men are by nature to be saved in God's way; unwilling to be made beggars to call at mercy's door! A child of God has to live a beggar and to die a beggar. We read that the beggar died and that his spirit went to glory. (Luke xvi.22). It is the same with all God's people - each one is born a beggar, lives a beggar, and dies a beggar. By nature one wants to be independent; it is not man's nature to be dependent upon God in a parental sense; man does not want God's power to come in. He wants to be self-righteous, self quickening. Oh, what a wreck God made of me in my heart and conscience! Thus He made me willing to be saved entirely by His rich, free, and sovereign grace. O, to be made willing! But, whilst sin and Satan work in the heart, there is an unwillingness to be saved in God's way. Still, when the Lord comes into the hearts of His people, He makes them willing in the day of His power (Psalm cxi.3).

3. Divine power maintains what it has given. - His divine power hath given. Yes; and that which His divine power gives, His divine power will maintain. What He drops into your hearts will live, and whatever power comes against you, all the powers of earth and hell cannot deprive you of it, cannot take that from you which God has made your own. The devil may pick up three parts, or even nine-tenths, of what you hear of any sermon; but if God gives you one word, the devil cannot pick that up. The fowls of the air cannot devour it (Matt.xiii.4), for it has entered into the good ground of your heart. And there it will be beyond the reach of men and devils,

and will bring forth fruit in one way or another in God's own time to His honour and glory. Oh, then, without this divine power, which is Almighty power, there would be no salvation.

IV. All things that pertain unto life and godliness.

1. Channels of communication.

(i) His dear Son. - The gift of His own dear Son. Ah! that pertains unto life. Without Jesus Christ there is no life. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John.v.12). Here is a gift, then, pertaining unto life: the gift of God's dear Son to become incarnate, to assume our nature, to work out a righteousness for us, to make an atonement for us, to rise again for us, to ascent to heaven for us, to sit on the right hand of the Father and of power and glory for us, to make intercession for us, and to reign until all His foes are under Him and till all His loves ones are with Him in bliss. Have you any life apart from Christ? Have you any life apart from the kingdom of Christ? He is the infinite fountain of life unto His people.

(ii) The gospel. - Oh, what a gift is this! The Gospel, the Bible, the Word of God, the truth as it is in Jesus. Has not this been a precious gift to some of your souls? Have you not proved it to be so? Have not you said, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (II Cor.ix.15)? Ah, how you have prized the gift of the gospel! How you have prized the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy (Rev.xix.10)! How you have prized the doctrines, the prophecies, the exhortations, the precepts of Christ! What an invaluable treasure is God's Word to your souls! And is it not necessary to life? Is it not one of the gifts that pertain unto life?

(iii) The Lord's ministers. - This is one gift, too, that pertains unto life and godliness. God makes use not only of His own Word in the life of His people, but He makes use of His own servants. We read of their "holding forth the word of life" (Phil.ii.16). There is life; then the word of life, the truth as it is in Jesus; then holding it forth by the Lord's own servants, the unfurling of the banner of the glorious obedience and divine perfections of our precious Christ. Sometimes the saints are favoured with the eye of faith to see this obedience, the ear of faith to hear God's voice by His servants; and then to say: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isa.lii.7). Oh, has it not at times been food for your life - nourishing and comforting the life of God within you? Has it not uplifted you on your heavenly journey, and

uplifted your heart to bless God for it? Then there is the gift of -

(iv) The Holy Spirit. - He applies the Word, and seals it on the heart and conscience. What an unspeakable gift is this, too! Not only a precious Christ, not only His blessed gospel, not only His ministers, who have grace given them to preach it; but the Holy Spirit, who carries the Word with power to the hearts of God's people, makes them manifestively His own, and blesses them with sweet portions - in promises, encouragements, invitations, and in other ways. The Holy Spirit not only applies the Word and seals it with power, but He dwells in the heart, to take care of what is deposited, written, and sealed there. If God did not take care of what He has given me, I should soon lose it; had it depended on me to maintain it, I should have lost it long ago. The Blessed Spirit, then, dwells in the hearts of God's people as a Caretaker and maintainer of the life and truth of God in their souls, keeping the life which He has given them. And so, dear friends, when death comes it will put an end to sin, but not to grace, not to the life of God in your souls. That life will be perpetuated until your souls ascend from earth to heaven. How needful is it, then, for God to guide us in our every step to glory!

2. Inward fruits of godliness

Many things pertain unto godliness and depend upon it.

(i) Faith is one thing, and God gives this. There is no godliness without faith; for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb.xi.6). Ah, a man may pray, or even preach, as he thinks, or do anything else; but without faith it is impossible to please God. Oh, what a gift is faith - faith at the prayer meeting, in praise, in hearing the Word, and so on! How a child of God goes, from time to time, with a trembling heart, longing to hear God's voice; and he says: "Lord God, help Thou my unbelief." He feels that his faith is hardly the size of a grain of sand, but his unbelief is as large as a mountain. So he says: "Lord God, I believe; I cannot deny that I have a grain of faith; but the mountain of my unbelief, as it were, breaks down my grain of faith in Christ. Yet at times my faith raises me above my unbelief." And again, he cries, "Lord, increase my faith" (Luke xvii.5). The child of God knows that, without faith, he cannot pray, praise, sing, have communion with God, enjoy fellowship with the Son of God. Without faith he feels he is nowhere, just like nothing; he cannot join God's people with pleasure.

(ii) Hope. - What is prayer or praise without hope? Or what is anything else without hope? If a poor sinner had no hope at all of God hearing his prayer, regarding his petition when he knocks at mercy's door, would he continue knocking? No, no; he would give it up. Would a beggar knock at a door and wait there if he had no hope of getting relief? No; he would pass by that door. So it is with a child of God even in his darkest moments, when he feels like Jeremiah, who said, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord" (Lam.iii.18). Even then there is hope in some faint measure, or there would not be sighing, crying, knocking at mercy's door. Ah, there is a living hope, and I say that upon God you are waiting, and waiting for a blessing. One says:

"Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine,
My life and death attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey's end."

The hope of salvation, the hope of being with Jesus, oh, how it sometimes makes up for all the trials, sorrows, afflictions, temptations, and so on, of this world and of this life!

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. vi.19). It is as though the apostle had said: "This hope is unbreakable and immovable; it is therefore sure and stedfast and has entered into that within the veil." The one who has this hope is godly, a praying man, one who has been drawn to God's mercy seat, and who has been enabled at times to praise God, who is the health of his countenance and his God. (Psa.xlii.11).

(iii) Love. - Where there is godliness there is love: love to God, to His truth, to His ways, to His people. If I did not love a thing, I should not pray for it. If you did not love God's salvation, you would not pray for it. If your hearts were not brought to love God's mercy, I know you would not seek it. Until my heart was brought to love the things of God, there was no seeking after them. When you praise God for anything, it is something your heart loves, it is something you delight in, something you esteem as a precious treasure.

(iv) Patience. - What a needful thing this is! I have needed that, especially of late - patience in tribulation. This is one of the things pertaining unto godliness - to be made submissive, to be brought to feel one's nothingness, one's hell-deservedness, to feel that God has a right to do as He

pleases with him for His own glory, in purifying and refining him. Oh, how needful at times is this patience!

(v) Felt need of instruction. - That is another thing pertaining unto godliness. A child of God does not know how to pray, praise, preach, hear, support the cause of God, does not know what is acceptable or pleasing in God's sight; he wants God to instruct and guide him.

V. Through the knowledge of God.

Who has called us? God has called us through His Son by His Spirit. As the Lord bestows these blessings, the Eternal Son (the channel through which they come) is opened up to our souls in the giving of them by the Eternal Spirit. And they are revealed from the Father through the Son, and by the Son also in the bestowment of them.

VI. God's calling.

It is an effectual, saving, sure, everlasting calling.

(1) To glory. - God's calling is:

(i) to a glorious salvation, a salvation that will redound to His eternal glory, a salvation that will terminate in the saints' eternal glorification; and this glorious salvation belongs to a glorious family, a family of the Lord's sons and daughters; a salvation that will end in a glorious office and occupation as "kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Rev.i.6).

(ii) God's calling is to a glorious relationship. By divine betrothal, espousal, and marriage to Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, millions and millions of poor sinners are taken into union with Himself, and they constitute one body; so here is one husband and wife (Gen.ii.24; Eph.5.31). This means fruitfulness. Hart says:-

"A barren tree that bears no fruit,
Brings no great glory to its root;
When on the boughs rich fruit we see,
'Tis then we say, a goodly tree!"

2. To virtue. -

(i) Not only to a name or title. Amongst men there are those who have such titles as Captain, Lieutenant, Corporal, and so on. In some instances they are non-commissioned officers who obtained their position by favour, before they did any real service, before they saw battle, much less fought in a battle. Ah, but there is no virtue; they have done nothing for their country; they have only the name.

(ii) But how mighty is the name to God's people. With them there will be glory and virtue, by which I understand that they are enabled to do a little service for their King by the work of His own Spirit in their hearts. They have not only the name of a soldier, but they are fighting men and women; they wage war more or less against the flesh and the devil; and they come out from the battle more than conquerors through Christ who has loved them. They are not slain on the field of battle; perhaps they may be smitten down, but they rise up again through Christ their great Captain (Heb.ii.10), and they return from the conflict more than conquerors. O, to be right at last - to be called not only by a glorious name, but to virtue as well through Christ by His Blessed Spirit! Amen.
