

1040
LA 9692

Sermon preached by Mr.F.L.Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Wednesday Evening May 30th 1962

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:6-7.

Peter is writing to exactly the same people as was James (in the chapter read – James 1). James was writing “to the twelve tribes scattered abroad;” Peter “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” But they are the elect of God, and according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, that doctrine which is sustained by the divine sovereignty of Jehovah. Sovereign election is the channel through which every spiritual blessing flows. Spiritual blessings will never reach any others than the election of grace. I feel it necessary to reassert that blessed doctrine. Nature hates it; general religion hates it. Yet you will find throughout the Word of God it is very rarely referred to with respect to His people's experience; but rather those evidences and fruits of election are set before us, and that for the encouragement of those who feel that they have no interest, no part, no lot in sovereign election. But that was the lot which was cast into the lap in the covenant of grace, and that is the lot in which His people will stand at last, and will be a comfort to them in all the days of trouble and turmoil, perilous times, and of affliction. As the Lord said to Daniel: "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (ch.12:13)

Now that lot Peter speaks of: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance." That inheritance is the lot of which the Lord spoke to Daniel. But there was a way to it, a path of tribulation to the kingdom, and Daniel lived in troublous times. He was the Lord's prophet in the captivity, and the Lord gave him to be an interpreter of many dreams, and a prophet of many things to come. But there were secrets which the Lord was pleased to withhold from Daniel, very solemn things. And Daniel said concerning them: "What shall be the end of these things?" Now we may be in circumstances, in a state of much affliction, and turmoil, and agitation, and many fears, and may often say before the Lord: "What shall be the end of this and of that?" But O to hear that divine voice and that kind word of instruction: "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days"!

So Peter sets before these elect strangers this inheritance incorruptible, undefiled. O what eternal qualities! There is nothing here beneath the sun of which this can be said, that it is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away – nothing at all. And this inheritance is in Christ Jesus, and it is the hope set before His dear people; for our Forerunner hath for us entered, even Jesus, entered to take possession of the prize, hath prepared this inheritance reserved in heaven, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil. O to get a faith's glimpse of what is within the veil prepared for suffering saints!

But Peter, having set the best before these saints, says: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." "Temptations" here include afflictions, chastenings, judgments, trials, conflicts, oppressions, persecutions. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season." This season is a season wherein the Lord will test, and try, and prove His people's faith. You take it the opposite way round. Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Hebrews 11:24-25) He would rather walk in this Scripture, and if need be to be in heaviness through manifold temptations. And the Lord looks upon this people, looks kindly upon them as it is recorded by Luke: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." (ch.22:28) Christ's temptations, that is His sufferings – the afflictions of the Gospel, suffering for Christ's sake, enduring hardness as a good soldier, glorifying the Lord in the fires, as His people are exhorted to do by Isaiah. When things were in a terrible state, the earth upside-down, utterly emptied, and defiled under the inhabitants thereof, and says the Lord: "When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree" – a little remnant in the worst of times, the most terrible conditions. "They shall lift up their voice, and they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord" – the little remnant, who by faith and the true light shining in their understandings, will see the majesty of the Lord in His judgments in the earth: "Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires." (ch.24:13,-15) It might be very easy to make a profession when things are easy, but when everything is in a state of contradiction, and you are under the mighty hand of God in His chastenings, when He is emptying one from vessel to vessel, then to be enabled to glorify Him in the fires is a great exploit of faith.

Of course, Peter gives us the secret of this perseverance: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season" – and the Lord knows how long that season is to be. Yes –

"Our sorrows in the scales He weighs,
And measures out our pains." (Gadsby's 132)

O that we had a stronger faith, my friends! I must confess with shame, I have got too much of that faith that lives by sight. O but faith and hope have regard to unseen things, live upon an unseen God – and yet seen. Says Peter: "Whom having not seen, ye love." It is in the chapter, and he knows that by coming through this season of heaviness and the trial of faith, proving the Lord in that heaviness, in those deep waters, those fiery furnaces.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season if need be." It is only "if need be" He reproves and chastens, and He does so as a Father: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." (Hebrews 12:5) O how kind the Word of God is! How it has respect to the weakness of His people! We are apt either to despise or to disregard His chastenings in a spirit of rebellion, or we faint under them; but how blessed it is to have enduring grace and patience, to have that good hope, to rejoice in hope, and to be patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer! It is not easy.

"Though now for a season, if need be." And the Lord knows where it is. He sees the condition of our souls, our lives, whether we have become lukewarm and indifferent, whether we are resting on

our lees in a false security, or whether we are harbouring some idol within, whether we have been turned aside by some vain jangling. "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith." This is the purpose of it, and this is the only reason why the Lord brings His people into these heavy temptations, and trials, and afflictions. It is for the trial of their faith, not for His information, as He knows those that are His, so He knows those who possess a living faith. He does not try His people for His own information, as to whether they have faith, but for their own; and how confirming it is!

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth." And so James says: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried" – when he is proved, when he is tested – "he shall receive a crown of life." (ch.1:12) O Job knew this pathway, and yet underneath it all his faith was maintained. He said: "But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (ch.23:10) Blessed confidence of faith! I have had to alter that language, feeling my own weakness, and that sense of sinking in deep mire, and have had to read Job's words like this: "When He hath tried me, shall I come forth as gold?" Well, He will not try a false faith. The Lord would not be troubled with it. My friends, a skilled surgeon charges a very big fee for operations; and this infallible Physician will probe and get to the very core, the very seat of the trouble; but He would not take that pains with a false faith. He will never try it. And that is why a false faith may appear, on the surface of it, to be better and stronger than a real faith, while that false faith lasts. But it does not last long, and neither does the hope of the hypocrite. There is a kind of fainting that only faith knows. You may think perhaps that is an unwarrantable remark; but you look at those whom the Lord was leading forth by a right way to heaven. "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way...Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them" (Psalm 107:4) – and they were the redeemed of the Lord. Now a natural faith would not have fainted, because they would not have been hungry and thirsty. O be thankful if your faith faints when God is absent and suspends His communications, shuts up this blessed Word, and there is a cloud upon the throne of grace! If you have faith and love in your soul, you will feel faint; and yet that is the only faith that is impregnable, because it stands in the power of God.

"That the trial of your faith." And the Lord knows just how to try it, how to deal with each of His people – and they need different treatment.

"If God rebuke for pride,
He'll humble thy proud heart;
And if for thy want of love He chide,
That love He will impart." (Gadsby's 872)

Yes, He knows how to deal with the rebellious, and give them to know that they dwell in a dry land. I have known it. And then the Lord will bring you into some affliction. It was so with the prodigal. He went into a far country, far away from his father's house; and the way that he was brought back was through manifold temptations, sufferings, hunger, poverty, rags. But it brought him back. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith" – the test of it.

There is another way the Lord will test His people's faith, and that is by leaving them for a season, taking no notice of them. And you will find that faith will come to the top. Those in Isaiah's day said:

"My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." (ch.40:27) They feared that they were in a path which the Lord did not see, and He did not take up their case and plead their cause, that their judgment was passed over. That is a trial of faith. And when you are brought to walk in darkness in your soul, and in providence, for every door to be shut, it will be a trial of faith. And it is precious, both the faith, and the trial of it. You see how He tried that dear woman's faith that came to Him with her family trouble. (Matthew 15:22-28) It appeared most unkind. She was in deep trouble. O how the Word of God gives warrant to His people to bring every kind of trouble, and affliction, and burden, and care, and cast them upon the Lord! And the Lord answered her not a word. That was a trial of faith. And if you have got faith, you will know what a severe trial that is – the Lord's silence: "He answered her not a word." And then even godly people, His disciples, misjudged her: "Send her away; for she crieth after us." A very great trial that. If you are in trouble and take it to the Lord, and instead of getting an answer, even His people begin to suspect, misunderstand, and misrepresent you. What a trial of faith! Then the Lord breaks the silence: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Then came she" – something very blessed about that! As soon as that dear woman heard those words: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep," it was as though she would say: "That is me – lost!" "Then came she saying, Lord, help me." Well, He tried her faith: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Some of our respectable religionists would not put up with that. "Truth, Lord:" you cannot call me anything worse than I feel myself to be – "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." "The trial of your faith."

Another trial of faith may be in outward circumstances; everything become crooked and out of joint. Where you looked for fulness, to find emptiness; where you had some hope, to find disappointment; where things you thought were getting better, you find they are getting worse. O how precious this is to the Lord! O the love, and wisdom, and goodness there is in these trials! Of course, we are such fools that we like trials that don't try us, pains that don't hurt us. "Being much more precious than of gold that perisheth." Every word of God is pure. It means what it says. We may get into the habit of exaggerating – a very bad habit really; but there is no exaggeration in the Word of God. It means just what it says: "Much more precious than of gold that perisheth." "Gold" – it is perhaps the greatest god in this world, the riches of this world, that covetous human hearts are after it. It is the source of evil. It is the cause of wars, jealousies, murders. O the strife to get a little of that sordid dust of gold! But here is a poor tried sinner with faith in his heart, faith toward the Lord Jesus. And this faith, and the trial of it, is more precious than gold that perisheth, because this faith will never perish. And not only so; this faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) And what faith sees is far more precious than gold. But there will be the trial of it when those things are out of sight.

"All things to promote our fall
Show a mighty fitness." (Gadsby's 306)

Some of you may know that, and you may be irritated under it; you may get up in the morning and have a real desire to walk with God, and the first thing you touch goes upside-down, everything is wrong and crooked, and a spirit of rebellion rises up. You are almost ready to say to God that He is neither just nor wise. Yet He is trying your faith, and it is only for a season, blessed be His name! Eternal joys are to come.

"Much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire." Of course, there is much mixed, while we are here, with the gold of faith. Not that faith itself can become mixed. It cannot; neither can grace. But it brings us to that word of Paul when he said: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." (Galatians 2:20) As though he would say: "Now that precious faith, and life of faith, I have to live in this body of sin and death. There is the old man with the lusts of the flesh – rebellion, pride, carnality, unbelief, and every evil; yet this faith is in the midst of it." But O how trial, sanctified fires, separate and purge the pure gold from all the dross! What a refining influence it is, sanctifying influence! I believe that in a little measure I have known it. I wish I could remain there; but we shall not, while we are in this world.

"Though it be tried with fire" – and the fire will try every man's work, of what sort it is. And it is very solemn for a minister, that word, because it will burn up all wood, hay, and stubble. There is no substance in that combustible material. But faith is indestructible, and so are all the graces of the Spirit. They are incorruptible, and can never fade. O to be possessed of that eternal life of God, and the spiritual blessings that are in Christ Jesus; to have that in our little being from God which nothing in this life, nor in death, can ever destroy! But it will be tried; it will indeed.

"Though it be tried with fire, might be found." There is something very blessed to my mind in this expression: "might be found." As though there was a raking amidst the ashes; because there will be ashes of the burnt hay, wood, and stubble. As though the Lord would say: "Look, there is the gold; it is still there; it has come through." "Might be found" – as though there is a looking for it, and the Lord recognizes it. Perhaps upon this point we shall not find a better interpretation than we have in Zechariah: "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." (ch.13:9) And what will happen in that fire? "They shall call on My name." That will be one evidence of living faith – prayer in trouble. So David says: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble." (Psalm 20:1) Therefore there must have been a troubled people, and the Lord listening to their prayers. It is a mercy, my friends, if our afflictions and trials produce, by the Spirit, prayer. Prayerlessness in affliction is very terrible, and fatal, if it is permanent. "They shall call on My name, and I will hear them." O blessed Scriptures!

"That the trial of your faith." To be the subject of this refining, to feel it within. Your prayers refined, your hearings refined, preachings - refined, your religion refined, your conversation refined. "I will say, It% is My people." He knew that before, but this is the point. They were afresh manifested and proved to be His people through the fire." They shall say, The Lord is my God." He was their God before, but they have proved Him to be so in th4fflictions and in the fires. And this is the preciousness of the trial.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." It is the effect, that it is proved to be real faith, and that it has endured the furnace and come forth purified, that it is to the praise, and honour, and glory of God.

"When faith is lifted up the highest,
She sings of none but Him." (Gadsby's 228)

O how it does redound to the praise of God, to see one brought through a fire, through an affliction, as Christian was brought through the Slough of Despond! The fear of God in his heart, as he struggled in that slough, moved him toward the side that was nearest to the Celestial City, and farthest from the City of Destruction. It is a great thing when sanctified affliction has that effect, if we come out of it nearer to Christ, nearer to heaven, in our souls. And that is to the praise, and honour, and glory of God, and it will be at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Now this is the work of the Holy Spirit, and this is the great reason why the Lord leads His people through paths of affliction and trial, a rough and thorny path to heaven. But then He promises that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be; and thy shoes shall be iron and brass." (Deuteronomy 33:25) O the suitability and the all-sufficiency of Christ and His grace! So you will find that every saint was tried. The Apostle Paul was a tried man, that thorn in the flesh rankling – a very painful thing. He besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed. It is not wrong to ask the Lord to remove a thorn or an affliction, so long as we ask according to His will. I know it has been said – and I don't want to find fault with anybody else, I have got too many myself – but some feel that Paul ought never to have asked for that thorn to be removed. But in my judgment we have a pattern and example in the Lord Jesus. When He was given that bitter cup to drink, He said: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39) And the Lord gave Paul an answer. It was for the trial of his faith: "My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 Corinthians 12:9) That message belongs to everyone of His people. Sometimes I quote that text in a different order: "For thee My grace is sufficient" – for thee, for thine affliction, for the furnace thou art in – for thee My grace is sufficient."

And what are we warranted to conclude with? Well, I feel this – indeed Isaiah was commanded to say so: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." (Isaiah 3:10) And what "doings" are they? They are the works of faith. And where were the works of faith? In the fire. And what are the fruits of their doings? "I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zechariah 13:9) And what other fruits will they eat? Answers to their prayers, deliverances from their trials, and heaven at last.

Amen.