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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden, at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Sunday morning 27th June 1965.

"But the God of all grace who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." 1. Peter. 5:10.

These two chapters, the 4th and 5th, are for troubled, suffering people and therefore, it will embrace the experience of all those who are being led forth by the right way to heaven, and it is a way of great tribulation.

The tenderness and compassion of the apostle in these Epistles is very beautiful. It is the Spirit of Christ whose compassions fail not; and He admonishes these suffering saints not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try them as though some strange thing happened unto them. We are apt to think so, that there is something about our case, something about our religion or experience, that there is something about our peculiar trial and affliction that is different from anybody else, and the devil's not slow to use those fears to cast down the Lord's people to cast them down from their excellency, if he could. But Peter here comes to the point of rest. 'But the God of all grace,' and that 'but' has reference to what has gone before; the sufferings of the saints. He exhorts them to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, cast all their care upon Him and to resist the devil; and then he shows them the ground, the ground of trust, 'The God of all grace,' as though he would set the one thing over against the other, all the sufferings, and indeed the sins. All the distresses, the calamities, the afflictions, the conflicts through which His people pass, he sets over against this, 'The God of all grace.' And O, if the Lord should grant unto His people the Spirit's influence, that their faith might be strengthened in the midst of all their cares and sorrows and weaknesses, to look up beyond all at the God of all grace! It is a beautiful expression. It brings before us the infinite God in all that He is in His everlasting love; and that all His divine perfections are exercised in love, and that is a great consideration. It makes His love and His mercy and His grace to be infinite, immutable, omnipotent and it gives a foothold to one who feels to be falling. It lays a foundation beneath a poor troubled sinner who is sinking in deep mire where there is no standing.

You see this rock, 'The God of all grace' the Most High, 'The God of all grace.' There is no grace anywhere else. It is divine grace, omnipotent grace, imperishable grace, sovereign grace. 'But the God of all grace.' It is the grace of His electing love; it is the regenerating grace of the Spirit, for the Trinity is here. 'The God of all grace,' God the Father in His everlasting electing love; God the eternal Son in all His redeeming grace; God the Holy Ghost in His quickening grace; and this blessed God exercising all that He is, and all His infinite power in a way of mercy for the salvation of His poor people. If the Holy Ghost should bless these first six words to those who are in the sufferings that are recorded in these two chapters, O how it would strengthen, as in the end of the text - would stablish, strengthen and settle them! It outweighs all; it swallows up all.

'But the God of all grace,' so that on behalf of His people He exercises His sovereign everlasting love; exercises the grace of His dear Son. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He was rich and for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich;" and the

exercise of the grace of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost that creates the graces of the Spirit in the new man of grace; sets up love, humility, patience. 'The God of all grace.' Why my friends, it will compose a poor troubled mind. I say again, look at it, look at these first six words and everything else in the world that troubles you, the devil who goes about seeking whom he may devour, the world in all its confusion and chaos and sin and darkness; your own fears, your own nature, a body of sin and death, your circumstances, your conditions, your trials, your conflicts. Your sorrows, put them in one side of the scale and look at the other, 'But,' BUT, that takes in everything, everything concerning you, that but; things that would sink you in despair 'But the God of all grace,' all of it. Every kind of grace; there is one kind of grace really, but that same grace is exercised in innumerable different ways. Some need the same God, the same grace in circumstances different from other people.

'But the God of all grace, who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.' Now this is where a poor troubled sinner may be brought to a standstill, they might say, I know I am in sufferings, that I am nothing but weakness, I am in deep distress, I am passing through fire, I have a poor, weak afflicted body, I can see all that - but I cannot come in here; I have no evidence that God has called me to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus. What are you going to do then? that is the point, what are you going to do? Are you going to give up and say, 'I have no evidence that I am called by grace, certainly no evidence that God has called me to His eternal glory, therefore I have no interest in the Gospel; and Christ has no interest in me; therefore I shall give it all up and try and bear things as well as I can.' Can you do it? Can you give it up? Is there no prayer in your heart, no upward lifting of an eye, no groan under your pain? And if you cannot speak is there not an upward glancing of an eye? Do you never say, 'I will look once more toward His holy temple?' You have no right to conclude that you will not be called unto His eternal glory until the Lord tells you so.

That beautiful 14th John, the Lord said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In Fathers house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you." You wait until He tells you that there is no mansion for you until you conclude on your own account. When you can give things up, when you can no longer groan, no longer pray, when you no longer wait upon the means of grace, when you can close the Word of God and never open it again, then there is some evidence that you have no interest in Christ. O but if there is that in your poor trembling heart that says -

*Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee. (Gadsby's 303)*

There is a call in that and there is this about it - there is only one object to which the Lord calls His people and that is, to His eternal glory; there is nothing lower than that. Therefore, says Paul, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There is no lower calling. He never calls His people to anything lower than His eternal glory, and it is just that which caused the apostle to say in all sobriety, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." We would not speak lightly, my friends, I know what it is to have great conflict in my mind with respect to my own case. When one realises that everything weakens except sin; not that the grace of God weakens; no, but this calling, 'Who hath called us to His eternal glory,' is an internal call.

In the first place, the work of the Holy Ghost begins internally. True religion begins in the heart, not in the head; and it begins in the heart and works outward into life, as fruits of the Spirit, and this inward call is very sweet, very blessed. In Zechariah it is said, "I will hiss for them and gather them, for I have redeemed them." It is that 'hiss'; that call; it has in it the blessed recognition of God in His love. He knows His people and it is a foundation; it stands sure, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." He chose them in eternity, He gave them to His dear Son in the covenant of grace, to redeem; and He knows them, knows when they are born. He knows when all men are born, but in a particular knowledge, the knowledge of His people is a knowledge of love, and it is the appointed time, a period known to God. A day, a time it may be of special circumstances, but that moment will come -

Not to propose, but call by grace. (Gadsby's 76)

O how beautiful is the analogy between this life of God communicated to the soul and a seed, an incorruptible seed, sown into the earth; and that is instantaneous, the life of God to those who are His. The moment comes, the seed is sown, and from that moment the seed will commence to germinate; it is a living, incorruptible seed.

'But the God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.' Look what He calls His people from, look what He calls them to. As though the apostle would say, if you look at these two things, see not only your sufferings, not only the wilderness through which you are passing, but look what you are called from with respect to yourself; look at the ruin that you are in in the fall, the death you are called from, from death unto life. You are called to enjoy all the riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Called out of abject misery and poverty unto the unsearchable riches of Christ. Called away from an inheritance of sin and death and hell, unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

'The God of all grace who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.' Why my friends, if the Holy Ghost should bring these realities into our souls we should wonder where our sorrow and our trouble is. It would be swallowed up in Him that hath called us to His eternal glory and it is by Christ Jesus. That is the purpose of sending His dear Son to call His people, by His grace, the fullness of this grace is in Christ Jesus, the fullness of salvation, the fullness of life, the fullness of merit, the fullness of power in heaven and in earth, the fullness of holiness, of righteousness, all in the Lord Jesus. This is a part of the God of all grace, and He brings, has brought, these immortal blessings down. O what a Gift He was! How full was the Gift, "How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things." All things, without exception. Why my friends, you will lose your misery, "Let strong drink be given unto him that is ready to perish" and this strong drink comes through the Person of God's dear Son. O the fullness that is in Him! it does strengthen your heart; it is amazing how low we can sink. I know it; sink down to a state of solemn destitution, a terrible blank, a great nought, nothing moving, death, darkness, distress. In a moment the Lord could change the scene by a touch, by a look, by a ray of light in your poor heart. 'The God of all grace.'

So that He has called His people away from everything that they are and everything that is in the world. Everything that would be their destruction unto everything that He is; unto everything that He possesses and unto everything that shall be their eternal life and blessedness.

'But the God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory.' Everything in the Gospel, everything in salvation, everything in the work of the Holy Ghost, everything in the things of God are eternal and those eternal things possessed by dying men - impossible except as the Lord declared of Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." His saints are immortal, not only have immortal souls as do the wicked; and that is solemn; but they have immortal joys, eternal life.

But they are called unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus; could never be called if it were not for the Mediator, God's incarnate Son. He came. He came to be the Father's Servant, "Behold My servant whom I uphold, Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth." O what a matchless condescension of the Lord Jesus who was equal with the Father and the brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person that He should condescend to be the Father's servant. But what to my mind is a greater mystery and condescension is that He is the Servant of unworthy sinners. For whom did He lay aside and veil His glory? For whom did He stoop to wretchedness and dust? For whom did He voluntarily allow wretched men to take Him, bring Him into a common hall and His judgement taken away from Him? For whom did He bear reproach and spitting? For whom did He suffer, bleed and die? For you who belong to Him. He was your servant, the mighty, the glorious Lord, your servant. He came. He knew who to call. Some He has called from the depths of sin. We do not know who is people are. On the Sabbath day they may be among the multitude desecrating the Sabbath down on our seashore; the Lord may see one in that multitude and hiss for him. The Holy Ghost communicates an incorruptible seed in that heart and mysteriously that work would be carried on.

Paul writing to the Ephesians in the 1st chapter prays that their eyes might be opened, that they may know what is the hope of their calling, the nature of it; and here Peter sets it before us, it is to His eternal glory, eternal rest, heaven itself. 'After ye have suffered awhile.' There is a needs be for it. "Though now, for a season if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation," - manifold sufferings, manifold trials. 'After ye have suffered awhile.' Paul takes up the same point to the Hebrews. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise." And there is a doing of the will of God in sufferings; "Wherefore, glorify ye the Lord in the fires." O the Lord is His own interpreter and as we are brought into these extremities He will make a way plain before us. It would help us to join with Paul and say, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." I remember waking up, about 40 years ago, one morning with that hymn singing in my heart,

*Thus make me willing, glorious Lamb,
To suffer all things for Thy name;
At last be where my Jesus is,
And rise to everlasting bliss. (Gadsby's 771)*

Glimpses of that will put your sufferings away, and it certainly will eclipse the world, it will bring you to the very gate of heaven. 'But the God of all grace, who hath called us to His eternal glory.' There may be this desire raised up under this consideration in some troubled soul and to turn this into a prayer is safe. Then you could read something that you may feel you dare not read; you could read the highest attainments of faith in the Scriptures prayer-wise. You could, those who feel to be less

than the least and the lowest and the vilest are warranted to turn the greatest experiences recorded in the Word of God into a prayer. Pray for it and if you feel that as yet you have never been called by grace, well, pray that the Lord will call you by grace, like dear old Sukey Harley, She prayed to be born again, There was only one reason why she did, because she was born again; and if you pray to be called by grace it is because you are! No one ever prayed for that, who has no grace in their heart. You may feel destitute, but the Lord regards the prayer of the destitute; and therefore, if you are destitute and pray, you are not destitute of prayer, and if you are not destitute of prayer you are not destitute of life.

O may the Lord come to His people and perfect that which concerns them! He alone can, that is complete His own work in their hearts. 'But the God of all grace.' All of it -don't take a bit off. You are not warranted to take anything off. He is a God of all grace. He says, "Cast all your care upon Him." Paul says, "We know that all things" - not all things but one, not all things but that mysterious thing concerning you, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose." 'After ye have suffered awhile.' It is the order in the economies of grace; it was so with the Lord Jesus. He suffered before He was glorified. He said to His disciples, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory." Carnal reason might say, why? Ah, but when the Holy Ghost teaches poor sinners, they look at the fall, look at their deserts instead of saying why, they will say, 'Lord, we are debtors, debtors to Thy grace. We forfeited mercy, we forfeited everything by our sins; when we look back at a long sin-stained life, my friends, we shall not say, why? "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" No, even in the midst of tribulation we shall confess it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not completely consumed, because His compassions fail not.

'After that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect,' not perfect in the flesh. Not perfect in the spirit completely. His people are perfectly justified, could not be more justified than they are; but they are not perfect in sanctification. Sanctification is a work of the Spirit that goes on all through life. Paul says to the Hebrews, "Let us go on unto perfection, grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." Well the inference in the text is this, that in these sufferings, those who are called to His eternal glory, the will of God is their justifications. He uses these means to purify, to refine, to separate the dross from the gold, the chaff from the wheat, and therefore He uses these afflictions as a sieve. "He will sift the house of Israel among many nations, yet not a grain of wheat shall fall to the ground." But there is a necessity to be put into the sieve, and a sieve is of no use unless it is riddled. You don't hold a sieve still, you riddle it and it is the riddling, the shaking, that is the sufferings; but the sieve is in the hand of the Lord as is the cup that is full of mixture, The wine is red, but He pours out of the same - and when a poor troubled sinner sees that cup, though bitter, in the hand of the Lord Jesus, and that He pours out of the same it makes it bearable; for

*Our sorrows in the scale He weighs,
And measures out our pains.*

(Gadsby's 132)

'After that ye have suffered awhile make you perfect.' Another way His people are made perfect is this, "Let patience have her perfect work." Another way His people are made perfect is, they have enduring grace and endure unto the end. Another way they are made perfect is this, as Paul says in the beautiful 8th Romans, "Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that

loved us," and another way that His people are made perfect - we sing about it and it has been made a comfort to His poor people, and it comes in with the text, the eternal glory,

*Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done; (Gadsby's 968)*

It will make you perfect. He will complete the work of salvation in your heart, the work of grace in your soul. 'Make you perfect, stablish.' To stablish is to mature, to bring to maturity, "that we are no longer children tossed about by every wind of doctrine," to be stablished and settled is really the same thing. It is to be rooted and grounded in the love of God in Christ.

'Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' O it is a mercy to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. When He sends help from heaven and at the same time strengthens you out of Zion; and He uses the means of grace to strengthen His people. Has He ever strengthened you, strengthened your hope? Has He ever in His blessed Gospel attracted your faith? Has He ever dispelled your darkness by lifting upon you the light of His countenance? Has He ever strengthened you by making over to you some gracious promises so that whereas you have felt you could never stand another day; has He has whispered in your heart, "As thy days thy strength shall be." This is the work of the Spirit. These are the secrets of the Lord known only to those whom He has called to His eternal glory.

Do you know anything of these things we have so feebly tried to speak about? Could you say, Well, I am not a foreigner or a stranger to that language? Have you walked in some of these footsteps of the flock? If you have you will walk in them all. If you have the least, the very least touch from the Lord of life and glory, you will have all of Him. If He has every softened your heart you will go to heaven. I mean this, the Lord will do nothing for a sinner unless He does it all, you cannot have a little of Christ, you must have nothing or have Him all; and O how this Gospel does strengthen and settle a poor sinner, and you will say - "To Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."