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Sermon Preached at Sesynes Hill May 26, 1969 By Mr J. Tyler

Acts 20, 22-23 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

We are well aware that this is a lengthy text for one service, but it cannot be divided, it is a complete whole. And so we trust to present to you by the grace of God the vital subject matter contained therein. You well know this forms a blessed portion of the apostle's farewell service to the church at Ephesus, and in particular to the elders, and he gives a solemn charge to them. One thing I would wish to underline concerning his charge to them is this, that he impresses upon them a number of things, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God." But this is the word that is always impressed upon my mind - ministers of God, let us remember this, "Which He hath purchased with His own blood." to recognise the true value of the people to whom we minister who fear God, he tells us they are the purchase of Christ's agony. How exceedingly precious are the people of God to Him! And I would keep this in constant view.

But now in particular let us desire to keep to the words read. And how shall we summarise the text? It is a blessed example, especially to the Lord's servants, and to all His dear people. And it is a blessed example because one vital thing shone forth in the whole of his godly life, his faithful ministry, his blessed apostleship; and what was it? A very large measure of the grace of God, and in that measure of the grace of God given to him was this, he conformed to his blessed Lord and Master. So great was the measure of grace that he

could say with unfeigned lips "I am what I am by the grace of God." So great was this measure of grace that he could speak of being dead to sin by the body of Christ, so that, as Christ died for sin, for his sin, he was made dead to sin. Well, what a wonderful thing is the divine effects of the grace of God; and we see it in several facets and aspects in this Scripture. He commences by saying, "And now behold" the time has come. I am not my own, I am in the Lord's hand, and His blessed Spirit so directs me through the course of my spiritual life and ministry. It is a wonderful thing to be led by the Spirit of God. He bears this out in the 8th to the Rom. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." He was led by the Spirit of God, his whole life, his movements in the holy land and in Asia, they were prompted, activated, motivated by the Spirit of God; doors were opened, doors were shut closed, he was under the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God led him. Are we thus led, graciously led? But there is one thing in particular here, he says, "And now" "And now behold" As though he would say, the time has come for perhaps one of the most important steps and journeys in all my life, "And now behold." I will tell you, friends, exactly how I feel in looking at this word, "And now behold." What should we behold? Should we behold merely the apostle Paul's journeys, taking ship and going from Ephesus to Jerusalem, 400 or 500 miles, shall we just behold him, the great apostle of the Gentiles about to take this journey? No, we shall behold Christ. Christ is here in my subject, the blessed Lord Himself. And why did he journey to Jerusalem? Why is this the overwhelming wish of his soul to go now to Jerusalem? Why? To follow his blessed Lord, and to enter into deeper communion with

Him in His sufferings. I believe the apostle felt that the day was at hand when he should not only drink deeply of the cup of suffering, he honourably suffered for His sake, but that he would enter into a fuller experience of blessing, of consolation, of divine favour, of communion with his suffering Saviour. "And now behold! Surely a word that expounds this journey to Jerusalem is that very wonderful word that we have, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection; and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." He would go to Jerusalem. That is why I read a few verses from the next chapter. What did he experience at Jerusalem? They went about to kill him. They did his blessed Lord. They beat him, he was bound with two chains, and they cried, "Away with him." The very same words that they cried concerning Christ, "Away with Him, crucify Him." "And now behold." He went to Jerusalem, he must tread the path of suffering to enter into this deeper union with his Saviour, and there he saw the richness of the blood.

Now there is a notable word here, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem." "bound in the spirit. What is this "bound"? Was he in bondage? No. No. certainly not. No spiritual bonds was he in the experience of whatever. What is this? I go constrained in the spirit, willing bondage. The meaning of bondage is constraint by the Spirit. That is how the Lord leads His beloved people, and His servants, He constrains them. Their spirit is constrained. And he was constrained in the spirit to go to Jerusalem. What does all this amount to? One thing, "Follow Me." What does He say to His servants and to His people? "Follow Me." That does not mean we are going to have an easy path, a smooth path. It means this, that we are going to follow Him and have

fellowship with Him, and be nearer to Him, and, "Through floods and flames if Jesus ^{leads,} ~~goes,~~ I'll follow where He goes." "Follow Me," That is it. "I go constrained in the spirit unto Jerusalem." What I feel to see just at this stage is this, that the path of obedience may well be the path of suffering to you. Going to Jerusalem may mean fellowship with ~~with~~ the Lord in His sufferings in a greater measure. This is where the blessing is for your soul. You take these wonderful words that he uttered to the Phil. he said, "If there be ~~any~~ therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies," Where do you experience that? In fellowship with Him in His sufferings, this is where "As the afflictions abound, so the consolations abound also." Consolation, comfort, fellowship, bowels and mercies.

Now let us fix and speak of this, what I feel in my soul is, that I preach to souls that are coming, or have come, into a deeper measure of fellowship with the Lord in His sufferings, into trouble. You are full of trouble, but you are not seeking an easy path, you are not seeking that which is pleasing to your flesh; your great overwhelming wish is fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and so, constrained in the spirit you go to Jerusalem. Now are we under this blessed constraining power of the Spirit? "Now behold I go bound unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there." They are concealed as to their exact nature. But my friends, if you make enquiries on this, I will say this to you, you will rest on one thing, your times are in His hand. When Mr Gosden was taken seriously ill at Maidstone, and was transferred to hospital, where he died shortly after, that was the word God made so blessed to him, and

brought him peace, "My times are in Thy hand." This is peace.

"Not knowing what shall befall me there." The future is concealed, hidden. You know the general ^{nature} ~~outline~~ of what is before you if you are the Lord's, but not the details. The Lord has mercifully concealed it, but may your spirit rest in that, "My times are in Thy hand." But he says, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." I believe that brings peace.

I now notice how this with the apostle was a fulfilment of the word spoken to Ananias concerning him, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My sake! And how shall we adequately present this? He had been so strong and active, and in the forefront in the devil's service in the persecution of the church, but it seems to me under the influence of grace there was just this vigorous wish in his soul, as it were, to lose his life for Christ's sake and the gospel's, because he believed this is where the blessing was. And it is, it is nowhere else, it is as you enter into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ you realise the divine blessing.

"And now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." I may speak first of ~~his~~ a godly, gracious resolve, nothing could turn him away from it, He was moved by the Spirit. I go to Jerusalem. I wonder if I might mention one thing in my little experience, and I want to do that discreetly, but I hope I can come in here. In 1932 I was in my own city London for a period of training. I had gone from Sussex back to London. At the end of that period I had, speaking naturally, a great opportunity in the earth, a wonderful

opportunity. And not only so, there were many things that were congenial to my flesh; I had some respect and honour naturally there, whereas ^{where} I had been brought up in my childhood because of certain things, loyalty partly to one minister. I felt despised and under reproach. That is what I was in Sussex, I felt despised because many spoke against this servant of God, but the Lord had blessed his ministry to my soul, and I was loyal to him, and so I bore the reproach and I felt ^{despised,} ~~reproached.~~ Now in London there were wonderful opportunities both in the profession, and also I had respect and honour before the people, and they had said to me, 'Why don't you stay with us in London? And they almost tried to persuade me to stay there. And then in the college, or institution, ^{it} they said to me, 'What are you going to do? I said, Well, I am going back to Sussex. They said this to me, 'Tyler, you are a fool. You have all these golden opportunities in the city and you are going back with no prospect at all! But I had this, I was in the spirit I believe Paul was in, I was constrained by the Spirit to go back to Jerusalem, to be despised and to suffer. Do you know what this is? In those days to go back ^{to me} meant that very thing, to go back among some people that manifested a spirit of enmity to me and hatred. But I was constrained and nothing could move me, because I felt persuaded it was the will of God. And so I proved it to be. So I can speak of this with some degree of feeling and authority. I know what it is, my friends, to choose rather to suffer affliction. Now would you take this step in going to Jerusalem? You knew when you walked in it, you knew when you set out in that journey it would mean bonds and afflictions. But you were constrained by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and that is where you are, and that is the place.

it may well be the place where you are crucified, but nothing will move you, you are constrained powerfully. So it shows that this child of God, or this minister, does not take the path, or the journey, of his own choosing that looks pleasant and easy, with golden opportunities. No, you will take the path that is rough and rugged, ^{and persecuting,} and there will be that one thing with you, it is to be near your Lord and to fulfil that which He has committed to you and to be a faithful steward in His kingdom, you ~~not~~ stand in your lot - not the lot of ease, no. Now my friends, I have ventured to name this one thing concerning myself. Is there an easy path? What about you, my friend, your mind, and your life, what path have you taken? The constraining influence of the Holy Ghost will be keeping you to follow Christ, which means suffering. But this is His will, and this He will sanctify to bring you into this abundant fellowship with Him. This is where you will have the tokens of mercies, the consolation, the comfort of love. This where you will learn something of this sweet Person, and something of what it cost Him to come and tread this ~~earth~~ path to Jerusalem for you. He left His city above, the starry heavens, as it were, and came down and went to Jerusalem. Are you going? He went there to Jerusalem, His face was set to go to Jerusalem. The disciples had very little understanding of it, He told them the plan, but they were in ignorance. And even Peter, though he had a blessed knowledge of His Lord and Saviour, and gave a noble testimony, yet when He spoke about going to Jerusalem he said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." And that is just what they said to Paul. And we read in the next chapter, one took off his girdle and said, This will be done to the man that owns this girdle. And they tried to persuade him not to go.

(with right intentions of course) Do you know to follow Him, to go to Jerusalem means fellowship with Christ? I do not know what is before you, but some of you are going to Jerusalem to suffer, and some of you are there, and you will suffer. But none of these things will move you. I often look back on those later months in that year in Jerusalem, and I stand amazed because I did not realize the great power that was influencing my soul. But I do now, I feel I know now it was only the constraining power of God that took me back there, and He took me to Jerusalem. This is it.

Now my friends, you have got the confirmation that this is where you are you know, in the path of your sufferings. But none of these things move you, because you stand on the rock, and you have the everlasting covenant in your soul; and this is where you will finish your course with joy. And that means you have received of the Lord Jesus Christ to testify the gospel of the grace of God. I often feel that this will be a test for all who are concerned about walking in ^a right paths, the right path goes with a fellowship with Christ, and it means suffering, much suffering. And it is opposite, entirely opposite to your natural understanding, or choice, it is opposite, it is not what you would pick, it is not the smooth path, it is not the wonderful opportunity - as it seems to your nature. It is the mourning path, the path of suffering, but it is a path of God's choosing, and you will be constrained by the Spirit. Nothing else could have caused you to take the journey, and nothing else could sustain you there but the presence of the Lord. Well, I cannot promise you ease. I can promise you two things, suffering, but not in the abstract, not a negative form of suffering, but the suffering

the apostle himself speaks of when he referred to Moses in the list of the worthies - and of course he knew it himself, he said, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ" ~~greater~~ the very worst part of it to your flesh - "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Of course Egypt, as you know, was the foremost country of the world when Moses made his choice by grace, with all his advantages in this world Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. The whole thing is the issue, the objective, the hereafter, "Having respect unto the recompense of the reward." Now this is it.

"Now behold" by grace, by the Spirit of God, by His influence, according to His will, for my blessing and benefit, and for the benefit of the church of God, and for the benefit of all the people of God as they shall read the Scriptures of truth, beholding what shall be written of me for honour, that I followed Christ - that is it. And this shall be written down of you for honour, that you are willing to choose, to follow your blessed Lord to Jerusalem for the two chains, the bonds, the smiting, the scourge, the beatings, and the "away with him, crucify him" and ^{for} all this you went to Jerusalem, and nothing could turn you, you wanted to get to the very heart of the suffering in fellowship with Him. Because this is where all the blessing flows. It is this that makes the ministry rich. If you say, 'I do love that ministry, it is so rich, it is so abundant in the spirit' Do you know the path that minister treads? He goes to Jerusalem, he is in fellowship with a suffering Saviour, he knows the very heart of God, he knows the nature of Christ. This is where the blessing is. And there are two sides to it; he is made dead to

sin, the world, and the flesh. And O how close to the heart of God He is! So, are you going to Jerusalem? Or are you there to suffer? They tried to persuade him, (as they did the Lord) he said, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? I am willing to go, not only to be bound, but to die for His sake." Willing to die! "Not knowing the things that shall befall me there, saying that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." The Holy Spirit revealed it to him, bonds and afflictions. But what are bonds and afflictions if your soul is favoured with holy liberty? What is suffering if you are close to Christ? What is distress and persecution if you can say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"? What is persecution and trouble, reproach and shame heaped upon you - that is, rightly so, for His sake, - if you can say, "I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better"? You see, this is it. After all, you take one that fears God, what is the one thing that is with you? It is to have Christ in your heart. It is to know the abundance of His love, to be near Him, close to Him, to have His divine smile, His favour, His rich blessing. I am sure this is the ambition here in a child of God that is following closely in the footsteps of the Master. "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Well now, some of you know this path, you are constrained by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, and that is why some of you are in the place of your suffering, the land of your affliction, the place where ~~you~~ ^{they} are crying out, "Away with him," where they bring forth the chains, where you are beaten, where you are suffering.

Then he said, "But none of these things move me." O what godly

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gracious establishment there is here, "None of these things move me." I am not deterred, I am not turned aside, none of these things move me. I am so established upon this glorious foundation, none of these things move me. He was that wise master builder who laid the foundation, he knew that blessed foundation, he was built upon it, he held it ministerially. None of these things move me.

And also because of that glorious object, the prize, that blessed mark that is set before me. And because of this he writes this down, and he says this, - as we were meditating yesterday, "the two states of Christ, His state of humility, and His state of exaltation, - He was following Him in this state of humility, he was willing to suffer because he knew his Lord would exalt him, the Lord would honour him. "None of these things move me. Let me be very close to my Saviour. He was despised and rejected, I am willing to be. He suffered, He gave His life. "I do not count my life near unto myself." I have got a blessed object, this is the mark, this is the prize. Let me fulfil my ministry which the Lord has given me, and stand a faithful steward to the day of my death. Why, I am committing this that He has committed to me into His blessed hands, and knowing I have been upheld by ~~the right hand of~~ His righteousness omnipotent hand. Amen.