

Evening Lesson. John 16.

05-01-1975

TEXT JAMES 1 V2

Just to refer to the blessed point and fact/in spiritual exercise and trial Before God for a New Year's message, this word, both as a prophecy and bless promise annexed to it, dawned on my spirit. Undoubtedly for the travail of the year we shall know just what it is to fall into divers temptations. There is this most remarkable exhortation that baffles completely human understanding. It is an exhortative word to the living family of God, and a word that is absolutely opposite to all human calculations. It is when we fall into various tribulations, and this is not a pleasant word to the flesh: it never has been, and it never will be to human nature. Flesh and blood would seek to find a diversion so as to avoid divers tribulations, and not pass through them. If we could anticipate divers tribulations all the forces of nature available would be harnessed in the greatest endeavour to put a tunnel under, a bridge over, or to know a method of diversion. I must tell you there is only one way for a true Christian. There is no way round, or over, or under: the only way is through. In any case, the whole complex matter is such concerning the hand of Almighty God that we are impotent. "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" We fall into divers temptations.

So far you find your spirit in agreement with what has been promulgated. I think I can recollect in my very early days in life I fondly imagined I should find a diversion, or that it would be possible to avoid many of the troubles the Lord's elderly people mentioned. I will speak a rustic, homely word to you. I remember an old minister saying; "You know, it is those who have large families who know what troubles are." I found myself resenting this. I seemed to say, in any case you were the instruments in having a

family, and so on. They were early days, and possibly some of you thought with your inherited superior judgment or talents you would become immune from some of those troubles. How many have thought, - I know there are various distinctions must be drawn, - you thought, when the children were small and you had been training them up in a religious way and they appeared to respond wonderfully; when you looked on older parents with growing up families in deep trouble; "I shall never come into these troubles. I shall make a better job of it; I shall have control over them." That is self-righteousness. Let it be admitted that there are some who have a greater degree of discipline; more control over their children. You thought; "They have come to pitfalls, troubles, and distresses. We shall make an excellent job of it and be largely immune from them." God grant that you may be preserved from the major sorrows some come into. They are early days, and these thoughts stem from a self-righteous spirit. "I shall be able to steer clear of obstacles and rock better than others." You imagine you will find a diversion, or a bridge, and never fall into divers temptations. I have proved it is vastly different. I have failed, so I have not a leg to stand on, but I certainly have not been successful.

Let us look at it in a different light. I have not been successful in piloting my craft clear of troubles. I say; "My times are in thy hand." There is a falling into divers temptations. I will give you a guide line for the year. So long as you fear God, and you may know if you fear God, - if you are a praying soul; if you love God and His truth, and the things of God have priority. You may not be able to speak fluently as to doctrine, as a theologian of the principles of the oracles of God. You know if you fear God

I must say to you to the glory of God, I am deeply touched because there are many in this sacred place who fear God, and it becomes therefore, a holy joy and pleasure to hope to be favoured to feed your souls and bring to you a message from God. - There are a number who fear God in the congregation as well as in the Church. - I rather feel the things in the Text, - falling into divers temptations, may be in the hand of God for us to count it all joy, because it will be the means of bringing you out. You will be pressed, squeezed, and in deeper trouble. God will be first: you will live at the Throne of Grace, and as God blesses you, you will say; "O what shall I do my Saviour to praise?" We shall probably count it all joy in the Church of God. There is a blessed point of truth I have tried to minister to you over the years, and I will refresh your minds concerning it. The most precious souls to a Church are those united to the Church in a day of trouble. They do not come in on a wave crest of prosperity and joy, but in a trough of trouble as Ruth with Naomi. Ruth came in in a day of trouble. Think of the value of Ruth! So I have been thinking recently, there may be only one brought in in a day of trouble, and it would be a most precious soul. You will say;

"Intreat me not to leave thee." -You will say it to Christ and His Church. Thinking of the trouble in the earth, this nation, and in our paths, those who are joined to the people of God in trouble are most precious. "Count it all joy." Over the years of my pastorate I have observed this in a special way, and I have counted it all joy. Take the narrative in the most beautiful Book of Ruth. There was nothing to draw or attract Ruth naturally. She was a poor, sad, sorrowful, broken-hearted, cast down Naomi. She did not want to speak: she did not know how to. They two went on silently. She was so broken down, stripped: I suppose we could say naturally she was disillusioned, yet there was something supreme that did attract Ruth. These are precious souls.

So as helped, I will get over to you the guide line: 'divers temptations'. The prophecy is rather that it will be a year of divers tribulations, and I have nothing else to offer you on the level of this planet. Before we come to work it out I will just give you God's message to you in it. You say; "I have fallen straight into it." I have heard people say over the years; "I could not do the wrong thing." That means that all they put their hand to prospers. The day comes when one falls,- so unexpectedly for the first time; not so much after. I hope to go over the ground, if the Lord help me. This is the pattern: various tribulations attended with varying degrees of Satanic power. I will quote the Hymnwriter; "Thy soul, full of woe, shall pass as through hell." Some of you will think this is an exaggeration. You say; "Surely not." Oh yes, it is! "pass as through hell." When you get to this section of the journey and various seasons, the devil will make his greatest attempt to wreck and destroy you. If you said; "What does it spell out?" I do not know.- Mental illness for some: many have known for the balance of mind to be broken,- many tragic things. "Thy soul, full of woe, shall pass as through hell."

The message to you for the year concerning falling into divers forms of tribulation is; "Count it all joy." You say; "This crosses all human calculation: it is impossible." Liquidity problems, difficulties, sore things have almost broken my spirit and filled me with anxiety through every day and night. How can I count it all joy?" This is the word of God for you who fear Him. I will postulate one thing: predictions in the expectations of men generally, and this includes us naturally; the flesh,-are usually incorrect. As we had in the address at the Prayer Meeting; "For my thoughts are not your thoughts." You can reckon if there are a series of apprehensions in the mind and you come to a deduction you can reckon it will prove to be wrong. If you come to a survey of promising, pleasant things, as you look over them and see how flourishing they are, and there is a very pleasant picture in your mind in the prospect, it is usually incorrect. If you think you have a bed of roses before you,- a wonderful prospect on earth, often you will finish up in a bed of nettles, and God shows you the foolish creature you are, that man should seek nothing after Him.

Things affects you another way: things are rather dark, and you feel afraid of the dark path and trials, and you come to a deduction and to an assessment concerning the future in the matter, and usually it proves incorrect. It is marvellous. You look on a day, and ~~you~~ you think it will be a dreadful day. You fear opening your eyes in the morning. You call on God, you plead, groan, cry, and the day proves a bright, good one. You ~~look~~<sup>look</sup> on a day and think; "Wonderful! we will get off to the green fields and it will be filled with pleasure. The day comes,- the Lord give you to enjoy all that is lawful: if you are setting store by it God mars it, and your expectation is incorrect. You will appoint: God will disappoint. Am I speaking the truth?

We will apply this to ~~the world scene~~ 1975. Our minds survey the world scene. We know the threat of Communism inadequately: we know how fine the balance of peace is in the Middle East; the dreadful problems concerning the world currency, and the grave danger of ruin. The predictions will prove to be incorrect. If God has a praying people there will be a bright star, and the same with you in your personal lot. This may be a crisis year for you. God can appear in a way you never dreamed of. Do not let it stop there. Give your honours and homage to Christ. I am saying to you, and if I have got it over to you, whatever the prospects or predictions of man and the flesh, they are usually incorrect. That which has caused you trouble and exercise will yield the brightest future. I wanted to convey that concept to you.

So you get two things together that seem so opposite, and they are, as viewed by natural sagacity. Divers temptations, and a word of exhortation, so there is a message for you. In the dark troubles you come into God has given a guide line. You are to go back to your arithmetic: this is very necessary, even in an elementary way. You must do your reckoning; addition; add together all this trouble and trial you fall into, and as the Lord sanctifies it you find the answer to the sum: it is simply joy. "Count it all joy." You will say; "How can it be defined and evaluated? How can I count it all joy? I have fallen straight into it." It means to enter into the doctrine by spiritual experience: not in a cold, doctrinal way. The doctrine I would advance to you is, a Christian is taught to count it all joy. What foundation have we for it? For instance, if you broke a leg, or came into trouble or calamity, something that affected you deeply, how could you count it all joy?

There are three aspects of the dimensions of joy really. The first is, and I hope you are listening to this; I want to get it over to you. The first aspect is, falling into divers temptations for exclusive brethren, the family of God, there is one thing God will give you to know, perhaps not immediately that all is sent in love and faithfulness. That is the root of joy. If you know things that are trying have been sent to you for the eternal good of your soul in divine love and Covenant faithfulness, that is a foundation for

joy: it must be. I want to convey one thought: what a wonderful and joyful matter it is if the Lord deals with us here in mercy for our sins, and not in the pit. You can see that. However severely He deals it will be moderate. If the Lord is dealing with you in the earth in love and mercy, it is an occasion for joy because He is not waiting until after death to consign you to the pit. That is the first facet.

The second is, you say; "How can I reckon this joy?" I will answer you in a simple way: you will prove it. When you come into your trouble and Jesus Himself draws near and goes with you, and as you pass through the waters He is with you, and in the fire "the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. When Christ comes in your trouble you will have joy; you will be full of joy. That is the second facet of the dimensions of joy. Things in the realm of the Spirit are opposite to those in the realm of the flesh.

What is the third facet? This: having a solid basis and such joy,-

"Such a peace can never miss,  
But produce a grateful mind  
To a God so vastly kind." (594)

Having a solid basis all your troubles will issue in joy, here and eternally "Count it all joy." When I come into trouble, and there is more in the path as we get closer to the Kingdom,-I do not know what it is to be out of it. Take a specific trouble we come into: this often brings a hush on me; "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." All things. You may say you do not see it: why expect to? You must wait. You will prove it and know it in after years.

So you have got your guide line for this year: divers forms of tribulation reckon them all joy from the three facets; because they are sent in faithfulness and love for the good of your soul: because Christ Himself will draw near and go with you: because you will have joy in trouble. There are the bitter waters of Marah and the tree cast into them:-the gibbet of wood; His cross and Passion. He will bring you out into a wealthy place, and you will know the miracle of two things. First, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." and the second, "This truth to rejoice in, The Lord will appear. Thanks be to God. Amen.