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Two Sermons preached by Pastor J.W.Tyler
on Sunday, November 25. 1973.

Morning Lesson. Acts 7. vv.51-60 & 8. vv.1-25.

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.
Philippians 1. 12.

Our own apostle Paul is here writing from Rome where he was a prisoner and in a state of ^{INCARCERATION} ~~imprisonment~~ and suffering. How wonderful that his sufferings could be qualified and defined! It was that he suffered for Christ's sake. It was therefore very honourable and blessed suffering. It was not for his sins or misconduct, or folly or foolishness. He suffered as a Christian, and great glory is in that suffering. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4.16)

I want to make a point as I open. This was the fulfilling of the word of the Lord concerning him when he was called and regenerated. The Lord said; "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9.15.16). If we look to the other side of the scene we find him returning from Paradise in an wholly unique spiritual experience. As he returned he knew what it was to experience a painful, lacerating thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him; so opposite to all one would anticipate; and how he used all his spiritual energy in endeavouring to persuade God to remove it! and some of you may be in the position. I would judge a few here have known what it is to be caught up to the heavens and to receive a blessing unparalleled in the remaining days of life. You concluded already you were being translated to His heavenly, everlasting, glorious Kingdom, and that you would never know the miseries of the world, distress or temptation again. Returning to the earth a thorn awaited you, a cross, and you used all your spiritual energy, and possibly prayed for hours

together in endeavouring to receive from God an answer that would satisfy your mind that this would be removed.

I am just surveying the ground and speaking as led. How many have thus really endeavoured to persuade God to remove the cause of distress and suffering, and yet in the midst of all felt a deep sense of realisation that all your language was futile? You were not in harmony with the mind of the Spirit, with the will of God; you had no real access. Presently the answer came; "My grace is sufficient for thee." What does that spell out? That you will have something to endure, to bear, to pass through as long as the Lord sees fit: to take the subject broadly, as long as mortal life lasts. This is disagreeable to human nature: it is not palatable, and we would gladly be rid of it as creatures. But "My grace is sufficient for thee." This may be a word for some of you.

The Lord continued: "For my strength is made perfect in weakness." It is not pleasant to know a thorn, or a cross: it is exceedingly painful, but when you have a promise of the all-sufficiency of divine grace,- and "My grace" may be translated,- "The Lord Himself is sufficient for thee."- if you have Christ you will be happy, submissive, and all will fall out unto the furtherance of the gospel in you and through you. The apostle so saw the wisdom of the divine economy and the government of Christ over him and in him that he took pleasure in afflictions for Christ's sake. The flesh cannot take pleasure in afflictions: the soul does, for there is a secret. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

So that is the other side of the scene,- the Lord's prophecies and revelations: "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." And Christ has not left,- as I have often observed to you,- the Lord never leaves suffering as relating to His people in the abstract. It is always married to love, blessing, deliverance, comfort, support. It is a marriage: these things are not put asunder. So the best things of Christ's Kingdom are associated here with the greatest forms of suffering. You never find the great blessings of the Kingdom associated with earthly pleasure and prosperity: they are associated and married to trouble, the cross, fire and flood, and the two are complemented in the economy of God.

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Have we been so long time in the school of Christ and not learned this? Are we established in the doctrine of the cross, of His cross, your cross following Him, denying self, and going after Him?

I will pause here. You become cognisant eventually of the fact that at your feet is your cross: it is not the cross of your sister or your brother; it is yours; formed, moulded, balanced by wisdom infinite: it is your cross. It is not the cross of your neighbour, or of those in the same pew: it is your cross.

"Poor angry bosom, hush,
Nor discontented grow;
But at thy own sad folly blush,
Which breedeth all the woe.

If sick, or lame, or poor,
Or by the world abhorred,
Whatever cross lies at thy door,
It cometh from the Lord." (335)

Are you with me? or with this truth? Are you living in it? I shall dilate further on this because I feel a measure of liberty in it. Your cross will be associated with your greatest blessings and gifts. If you said one, or ten, twenty, thirty years ago; "Look what God has done for me! I am joyful." Of course you were: you did not see your cross then. After a while the Lord changed your countenance, and you see with your greatest blessings you had a cross. It is the path of God's own leading. If you said to me; "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. It is wonderful. Look at the confirmation I have received!" and your face shine. O yes! I join with you in your gladness. The step is taken: you are happy. You know the step is of God, and after a year or two you find you have got a cross in it. Can you contradict? If you said a step ~~was~~ ordered by the Lord and you walked in it with no trouble, how close are you to Christ? You do not get near Him because "If any man will come after me, let deny himself, and take up his cross." (Matt.16.24) Do you see? Where are you? I am aware of the fact that the human mind with the permeation of trouble and trial in the environment you live in reaches

out after what means euphoria. You think a different set-up in your circumstances, the climate, the people and whatnot, may produce a state of complete satisfaction to your mind. It is like seeing through pink spectacles: it is day-dreaming. It is a mirage, an optical illusion. You think you see something wonderful in the distance: as fast as you run to it, it proves evasive and unreal. "The Lord reigneth." (Psa.93.1) and "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Prov.16.33) and you are in the path God has chosen for you, and you have your cross. How long will you search for Utopia? How long will you reach out after a thing that is only a mirage? It is so unreal: it has no place in the Book of God for His people. It is a mercy to know you are where God placed you and to recognise there is a cross, and to be made willing to take it up and to follow your Lord. See the issue. "the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel that is to say; the furtherance of the work of grace in your own soul and through you to the souls of others.

"Furtherance" here, a Greek word, means the work of a pioneer cutting a way through the bush. Furtherance, extension. That is how the Lord works in us: things fall out, happen, issue, take place. You were singing; "Sovereign Ruler of the skies," and by the manner of your singing you believe it. Things therefore take place, issue, must be, result. So Paul tells us at an advanced stage of his life what the net result is. He looked on the things that happened, and gave a wonderful body of divinity to his own spiritual children. "I am at Rome. I was once over there by the river side, a free man. God brought me to you. I was preaching the gospel to you by the river of God, and I was free and the Lord blessed my ministry. There were the founder members of the Church and the Church has grown. It is a loving united Church. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Now I am at Rome, a prisoner. I have a chain. Am I miserable? depressed? I am not free. I cannot come to Asia, to Philippi. I am in Rome. Am I miserable? I am confined largely: I cannot travel. Day and night I am chained to a soldier. Am I miserable? No: I would ye should understand." What are you to understand? "Brethren,-because we are close, so you can feel with me; the things which happened unto me.- These things

have taken place. I am a prisoner, chained to a soldier. I have no liberty I want you to understand that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." That is the basis of the subject. If you fear God, the things that happen to you by the sanctifying grace of God will fall out to the furtherance of the gospel, - opposite to what the devil designed. The great adversary could have said: "It is a good thing I have got Paul in prison. I have stopped his labours. He is confined. That is a good thing." Paul says: "I want you to understand that this has issued to the furtherance of the gospel." Let me say ~~xxxxxxx~~ explicitly, this is not singular to Paul. It is a principle that applies to all the family of God in every generation and age. "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." The most mysterious, unexpected, opposite things, this is how they will issue.

"Fallen out," is translated as "issue" It is a terminal thing really: it is not as you see it initially, immediately: it is in the long run, the long term view; if you like, the end result. Things have fallen out unto the furtherance of the gospel. Wonderful word! I wonder if I can take up this point and turn it the other way. What if since the birth of Christ and His preaching, and the accomplishing of the work of redemption and His ascension into heaven, the pouring out of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost and the anointing of the holy apostles and all His ministers through nearly two thousand years, - what if it had ^{been} all a path of ease? if there had been no opposition, no persecution, trouble, prison, no experience of suffering It could not have proved to be real. That is saying a lot. How do I know? Because who are Christians? Followers of Christ. Was His path a path of ease? Was He despised and rejected of men? Did He suffer being tempted? What was His path? and what does the apostle Paul say? "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8.17) So if it had been all ease it would have been unreal. It never has been. It has been said that the ashes of the martyrs were the seeds of the Church by which the Church was extended. So whatever you read in the New Testament, see how things issued, - the persecutions and troubles of the saints of God. Turn to the Old Testament and read of Israel; the more they were persecuted the more they grew.

Pharaoh thought he would subdue them; he would resist what was the purpose of God. It has been the same with the Jews all through history. Though they have been carried away captive and dispersed through the world the Jews control finance in the whole world and ^{none} can dispute it. A Jew will rise from nothing to be a great man. This has happened many times in the city of London, But the spiritual aspect is, the more they were persecuted the more they grew. They were tortured and massacred, ye look at the economy of God in the revival of the Jewish nation, because they are His own people. See the economy of God. The more a child of God is persecuted the more he grows.

The apostle knew what he was enunciating because he had been the leader seeking to exterminate the sect. Did he? Never, O the wonders of grace! We must go back to our Saviour. They thought when they had crucified Him, "This is it."

"He conquered when He fell.

"Tis finished!" said His dying breath,
And shook the gates of hell." (168)

They thought that was the end of Him. We see "His glory and renown."-- and the poor, weak, defenceless company, the followers of Christ they could not exterminate. O the effect the martyrdom of Stephen ultimately had on Paul! He could see the man in the pit: he could see his accusers. He could see the boulders, and the poor man in complete submission to martyrdom. He could see the light of his countenance, but the point was, what a word! He saw him kneeling down and calling on God, saying; "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" And what a word! What did he say? He saw the angry men hurling boulders, and he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this he fell asleep. Amen.