

J. W. Sperling - Tyler

Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Evening, November 3, 1974.

Lesson. 1 Peter 1.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7. vv.13-14.

Just briefly by way of introduction, I will mention the amazing fact named in the service of the morning when we remarked on the character of the blessing bestowed on the apostle John in exile on the Isle of Patmos when the Lord opened to him the heavens,- Paradise. So being in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, he came from this planet to glory itself; to the third heavens; to the glorious place to which Christ had ascended and now reigns.

There are some very encouraging points to make: one is to remind you ~~xxx~~ about the Throne of God,- and this will mean something to those in trouble; he saw a rainbow. The rainbow is expounded to you at length in the opening Book of the Bible, and we have the Covenant of The Lord with the human race that He would never inundate the earth, that is, the whole world, nor destroy it by water again, and that when there is a cloud over the earth we should see the bow in the cloud. I am disposed to name this, (I am speaking spontaneously) because it means much to those in tribulation, and I will name this to you concerning the cloud;

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my soul has always stood;
His lovingkindness, O how good!" (9)

Whether it is concerning you personally, or in your family, in business, in a way you cannot disclose to fellow mortals, for those who fear God and consequently seek the Lord in prayer, - and as you realised in our united petitions there seemed to be a special directive of the Spirit to the

distinctive paragraphs of Psalm 107, when poor people were in deep distress and trouble, and to the prevailing characteristics in them. "They fell down, and there was none to help." They came to their wits' end. No one on earth could do any more for them: they came to the end of all their wisdom and sagacity. "They fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." This beautiful language, as conveyed to the spirit by the Holy Ghost, has often been a source of inspiration, solid comfort, peace, glorious hope to souls because they have the same issue. They have come into the path where 'they fell down, and there was none to help.' This is a part of the great tribulation. "Then they cried," I felt as I approached the Throne of His heavenly Grace that some of you were joining in a special way, and your cry was ascending too. "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses... He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions... And he led them forth by the right way... He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." and what was the issue? "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

So I especially underline and name to you this in the question of the cloud and your fear as the gloomy cloud develops in your life and path, and presently there is the rainbow. We have seen it in the past week: you have made a point of viewing it, and it speaks loudly and sweetly and powerfully and efficaciously of the sweet mercy of God to you, - to you poor troubled souls, in the family, as a business man, or in a profession, you in trouble, distress and sorrow: the rainbow. The Lord is saying to you; "There is no wrath. You will never sink in the flood. There is forgiveness, mercy, compassion, peace, healing."

What does the rainbow suggest to you? "This truth to rejoice in, The Lord will appear." We shall sing it in glory itself if we see the rainbow about the Throne. O the sweetness of divine mercy to needy sinners! Take it home; spread your Bible open at Psalm 107. Plead the holy contents before Him! Read about the rainbow in Genesis. The Lord looks on it, and you look on it, and it is sweet mercy. This may mean something to you; I believe it does; mercy. Before I go further I want to say very emphatically, if you

are a praying soul in the true sense of the word, the Lord will surely appear for and deliver you: you will come out of great tribulation. Whatever it is; chronic, long-lasting; acute; extremely complicated, mysterious; what you are in, child of God, the Lord will surely deliver you out of all your afflictions. You will prove it.

The next view here was of the glorious company of heaven; the saints in eternal bliss. What a wonderful sight, to look into heaven and see the glorified saints of God in white robes of holiness and purity, around the Throne of the Lamb, adoring Him! I feel to put a word to you. This is the time we remember the blessed dead; the souls of those who have departed to bliss. Have you not a sweet, blessed realisation of how many who are dear to you, those you love much who are in glory? I am not here to refer to myself, but you have probably ^{heard} mention of this before. I never knew my grandmother on my father's side in the flesh, because she was gone when she was about thirty-six, - years before I was born. Before she was married and settled, she was in the Sanctuary with the late Mrs Bradbury, and the Text was; "The people which shall be created shall praise the Lord." (Psa.102. 18) She was a single woman, and the sermon was blessed to her; the word of grace was so powerful, sweet, efficacious to her that after the divine service in private communion, she said to the late Mrs Bradbury; "Polly, I believe I shall be the mother of one or more of those children." I feel an extraordinary love to her because I believe I was in that. She saw, (she did not identify) but she saw me. Do you understand? To me this is one of the sweetest things, to know and experience an outstanding love to a saint of God I have never known in the flesh, but known in Christ; in heaven. There is a bond that will never break between my grandmother and myself, in Christ. Have you these bonds? Do you feel in your soul concerning those you love and have prayed for, and been uncertain and tried about; can you before God to night believe they are in glory? This is a wonderful favour; and I will turn it in the other direction. Are there those yet in the captivity of sin, and yet there is in your soul a sweet hope that the day will come when they will be found amongst the mighty multitude, the blessed, glorious multitude, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands? I felt I could speak at Uckfield on Friday concerning the families where not one will be missing; they will

be complete in glory. John had a view of them in bliss.

Dear friends, I address you: have you a very sweet, vital hope that you will be there presently? Do you feel as though you see yourself, worn with care, toil, pain, weariness; delivered out of it all, and translated to bliss? almost as though you hear the minister at the grave-side, saying; "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore ^{are} they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." I cannot tell you the sweetness I have felt in the expectation. (I must try to go on and work out a little the further word.)

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." You will remember in the last ten minutes of the morning we began to speak on great tribulation. I hope I shall not overlap. The meaning of tribulation for the people of God is, all trouble emptied of the curse because Christ drank it and filled it with His love. What does it spell out? That every trial works for good. As we read in the Lesson; "Wherein ye greatly rejoice though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations," or, tribulations. How does he proceed? You may be 'in heaviness through manifold temptations.' It is 'if need be.'- the trial of faith. If it is there will be a good issue: you will come forth as gold. Look, if you are in this blessed Scripture, and the trial you are passing through is the trial ~~is the trial~~ of faith;- if you have been blessed with living faith there will be a good issue: you will come out of the fire. Whatever God has done for me He has brought it through the trial of faith, and when He has given it He has taken it through the furnace. What about Abraham and his promised son? He went through the fire with the promise before he was born, and when he was born. - "Offer him up." You will never know the reality and preciousness of a thing until it has been through the fire. If God has given you something, you will prove it has gone through the fire and you will value it. It has gone through the fire? it has been proved. How wonderful this is!

So tribulation is a unique form of trouble to the chosen of God. It has been emptied of the curse and filled with love. It is "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." That is the issue, you see. That is how you will prove it. It is trouble that has been emptied of the curse and filled with divine love, so it must work for good.

Consider with me this trial you are in; this affliction, sorrow, distress what do you think about it? How would you assess it? Do you think in these terms? "Surely this could have been dispensed with. Surely this is unnecessary. Why should it come to me?" Or are you thinking; "I believe this is the hand of God. It is dawning on me that this is the Lord's hand. It is further dawning on me that the cup is in the hand of the Lord, and it is full of mixture, and the Lord has given it me to drink. If this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Lord, give me grace to say; 'Thy will be done.'" You realise it is not only the hand of God, but it is a Father's hand, your Father; your heavenly Father.

"Thrice comfortable hope
That calms my stormy breast;
My Father's hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best." (70)

It is all beginning to open before your astonished view, and you feel; "Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it." "I believe the Lord will make a blessing out of it for me and for others." So you say; "Lord, sanctify it: make it a blessing to my soul." You are beginning to see because it is emptied of the curse and filled with love it will work together for good. You say; "Lord, do for me what I needed doing. Wean me from earth and the flesh, and draw me close to Christ." And these beautiful words;

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me."

You are proving you are in tribulation; it has lost its sting, as we had this afternoon, when Jesus^{died} death lost its sting, and losing its sting has not left a vacuum; It is not hazy or nebulous; it is full of divine love. There is no sting. I will tell you what the Lord will do. You are afraid in the storm that the ship is going down and you with it: that is where

you are. Christ will presently rebuke the winds and say; "Peace, be still," and there will be a great calm. You will thank God you have come into tribulation. We can apply this to a person in business; in a providential path: the mercy is to know what you pass through is tribulation; that there is Fatherly love in it. If you go into a dispensary you see this with the apothecary. Everything is dealt in weights and measures: it is exact. He will never afflict too much, You will prove there is much mercy, sweet mercy. You will 'sing of mercy and judgment'. You will prove God goes so far, and then stops. He never lays on you more than is right. "Wherefore doth a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens." Tribulation. You are in it. I would love to ministerially land you in glory. That is the important thing; to get you home; not out in the wilderness to leave you. What do I mean? I do not now wish you all to die to night who fear God. I want the Lord to bring heaven near to your soul and bless you with a foretaste of it; so you will have an assurance that you will get home.

"More happy, but not more secure,

The glorified spirits in heaven." (340)

Great tribulation has always been the path of God's choosing for His saints, and it always will be. None are immune; God is a Sovereign. Some know a great volume of tribulation, but it will be for those who fear God. "These are they which came out of great tribulation." There are those the Lord has a favour to. It is the Lord's purpose to give them life, and as they live on this planet for a while things go well with them. For Job all went well; he was the greatest man of the East, and he was a gracious man, Then all ~~changed~~. I shall never forget the case of Dr Wakeley. As you remember he practised at Helwyn, and he would come to Lewes for a respite, and we would see him on the Thursday. He was a gracious man. I remember a long dialogue I had with him after the service. He said to me; "You know, I was an idolater. I have got more money than I need and my garden was one of my idols." Then there was that terrible accident with his son, and he fell under the hand of God and lived there. He never came out of great tribulation till he went to glory: he had no joy in anything. God forbid this should be your case! In some way if you fear God you will

have great tribulation. Things will wellnigh convulse you; remove you from all below feelingly. I remember with our dear friend he went on and humbled himself under God's mighty hand. O the reverence and worship of his spirit under the stroke! and the beautiful way the Lord delivered him. He came in from his evening surgery, and went upstairs and died.

"These are they which came out of great tribulation." It does not matter who you are if you fear God; it is great tribulation. If I could get it over to you, it is not against you; it is for you. It is because the Lord loves you. He will not let you go on. You are His: He will claim you. You are not of the world, as He is not of the world, and He will draw you heart and affections away because He loves you. With some of the dear ones who have gone to glory, there was one in particular facet of great tribulation; terrible loneliness. The props they thought to rely on, and did absolutely, those props were taken away. People twenty years younger were removed, and this is great tribulation. You will find it in the journey: props are removed. You have only got the Lord. Your chief prop in life has gone, and it is great tribulation. Then, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Amen.