

Afternoon Lesson. John 16.

OCTOBER 20 1974

TEXT ROMANS 12 V12

As our godly friends will anticipate, we are now by the help of God to speak to the second clause of the verse; "patient in tribulation." Let it be said immediately although there are three distinct exhortations to the saints of God in the verse, they are all interlaced and become one in the living exercise of the soul under the power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of all the trials and distresses of this life.

We are to expound now by His aid, clause two; "patient in tribulation." There are two leading doctrines and truths therefore, before us in the clause. One is tribulation. That is why I read the Lesson in John 16, because there the Lord gives His dear people, His disciples, a sure expectation of what they must pass through in this life. It has never varied, and it never will until the Second Advent. So long as this dispensation is with us, in all generations,- your fathers, ancestors, your children (if they are favoured to fear God, and I hope they will be) your grandchildren as well as you,- "in the world ye shall have tribulation." You all know, who fear God, that this is true. I suppose we may second ~~what~~ what we mentioned this morning: there is this illusion of mind that every season of life may bring some easement or betterment of our lot in the world; it never does. None can say to you; "Now you can anticipate good things." Your sorrows and trials will deepen; and things are exacerbated because you are carrying your cross. If you are made willing in every blessing there is a cross. I must preface the discourse in this manner. If the Lord capacitates your heart to receive a blessing from Him here below; if He is pleased to send you an awareness of it you also embrace your cross. It may be in embryo when you first embrace it,- just beginning to develop. It will come from that stage to maturity, and as you embrace the blessing you embrace your cross in it and with it. Let me remind you, if you need it, of this fact. You are not static with your cross; not stationary: you are moving. You will need grace every day to enable you to take up your cross. What is meant by moving? Following Christ to Jerusalem, and without the city you will be crucified on your own cross. Some of you have no understanding of this. In ten, twenty, or thirty years you will know the meaning of it. Tribulation.

Let us take up ~~the~~ ^{the} first doctrine of tribulation. We may say, here is an amazing contrast; an extreme contrast, set forth by three things with the Israelites,- they were not all godly people. I am thinking of spiritual Israel. They had their agony, their taskmasters, the bondage of Egypt: they were liberated, emancipated. God led them, but they were forty years in the wilderness. If ever there was a rough journey, that was. There were scorpions; there was nothing edible; there was brackish water: but it was God's method of capacitating them for the Land of

Promise, my friends; the Happy Land, flowing with milk and honey; and so it will you. If you had peace on earth you would never want anything else you would never seek for heaven. But

"Thorny is the wilderness,
And the Lord will have it so." (1037)

This rough journey, as it is,- more than we know how to bear often.- You open your eyes and say; "Lord, is it still the wilderness? another day in the wilderness? How can I bear it? Bid me come." You will feel like this. "And enter my celestial home." (482) That is the contrast. So there is tribulation. I want to remind you of the true Scriptural interpretation of tribulation. There is a distinction between trouble and tribulation.... Did you understand what I said concerning receiving God's blessing and embracing your cross? You know, I feel such a spirit of compassion for those poor souls who have come to a day of prosperity and they are about to embrace something wonderful from God, and their hearts are lifted up. Little do they know anything as to the cross they are ~~xxx~~ embracing. It is true. Whether the Lord will show them before the event or after, I know not. There is this in every branch of life to the people of God. In the past you have put your head on your pillow and thought; "This is blissful." (I do not mean spiritually.) It may be in the night the Lord opened your ears and revealed to you what you must experience in your future path, and He changed your countenance in one night. Some of you have heard me say how the Lord spoke to me from a tombstone in Hope Chapel Cemetery, between the services of the day,- I do not remember what they were. It was before I preached, and as I walked in the cemetery it was as if the Lord took my vision and focussed it on a verse and I read it, and I have never lost it.

"Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil." (933)

This was the means of leading me further to Christ, and to see how all must be subservient to Him, and He would balance all of my life. Do you understand? Could you give, (this is for the ear of God Almighty) a

commentary on tribulation?

Let me remind you of the definition of tribulation, and the distinction between that and trouble. The whole world is full of trouble,- all nations all members of nations know a variety of trouble: bereavements, desertion calamities, sorrows, wounds, distresses, loneliness, orphans, broken things in life,- broken hearts and homes. The world is full of trouble: this is the heritage of Adam. He left this by his fall, and it is the result of sin and the curse. Do not think because I name our federal head that I am thinking of him chiefly. I am thinking of self; my base, vile sin. Tribulation, to put it briefly, is exclusive to the saints of God. No ungodly person knows it in the sense that is inside the chapter read. It is expounded by these words; "And ye now therefore have sorrow." Poor heart! sorrow. Do you envy any? Do you envy the ungodly? He said; "The world shall rejoice." You see the world pass by; "And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." That is tribulation "And ye now therefore have sorrow." So that is the meaning of it. It is trouble that has been emptied of the curse and filled with divine love. That is tribulation. I have said before, it is trouble that has the sting of the curse extracted, and been injected with divine love. Where has it gone to? Has it sunk into the earth? No; your Saviour drank it for you when He touched you with redeeming love, saved you, and the blessings of salvation flowed through your life and on into glory. There is no wrath; it is filled with divine love. That is tribulation. How wonderful this is. How do you know that it is tribulation you are passing through? How do you know your trouble is not in the abstract, but is tribulation? The grand proof is, and this is a thing the people of God are always exercised in,- it leads to communion with your Saviour in His sufferings. Now you see the key to the exhortation: "Patient in tribulation."

How do you know your soul is in tribulation? There is another proof. I will speak to the experience of it. It is so bitter, you feel it will bring you to the grave. This is no exaggeration: the preacher knows it well. The proof that it is tribulation is, the Lord will show you a tree that makes it sweet. This is really unfathomed. Look, a week has passed, and it was a trying week; not easy. You looked forward to things, and instead you entered into trial. All is marred here below. Then, as the

week has taken toll you felt emeciated, shaken, bruised, wounded. You thought; "It is not easy for me to go to the holy hill of Zion." because of the path you tread. Look at this: God favours you to ascend to the holy hill, and the word reaches you, and you find it is rather sweet to be in a path of tribulation because you are among the poor who have the gospel preached to them.

I will go further by the Lord's help, concerning tribulation. The grand proof was it brought you, as an agent, sanctified, into fellowship with your Saviour. Another proof is, and we had it, as you remember a week last Thursday. Vengeance had come out: trouble had. Then presently it went in and mercy came out. Do you understand? Mercy's angel form appeared: vengeance retired and mercy came forward. This is tribulation. You may have thought it is all trouble and distress, and it goes in and mercy comes out. That is how often God's ministers obtain a message: that is how they came where you are.

"Vengeance, that called for this just doom,
Retired to make sweet mercy room." (791)

This is sweet to me: it is tribulation. You never get it in trouble: it is in tribulation, and it is so wonderful.

There are thousands of ways of viewing mercy coming out. You can hardly begin to say or to end, because of the numerous occasions of mercy coming out. This is tribulation. I well remember, and this is very sweet to me.-Many years ago I was in London preaching and burying a friend, and when I came home I found a dear daughter dangerously ill in hospital. It is very painful to feel there is no hope, but mercy came out. If I may mention humbly two things,- first, the doctor was like a brother to me. He came in and found I was away, and he took charge of the case as if he had been the girl's father. This was sweet to me: it was mercy. He could not have done more. The second thing was, though he had planned to do something else, presently she had a bed where as the Night Sister came on duty she saw, Elisabeth Tyler. She was a member of my own Church. This was mercy. So every step from first to last with your tribulation is mercy. You will know it is tribulation: it is in love; there is no curse in it. It is very blessed and sweet. It is tribulation my friends. If I could impress it on you, in tribulation you are in the

depths, but you have got loving arms round you and under you. You have got a precious Jesus with His arms round you and under you, so it is sweet.

I have cited another proof of mercy coming out. Everything is ordered well to the moment. It is mercy. Are you in tribulation? It hurts, pains afflicts. It is not something that is superficial; something you can brush away. It is very deep and heavy. Only the grace of God enables you to walk in it. But see how the Lord has wonderfully announced it, as in our Lesson. See how kindly He has folded it between two great doctrines! How? "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He has folded it between peace and His victory. It is not in the abstract. There is not a single promise in the New Covenant where tribulation is left in the abstract. It is always with holy peace, strength and deliverance. O the wonder, glory and bliss of divine love!

So we have had a little dissertation on tribulation. You are in it, - operations, unexpected things in life you suddenly discover, and it spells out to you a path of affliction and trial. I must bring myself to examine the second part of the exhortation, - tribulation. You have got it it is in your lot. You say; "Now perhaps, Lord, I feel a little burning of my heart." and when you have sung a hymn you go out and you go back to it, and it is not so pleasant to flesh and blood. What does He say to you? "Patient in tribulation. Patient. I will tell you what will call up in your spirit a blessed exercise and desire for the sweet and holy grace of patience in tribulation. One thing is your own sinful unworthiness. You say; "I am a guilty, vile sinner. If I had my just deserts I should be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, and yet Thou in mercy has chastened my soul as a father chasteneth his children." You have a sweet realisation that He is dealing with you as with sons, and this will call up a desire for patience.

Another truth is the blessed example of all the saints in the Scripture and those you love. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. The example of dear saints in tribulation will call up in you a desire for the same grace. To come to the greatest power over you; the power of

a suffering Redeemer, of His dying love, of His patience in all that He suffered. I hope we shall softly and sweetly sing in the last hymn, of His patience as "a prodigy of injured love! (797) All the scoffing, the smiting, the spitting, - all the insults; think of His patience in all that He suffered. "A prodigy of injured love." This will call up in your breast a desire to know a measure of it. His patience also to you in the days of unregeneracy, and since you have known Him; all your ill manners in the wilderness; His patience.

"Behold His patience lengthened out,
To those who from Him rove;
And calls effectual reach their hearts,
To teach them God is love!" (750)

O His patience! What is patience? Here is a sweet blending of virtues that are holy. Patience may be expounded first as a sweet calmness of mind under all the distress you experience, and sweet submission to the will of God, coupled with a blessed expectation that He will fulfil all His promises and that there will be a good issue.

"Patient in tribulation" is an indication of deliverance, of victory, of the Lord appearing. So, 'patient in tribulation' - calmness of spirit: and there is a wonderful word in James; "tribulation worketh patience." It is the method of God. In tribulation you will need patience. It is the trial of faith: you hope you will be brought out of the furnace. He said; "Let patience have her perfect work." Let her have her perfect work, as though he would say; "Don't put anything in the way of patience; don't hinder or obstruct her. Let patience have her perfect work.

I will give you a simple exercise in gracious and holy language so you will see as we close where patience comes in in the order of things. The words all begin with 'p'. First, the divine purposes of God. Next, the divine promises of God that reveal the divine purposes. Then patience: as you receive the promises you have need of patience. Then prayer: then performance: then praise. So you see just where it is: purposes; promises; patience; prayer; performance; praise. Amen.
