

t reviewed by Mr. Delves.

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preached at Ebenezer, Clapham, by the BAPTISTS Mr. J. Delves,
on Sunday morning December 4th, 1955. Text. Romans 5, vs. 3, 4 & 5.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

It will be clearly seen by the language here, that the apostle Paul is writing to a people who had some gracious understanding and experience of the gospel. Not only so, but he writes to them as justified persons. This seemed to bring such a sweet connection between the hymn we have sung (119) (the last verse particularly) and the first verse of this chapter. In that last verse the poet says:-

"What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine."

We need to go no further than that for a precise explanation of what justification means. So looking at the two verses particularly concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, we read, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." What a complete satisfaction for a poor sinner to be in, (actually not poor but rich) to feel to be in, to enjoy and to walk, in some measure, in the light and sweetness of that blessed truth.

I would desire, as I have grace, to bless God that I hope and believe He has made the Lord Jesus Christ precious in my soul's experience, that I believe I can rest my eternal standing and prospects of salvation, entirely upon what I hope He has done for me, and that I have a firm conviction in my conscience, that Jesus Christ

is truly and properly God, a Person in the blessed Trinity, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost. I had a man call at my door the other day, and he began to want to reason with me about certain points of truth. I soon found that I could not possibly walk with him in his sentiments, but I told him what I believed; I told him that I believed in the Trinity and that the Lord Jesus Christ was God as well as Man. He denied it, definitely denied it, and it seemed to chill my blood, because I know that I have no hope whatever for eternity, for the salvation of my soul, unless Jesus Christ be "very God" as well as Man. I love sometimes to meditate upon this blessed truth. I have had a few moments in my little life when His glorious Deity has shone before my eyes and I feel that all he has accomplished for His dear people in the efficacy of it, and the salvation of their souls, rests upon this blessed doctrine that He is God and Man in our nature. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." O friends, there are so many subtle, pernicious errors abounding in this day and they seem, some of them, at first sight, so far according to truth, and they can be very attractive; some things that are in the Scriptures are denied, in pleasing and plausible ways; they may suit human nature and make religion an easy thing compatible with flesh and blood, but how can that be the teaching that is laid down in the word of God?

I believe these verses that I have read constitute a very gracious, sweet, blessed experience and you will quite understand me when I say that I have not read them because I consider myself, in any sense, an example with regard to what is involved in them, but rather that I believe them, admire the blessed truth and perceive in them, the sanctifying grace and power of the Spirit of God, in the

lives of His dear people, in their spiritual experience, and also in their trials and afflictions, as the Lord is pleased to sanctify those afflictions to them. They prove by His mercy that all is designed to work together for their good, and it is very sweet to believe it; because when we can truly believe it, we have no quarrel with God in relation to His dispensations, but can humbly, at least hopefully, feel that "our light affliction..... worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And this brings a holy willingness to walk the path the Lord has appointed to us, with all the bitter ingredients in it, realising that His love is wrapped up in it, or rather that they are wrapped up in His love, that His love covers them, and that every divine discipline, chastening, trial, tribulation, cross, or affliction, whatever it may be, is like the links in a chain leading up to this blessed issue, even to "the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." If you come into the 5th verse, you will not quarrel with Him for any touch of His hand, whereby He has laid you low, or any cross He has laid upon you, a crossing of your hope, some project or disappointment or something in your life. The Lord can lay everything straight in your life so that you can say, as I attempted to speak on Wednesday evening, , "Thy Will be done," and say it without reserve, and esteem it to be "the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush." But old nature will never say that, nature will never fall in with the dispensations of divine providence, but faith does. What a mercy it is when faith rises up and overcomes the quibbling of unbelief, the questionings of old nature and of a tempting adversary and can rise above them, and say, "He hath done all things well." It is wonderfully sweet to be there, and this, and only this, is what His grace can accomplish - and does accomplish. What a mercy

to be brought into the experience spoken of here! It seems to start in the last verse of the chapter before, where the apostle has been, and in the chapter here establishes the doctrine of justification, through the perfect obedience, grace and blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall never be justified before God in this aspect upon any other ground whatever. Therefore referring to Him the apostle says here, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Then he proceeds to dilate upon the fruits of this, known in the heart and experience of those thus favoured.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Being justified! The Scots believe we should read a comma after 'justified' which is correct, "Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Not only do we have this peace, but we also have that access; "By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Here then, the apostle seems to lay the foundation which constitutes a basis upon which believers stand in the face of all that may attend them; the tribulation, the cross, the affliction - all these. He elucidates the doctrine which is, as it were, a bulwark in their soul, a ground upon which they stand, and which enables them to endure and hold fast - notwithstanding all.

These fruits of justification are mentioned particularly. Peace with God. What a wonderful mercy it is to feel that - justified persons do! You would, I should, I believe I have. If we could walk in the light and sweetness and blessedness of that verse we have sung and feel that

"My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine,"

that would bring peace. Every sight of Him brings peace, a touch of His love brings peace, the virtue of His blood brings peace, peace through His cross. He laid down His life that we might live, and through His blessed mediation, His dear people enjoy this peace. How sweet it is to feel to have no controversy, or to feel at such a time that God has no controversy with us, to enjoy a stillness, to 'be still, and know that he is God,' to prove that "In quietness and in confidence is our strength," to lean upon Him, to be "coming up from the wilderness leaning upon our Beloved" is a sweet peace, a wonderful peace. Only heirs of heaven know what it is, and enjoy it, and strange to say, they often enjoy this blessed peace in a peculiar way when the hand of the Lord is upon them in some particular need, under some trial of their faith, or something which in itself may tend to disturb that peace. This is the way in which God by His good Spirit causes tribulation to work patience. He enables a poor, trembling believer to fall at His dear feet, put his trust there, resolve all his concerns into His blessed hands and leave them there. You can do that if the Lord helps you. O, but, say you, things are all so awkward, crooked and backward. Yes, but that makes no difference whatever; if the Lord brings his peace into your soul, you see His love above everything else, and enjoy in your hearts and your souls' feelings, the prospect, the blessed prospect, laid up for all who love Him. What a wonderful mercy then, it is to have a real experience and to prove that tribulation does, after all, work a little patience. Old nature does not work it and the Scripture does not say that it does, but the Lord works it by His good Spirit in your soul. Hence when you are favoured to feel that in some measure, brought about in your experience, that shows you to be a justified person. O it is a sweet peace! "Therefore

being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" Well, what should we do without Him? We should never have any peace without Him, no communion without Him, no hope without Him, no spiritual blessings without Him; all must come through Him, and you can believe it in your soul if you get just a little opening up of His beauties, of His risen glory. What a wonderful verse that is which we read this morning in chapter 6 concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, "For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." In my little study this morning it seemed to shine before my eyes; O, I thought, if the Lord should be pleased to give us a little entering into that this day, and give us to feel a little of the sweetness of it, then the rest will be sure to follow, even that "tribulation worketh patience;" it will bring a sweet falling into His blessed hands.

Not only does the apostle speak of peace, but also of access, as another fruit of the blessed standing in their souls. "By Whom also we have access" that is by the Lord Jesus Christ the same Person, the blessed Mediator between God and man. "This same Jesus". "By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace," that is, into this grace of justification, "wherein we stand." This is another blessed fruit. It is sweet to have access, to feel to be made nigh by the blood of Christ, to be helped to draw nigh, to be drawn to the mercy seat, to have your heart opened in prayer, to plead your cause before God, to bring your case and your trouble to Him, and so to view the sufficiency and merit of His sin-atonement blood, that you can take no denial when you plead for Jesus' sake. Beside there is no access whatever without Him, no contact with God without Him, without this Medium. Here is this access then, which is known and experienced,

by the power of faith working in the believing heart.

Another fruit is to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God". When you feel a little hope of the glory of heaven, it will be sure to bring joy with it, and will raise your hope and prospects and bring before your eyes the sweet anticipation of one day leaving all sin behind and being with Him. It will bring a joy in the midst of all your afflictions and hard things - it will bring a little joy, it will satisfy your soul. You can, at such a time, rejoice even in tribulations, that is glory in them, rejoice in them. Here are the fruits then, of justification by faith.

Then the apostle comes more particularly into the path of experience as it relates to the tribulations of the Lord's people. There is nothing in the Scripture to show that the people of God may expect immunity from tribulation, from affliction or things of that kind, but there are many Scriptures to show that the Lord is their God in them, and that He will not "leave them or forsake them". This is your mercy and mine.

But here the apostle speaks of several things and he links them up together. There are here mentioned five links in a chain, five golden links. Those links are tribulation, patience, experience, hope, and love, one looping up with another. They are like five golden links in a chain and indeed as we view them, there does not seem to be very much gold in the first link of the chain, for the first link is a heavy one, in itself a black one. Some people might think the apostle should put things the other way round and start with love, as that might appear to be the most shining link in the chain and to have what might be the most shining link would be more encouraging but all these things are united one with another, and after all the love

of God shines in every one of them. Here is a point to notice; there is what might be termed a linking up, or a very close connection between the first and the last link. I quite agree that, superficially speaking, there does not appear to be any connection at all, for what connection can there be between tribulation and love? They seem two such opposite things; there does not seem to be any connection between them, and yet, if helped to consider the point, we should see there is a very close connection between the first and last links in the chain. Not only so, but it seems the first link and the last bind all the other links together in it. For instance, although I know tribulation in itself, may not seem to have any love in it, but may often seem to be just the opposite to that, yet how clearly the Scriptures show that the tribulations of the Lord's people are wrapped up in His love. Now you take what the Lord said to His disciples in John 16, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world" - here then comes the first link in the golden chain, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" and then He seems to take them out of the world, "But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Herein is love; the Lord Jesus has overcome the world for His dear people's sake and here His love comes in, for "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And this can come right into your own experience of things, if the Lord is pleased to bless you in them; that is to say He will sometimes, and I believe He has given some of you such a sweet sense of His love in your heart, shown towards you even in the midst of all your tribulations.

"Not only so" as it is said here twice in this chapter, but if we turn later to this epistle to the Romans, we find him saying,

"who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and then comes the first link in the chain again, "Shall tribulation, or distress or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" No, none of these things. So here again you see a sweet link joining up between the first and the last links; even in the tribulation and distress, peril, famine, nakedness and sword, the love of Christ covers it all. Has there ever been just a moment or two with you, when His sweet love has covered all, although you may have been in the midst of some particular tribulation?

Then there is another point which shows how closely the first and last links are bonded together. If we turn to The Revelation we find one of the Elders speaking to the apostle John in his vision, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Well here is a link again between the love of God to His dear people in all that has been done for them, and the tribulation in and through which they may have to pass, according to His sovereign will. In the Scripture I believe we find ⁱⁿ a number of instances, that the two things are thus closely bonded together; yet what a strange link it may seem to be, to start this golden chain, the heaviest of all in itself; but if you look at it like this, you can see that each link has been joined one to another and shines brighter and brighter, until we come to this "love of God being shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Five golden links then. Perhaps you would say, I feel to know more about the first than anything else - but if the Lord brings you into the first, He will surely, in His own good time, bring you through to the last. And not only so, that is - not only is this true, not only has the Lord done this, not only have you this tribulation, not only

is there this peace, not only this access and joy, "but we glory in tribulations also;" that is, rejoice in them, - tribulations here meaning not just common troubles in themselves, which all have, for trouble in itself is no evidence of grace, it is common to all, but sanctified trouble is an evidence of grace, because it is thereby a proof of the Lord's personal dealings with His people in their tribulations. Tribulation is a term which suggests being pressed down, squeezed, hard pressed, having allusion to the threshing of the corn - the flail which squeezes, presses down and separates the wheat from the chaff - so God with His people cleanses them with the flail of tribulation and separates the chaff from the wheat. But what do we understand by tribulation? In the Scriptures tribulation sometimes refers to the solemn things which come upon the earth in the last days. "In those days shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." "Great tribulation!" and this referring to the end of the dispensation of time, but more particularly in the Scriptures to the sufferings, persecutions and trials of the Lord's people for Christ's sake. Hence we find John in the Isle of Patmos, saying, "Your brother and companion in tribulation"; and Paul says, "We glory in tribulations also:" and "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." But the Lord can make tribulation of whatever He may be pleased to lay upon you, or upon me; some particular cross, something that comes, some crosshanded providence, some loss, some affliction of body, or some circumstance of some kind; whatever it may be, if the Lord exercises us in it, He makes to be a tribulation, a cross to bear.

But how can a tribulation work patience? This is the point

to consider. "We glory in tribulations also." But "glorying" in them is not making light of them, spurning them, or endeavouring to take no notice of them, but rather to be graciously and rightly exercised in them. You can glory in tribulation only when the Lord is pleased to appear to you in them, visit your soul, touch your heart with His love, and break you down with a sense of His goodness, or, it may be, give you to see some particular interposition of His hand. It is His grace alone that can enable us to glory, that is, to rejoice in tribulation; it does not belong to nature in anyone - but this marks the difference. It is true many people in the world are ^{very} commendable in the way they bear their trials - are very patient and meek under them. That may be and is a natural endowment in them, without any particular spiritual, gracious gift of the Lord, but another person whose natural mentality may be quite opposite to that, may be fretful and resentful and in his spirit may revolt against anything which comes across his path, and yet that very person may be brought by God's grace to joy and glory in tribulation. It is when He brings you to fall at His dear feet, when He gives you to see the matter in His hand, whatever it may be, painful as it may be too, and gives you to feel that although He has thus touched your body, your circumstances, or something of that kind, yet all is designed to be for the best for us. As we are assured later in this epistle by Paul, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." When you can feel it is all for the best and when in a sweet way, you can believe that it is a Father's hand that has thus touched you in some way, and that He designs it to be for the best in your soul - it may be for your future good - then, and only then, can you rejoice in these tribulations. So it is here that tribulation

worketh patience - that is by His grace tribulation works endurance as the term here more particularly means - indeed it has to be seen that the Lord's people are in some measure strengthened in continuing in the path of trial and affliction that may be appointed them. Some things may be very hard to bear at first, but afterwards, having some teaching in them and being profited by them, they become more supportable, more easy to be borne, and the spirit more graciously conformed to them. So it is found that tribulation does work patience, and brings some conformity, as the trial is sanctified to us.

Well, I shall have to leave it. May the Lord grant to us if His blessed will, some leading into these sacred things, and though some may feel to be in the first particular link of the chain, and feel there is no gold in it, that all is just the opposite, so conflicting, so undesirable, so much resented, yet although the first thing may be a heavy one, it is well designed, and will, as linked with the others, eventually prove to be as choice as any of them, because all are joined together.

Here are the five links in the chain. "Tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

This seems then, to take in and constitute not only the path, but the experience of the Lord's people here, to issue eventually and fully in the joys of heaven, with "the love of God shed abroad in the heart" "as a river to swim in" a river never to be passed over.

The Lord grant us just a little leading into these particular things.

Amen.