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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Gosden at
Galeed Chapel, Brighton on
Sunday evening, 28th. May, 1946

THE TRIAL OF FAITH PRECIOUS

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Text: 1 Peter 1 v. 7, 8 & 9

"That 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:

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

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We do not, when we are in trial, often realise the value of it, but this Scripture declares that it is precious, not only the faith that is tried, but the trial itself. For this reason: it proves the genuineness of the faith and it proves the infallible Source, Author, Maintainer and Finisher of it, Jesus Christ, for every trial of faith which true believers experience, is really an attempt to detach that believer from his hope in God: to separate him from Christ. That is the enemy's purpose: and if he cannot obtain it, he will torment, afflict, attempt to deceive, to lull to sleep or to drive to despair, and the Lord suffers this for a wise purpose. That remarkable hymn of Gadsby's which you sang just now (614) contains a great deal of experimental truth in which perhaps some of you walk in these days. The Lord does over-rule these trials and temptations of Satan to bring us more and more away from ourselves and from self dependence, and also to keep us from presumption and vain confidence; from dead formality in religion, and they are not small benefits. We are liable to all those evils in religion if we are left unexercised. It proves to us also, ultimately, the unfailing faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He forestalled Peter's terrible fall by a warning and by a promise. Peter could say when the warning was given him, that he was ready and prepared for anything he might suffer: ready to go to prison and to death for Christ's sake: his mountain, as he thought, stood strong, and undoubtedly he was sincere in his profession; undoubtedly he had an affectionate attachment to Christ, but as far

as nature was concerned, all that, was broken by the temptation of the enemy, and he fell. But his faith did not fail. He fell as to its prevalence, unbelief got the better of him and he denied his Lord and Master.

But the secret of his being restored was the intercession of the Lord Jesus in his behalf: that ensured his recovery, and that will be the way, and the only way whereby you and I will get safely through to the final victory of faith. So that these trials make us see our weakness, our inability and inward corruptions. When the Lord withholds the power of His grace and suffers inward corruptions to rise and the angry powers of hell to assault us, even such things as that in a mourner's heart, bring about a caution with regard to confidence, a tender exercise, and such people are brought to look more entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation alone. The hymn writer says:

"Corruptions make the mourner shun
Presumptions dangerous snare,
Force us to trust to Christ alone,
And fly to God by prayer."

I believe that to be true, and that is one of the valuable effects of sanctified temptation. I know we are taught in the Scripture, and it would be well did we more closely follow the direction to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil", and we may mourn our sin of omission in this respect when the Lord suffers temptation to have great power against us. Peter speaks of "manifold temptations" and heaviness in consequence. The word 'temptations', is not to be confined to the devil's invasions, his subtlety and roaring, but it is embracive of all kinds of experiences which try faith:

"The Lord the righteous tries".

Yet when you are tried, you may feel in the trial, to be far from belonging to that category, - 'the righteous.'

Trials often produce evidence to us of our sinfulness, our rebellion, our own self-will, our insubmission to God and our unbelief, but that is not a bad thing to learn. Why, if we never had trials and crosses, perplexities and temptations, what would our religion be? How often should we pray?

"Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there."

They do when they are sanctified by grace; and another thing, earth's trials, when sanctified, have the influence of loosening the affections from the sordid things of time and sense. O how we do cleave to thick clay! how our affections are apt to cling about the dying things of life! and how impossible it seems to rise sometimes and go to seek eternal things. But I believe the Lord does at times by means of sanctified trials, make His people weary of earth, themselves and sin, and makes them anxious and longing to know more of Him, and the one aim would be to reach God and heaven. Well, that is a good effect of trial.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire", and in proportion to the reality of our faith, so will the trial of it be. If your hope is assailed; if the things you believe and expect to attain are in your experience challenged, that will be a great trial of faith. If you really hope for salvation, hope the Lord is yours, hope you are born again of the Spirit and that one day you will see the Lord and be with Him and like Him, and those trials that come and temptations, that would seek to throw you down under the power of unbelief, how dejecting they are. There is a heaviness, a weight upon your spirit; a cloud upon your mind, bondage and fear. And all these things are to humble us. We have pride, independence and many other things, and there is a needs be that these trials should come to us for a season to bring us down by Divine grace, lay us low, empty us out and cause us to realise that all our salvation and all our hope is in what Christ is, and in His finished work. It is no light thing to be tried, you will find it so; it is a heavy matter and yet faith is supported in the trial. And the less of our own resources we have, or think we have; the less support we find from any power of our own; the more severe the trial of our faith that brings us entirely down to utter dependence upon Christ, the better. I do not say that lightly, but it does make the Lord, His Person, His faithfulness, His merit, His atoning sacrifice, His blessed resurrection, His priestly work and all that He is, much more precious, and that will bring you to rejoice in Him. We are apt to rejoice in ourselves, to glory in something of the flesh - religious flesh; but

the Lord will have no glorying in the flesh. Christ will be all in all in His people's experience and to bring His people down to a willingness that He should be all in all, is the work of His patient and faithful Spirit. Gold perishes not in the fire, but it will perish one day. It is corruptible, but faith is incorruptible; it is the seed of Divine life, a gift of God.

These people to whom Peter wrote, had been born again by an incorruptible seed. They had been redeemed, as he reminds them, not with gold or silver or corruptible things, but by the precious blood of Christ, and that precious blood of Christ will be needed in the conscience of a tempted, tried, convicted sinner. How increasingly some of you may feel to need that blood, and how valuable it will be in your apprehension. Peter calls it 'precious' and indeed it is, beyond all computation valuable, being the blood of Him who is God the Son.

So the effect and result of these trials will be, in God's time, a manifestation of the glory of Christ, the suitability, sufficiency and completeness of His work of salvation for His people. We must be brought to that: in the Lord alone is the salvation of Israel. And the Spirit's work is to reveal this to those who are lost; to reveal His name, as Peter in the early days after Pentecost preached to the multitudes this name of Jesus, that Blessed One whom he had denied, but who converted him and gave him repentance for his sin; made him weep bitterly, godly tears of sorrow and compunction. He was bold with a tempered boldness when he charged the murder of the Prince of Life on those people, and when he declared that He was exalted a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, and that there was none other name under heaven given among men, whereby they must be saved.

"Whom having not seen, ye love." I wish we had more love for the Lord Jesus. What will kindle it? A sense of His mighty love, a manifestation of that love in His precious death. There is a word in the Revelation that has sometimes been a great influence on my heart, - 'Unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' (Rev. 1 v 5). He loved His people and it was in love to them that He shed His blood in order to cleanse them from their sins, and redeem them to God. Now it is the knowledge of this, some believing apprehension of it,

and especially some impression of that redeeming love upon a poor sinner's heart that causes him to love the Lord Jesus in return. But there is no comparison between the love of a poor sinner, though a believer, and the love of Christ: you cannot compare the two, though the one is the result of the other. We only love Him with the warmth of His own love, and through the Spirit's manifestation of Him in our hearts. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might present it to Himself holy and without blemish or spot or wrinkle or any such thing. If we had by the Spirit's leading, entrance into that sacred truth of the love of Christ in dying, sacrificing Himself, in suffering the penalty due to our sins, and if we should look back, as the hymn-writer says:

".. to see
The burdens Thou didst bear
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And [hope our] guilt was there."

it will produce love: "Whom having not seen, ye love." When the Spirit makes Him real, O how you will love the truth of His incarnation; that loving act of condescension wherein He, God the Son, became what He was not, even the Son of Man, in order to suffer, bleed and die to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In this, the work of Christ, is the hope of the church; in the work of Christ, is the will of God. This will attract you sometimes and the substance and reality of His Person and personal excellencies, His suitability in that it behoved Him to be made in all things like unto His brethren (sin excepted) that He might be a merciful and a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, - why, that verse printed in the second of Hebrews, will have a vital subsistence in your hearts: the truth of it will be solid, and He whose suitability, mercifulness and faithfulness in the discharge of His obligations will draw out your admiration for Him, strengthen your heart, and there will be in some measure accomplished in your experience that prayer to the Spirit:

"Out of self to Jesus lead!"

My friends, to live a life of faith upon the Son of God is the

greatest privilege that we can have, and as I said this morning, that faith works by love: it is accompanied by love, not always in the comfort of it, but there is the element of love in all living faith.

"Whom having not seen, ye love." Thomas said he would not believe until he had literally seen the hands and feet and the print of the nails, and the Lord condescendingly came and conquered doubting Thomas and offered him His hands and His feet and His side as a demonstration of the reality of His physical resurrection from the dead. Poor Thomas. They mock at 'doubting Thomas', do these free-willers who can believe at will, but I have a sympathy with Thomas, and he was blessedly conquered by the tender condescension of his Lord and Master, and he said, "My Lord and my God."

"Not with our mortal eyes
Have we beheld the Lord;
Yet we rejoice to hear His name,
And love Him in His word."

And sometimes you may feel in your very heart that He is as real to your faith as if you saw Him. Faith supplies the want of sight when it is strengthened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. I feel, that is the explanation of that word in the Canticles, where the Church said that her Beloved 'flourished Himself through the lattice,' - shewed Himself through the lattice of His word. Have not some of you seen a little of His beauty and by faith fed upon Him as the Bread of Life: worshipped Him and adored Him, and felt a holy joy and peace in believing and that, notwithstanding what you are and what you have learned yourself to be through trial and temptation? Indeed, the Lord Jesus in His preciousness is enhanced in the heart of a believer when he has well learned what he is, and I am disposed to believe this: that a growth in grace is not a growth in conscious betterment in self, but a growth in solemn acquaintance in what we are in our natures as sinners, and a growth in esteem for the Lord Jesus in all His excellencies and merit.

"Whom having not seen, ye love." One of the ways whereby love is exerted in a sinner's heart, is in waiting for and upon the Object loved. You will be anxious to know Him more intimately; to have more communion with Him, and the services of the Lord's house

and your private devotions, reading of the Scriptures, and all your religious profession will have this in it: - 'I would see Jesus.' There is love in your heart. You want Him and you need Him; you desire Him, you have no portion but Christ. Is not that so? What did the Apostle consider? Everything that was gain, he counted loss for the love and desire he had for Christ, and I believe that same principle and rule will operate in every Spirit-taught believer. You will love Him not only for what He is and for having suffered what He did, for the victory He accomplished, for ascending on high and being seated there, but you will love Him for what He does and says in your heart. He does speak to His people. One of our friends in the early prayer meeting, prayed very earnestly that the Lord would not be silent to him. I suppose most of the Lord's people are troubled at times by His silence: it is not a matter of indifference to them whether He speaks or not. What an effect there is in His voice; what comfort there is when He speaks to a poor troubled sinner and says, "Fear not." Have you heard His voice? You will see His compassion and feel it, in that word, - His goodness, His condescension. Nothing humbles like communications from the Lord Jesus. You will love Him for that condescension; you will want to lift Him high. That love will make you want to follow Him and to declare that you are His. This is the greatest privilege you can have in this life; you would not envy the worldling and his portion if you might be suffered to walk in His ways. Love may cause some of you to say, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." What will enlarge your heart? Only this: more acquaintance with Christ; the atonement in the conscience; redeeming love shed abroad in the heart; the gracious voice of Christ heard within. This will enlarge, liberate, remove bondage and fear, give humility, overcome your unbelief and unbelieving fears and give you ability to run in His ways. It is good when love is so bubbling up in the heart, as that it moves feet in the Lord's ways. You will hang about Him, His cause and interest; seek Him here in the services and seek Him in your providences.

And another thing: this love will make you submit to Him. Whatever the Lord does, when love is felt in your heart and you have the sacred assurance that He is yours, your Redeemer and King, your Friend and Intercessor in heaven, it will make you willing to submit to whatever He does, it will be true that whatever He does,

pleases you, as whatsoever David did at one time, pleased the people. Our rebellion is a wicked and a foolish thing, but if you can feel the love of Christ in your heart and see something of His wisdom and prudence in that love, you will glory in the fact that your times are in His hands. David seemed to do this when he said, "My times are in Thy hand:" and Asaph had the same feeling when the Lord made Himself so precious to him that he could find none in heaven or upon earth beside Him whom he had for his portion. He said, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." And, there will be some activity in your love in seeking to know the Lord's will and to do it. It does not show any love to the Lord Jesus to be willingly ignorant of and indifferent to His will. In the Hebrews, the Apostle desired that the people might be perfect in all the will of God (chap.13 v 21), and in the Philippians, he desired that the Lord would work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure (2 v 13). Do you look at your life and your aspirations, your determinations and your hopes, and see how much of self there is in those aspirations? Then perhaps, the Lord turns your schemes upside down; weakens you in circumstances or afflicts you in body or relatively so that all your hopes seem frustrated and then you are enabled to cast yourself for His disposal upon the Lord Jesus, for His mercy, His wisdom and faithfulness. There is rest there; liberty there; it is a sweet place to come to. It will not make you indifferent, but you will not be over-careful, not living in anxious suspense, because your times are in the Lord's hands, and as you are brought to believe, by the Spirit's witness, that He has made your heaven secure and that He lives in heaven to hear your prayers, to manage your concerns, to overcome your enemies and bring you to heaven at last, you are quite willing and anxious to be at His disposal if He will but condescend to make you a vessel meet for His use unto honour. Does the Spirit do this in measure for you? Has He captivated your heart? Does He come to you again and again so as to overcome those counter-attractions which have such an influence upon the old man? You will value that. Everything that brings you nearer the Lord, separates you more and more from yourself and the world, you will esteem that to be valuable in experience.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice" Believing comes through

the revelation of the Spirit. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ produces faith in a believer's heart, and there is power in it, substance in it, an effect in it; it brings rejoicing. There is in Christ a real cause for joy. You may have many causes for mourning in yourself. I sometimes mourn with bitter mourning when I look back upon my poor life, my many failures, but there are times when there is a deep sense of satisfaction in Christ as He is manifested through the Scriptures and is felt in the heart. In the Romans, the Apostle desired for those believers that they might be filled with joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that they might abound in hope (15 v 13). Such an intensity is in that verse, and you may feel sometimes a little of that intensity in your heart.

"Yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." You rejoice in His faithfulness, in His immutability, in His promises, in His triumph, in His finished work. You rejoice in that He is exalted on high and yet He condescends to incline His ear to a poor sinner's prayers. Do you get near Him? Sometimes, after perhaps a time of mourning His absence and feeling with Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him", you do find Him, He permits you to draw near and draws near to you; inclines His ear, permits you to pray; enables you to roll on Him your burdens, to commit to Him all your cares. It is a valuable experience; it will endear Him to you, strengthen your heart and hold you on your journey. This joy is said to be unspeakable. I believe it is. People may think you are excited and may perhaps think you were exaggerating, if you attempt to express at times what you felt. You are not called upon to express all you feel. You cannot do it when you feel the Lord precious to you, that He is your portion; when you feel His love in your heart and hear His voice, get near Him and bless Him for being what He is. I say that there is such an intensity about this, that you cannot express it, - it is unspeakable. It is better felt than spoken of. There is not much of this today apparently. One would not profess to have much of it, but a little of it, a few moments of it in secret, is wonderfully refreshing and sanctifying, and it does relieve that heaviness which if need be for a season rests upon the spirit through manifold temptations. The life of a true believer is very

up and down: light and dark, comfort and mourning alternate in experience in this life. Of those who have no changes, it is said they fear not God (Ps. 55 v 19). It would be well if we had grace to seek a closer walk with God, so that we did not so often forsake our own mercy and turn away from Him in whom is our hope. But it is a mercy to know a little of the joy and peace in believing in Christ. There is worship in it, praise in it, sanctification in it, lively hope in it and there is glory in it.

"With joy unspeakable and full of glory." Wherever salvation is in the experience, there will be a measure of glory. Glory of the Divine character, glory of Divine grace and of Divine wisdom and of the Trinity, and that glory will fill your heart sometimes and you will worship the Lord. I can only hint at it, knowing so little of it, but I do know enough just to hint at it.

"With joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." That is the finishing, the completion of faith, - the salvation of the soul. Whatever trials you have, that will be the ultimate end, - salvation and deliverance from them all, victory over every enemy and especially over sin. Sometimes you get that victory in faith. Faith does anticipate eternal life sometimes, everlasting salvation, glory and holiness in heaven, and very sweet it is. O how you will stretch out after it when you have the anticipation of it in your heart. But it is to be received. "Receiving the end of your faith." When Jacob came to the end of his long days and his many trials, - and O what great trials he had! - his faith stood fast. He faltered sometimes and doubted and seemed full of self-pity, but when he came to the end and was blessing his sons, he paused and said, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." That was the uppermost thing with him. David similarly, when he came to his end said, "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." O what a thing it will be to be saved so as nevermore to be in sensible danger. To be saved into heaven, to get away from sin and enjoy the fulness of that provision made in the covenant

sealed with blood, and to see the Lord. Salvation will be that. They shall see His face; and His Father's name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no more curse: and His servants shall serve Him. (Rev. 22 v 3 & 4). It is a great salvation Christ has secured by His death and resurrection. Are you after it? Do you seek it? Have you had some intimations of it? Well, you are a favoured people if it is so. He came to save the lost. We are a lost people, and if we die ignorant of Christ we are lost for ever. If there should be a soul here living indifferent to the Lord Jesus, having no interest and no desire after Him, may the Lord make you think of that. A Christless soul is an eternally lost soul. But every believer, whatever his trials may be, when he comes to the end, will die in faith and enter into this everlasting salvation. The Lord help those of you who are tried and enable you to believe that these manifold temptations that come to you are for the trial of your faith, and may that love of which I have feebly spoken, be manifested in your heart, drawing you out to the Lord Jesus in submission to His will and in obedience to His commands.

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