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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday evening, 26 February 1928

1 PETER 5 v 10/11

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us  
unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that  
ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish,  
strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for  
ever and ever. Amen."

To be a child of God, to be in union with Jesus Christ, to feel His blood on your conscience, to be persuaded that it is well with you, and will be well through life and in death, this is the one thing after which, through the Holy Ghost, God sets His people's hearts. The difficulties of the way sometimes are, so to speak, lost sight of. If God says to any of you that He "has chosen you in the furnace of affliction", very likely the choice made by God the Father would so fill your hearts that, for the time, you would not think about the furnace of affliction. The first would swallow up the second. To be chosen unto life, chosen to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, would so fill your hearts as that, for the moment, you would have no thought for anything else. If Jesus says to you : "Follow Me", nature might be as forward in you as it was in Peter. "Lord what shall this man do?" but it would come to this, to be chosen by Christ and to be a follower of His divine Majesty, would be the first of all things, the very first. Well, and this is exactly what Christ puts before His people. A faithful witness He is, and He says: "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head". You say you will follow Me, see what the way must be. "Follow Me". I will said a man; said the Lord, this is what you must look for. If the Master has nowhere to lay His head, do not let the servant expect a pillow of down here. The Spirit, by the Apostle Peter, puts first of all the choice of people - who have been called unto the eternal glory of God by Christ Jesus; "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father", the God of all grace who, in the fulness of time, spoke to the soul and said "Live". That has been done to some of us. The Spirit came and laid eternal

realities in their weight on our spirits, and everything else, for the time, sank into a kind of insignificance. To be called; O, to be called with a holy calling; think of it. Called to stand before God in your guilt, to stand confessing felt sin, acknowledging felt depravity, ignorance, wickedness, wanderings, wrong desires. Called to look on the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God. When a man is given a spiritual view of that righteousness, his own righteousness becomes filthy rags. Called to stand before God as he is in His law; as he is in His law which is inexorable, will not give way, not bate one iota; every jot, every tittle of that law must be honoured. Called to stand before the blessed Saviour, a poor dog, like the Syrophenecian woman; a wicked publican, a vile criminal like the dying thief, each standing before the Saviour crying, "Lord help me"; "God be merciful to me a sinner"; "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom". Ah, and what a standing it is; what a sight it is. Called to this. And in this heavenly calling there is glory. This eternal glory begins here in the experience of the people of God. In that important chapter in the Corinthians where the Apostle Paul contrasts law and gospel, he speaks of the glory of the law as a vanishing thing. Terrible, a ministry of death and of condemnation, a ministry that kills all to whom it comes - of that, he says, it vanishes, and in respect of another dispensation, it has no glory at all. And that other dispensation is the gospel, the ministration of life, and this has an abiding glory. And in that chapter - in the conclusion of it - he says, "We all, with open face" - honest, instructed; an honest and instructed conscience brought from looking at the law to gaze on the gospel - "We all, with open face, - the veil taken from the heart - "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image" - that is the image of the glory looked upon - "changed into the same image even as by the Spirit of the Lord". That tells us that this glory begins on earth in a gracious experience. And, in the 17 John, to which I made reference this morning, the same thing is set forth. In that prayer, Christ says to His Father "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them". Think of it. And what was it? The Word of God. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me". The grace of God, eternal life; this was the glory that began in their experience. Well, dear friends, it is not long we have to live, and it is not much we have to suffer compared with what Christ suffered, and as compared with the

eternity of a blessed grace-given freedom from suffering. "If we suffer with Him we shall be also glorified together." We are very foolish, very weak, creatures. We little believe what Christ says: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof". O, how long trouble seems, and the Apostle says, it is but for a moment. How heavy it feels, yet he says, it is a light affliction. And the reason of all this is that what is to come, the weight of glory that is to come, so outweighs all that is felt and suffered, that the one is not worth naming by the side of the other. Yet we are mean, suffering, poor creatures, and the Lord says to us, as many of us as are His and have been called by Him, "Come unto Me"; cast your care and your burdens on Me. I will sustain you; I will never suffer you to be moved. And faith sometimes will enable us to sing

Beneath my fainting head  
My Father and my Friend

What a favour to feel that

Beneath my fainting head  
My Father and my Friend  
His everlasting arms has laid  
To succour and defend

That is enough, and when you feel it to be enough, for the time being you want nothing else. This eternal glory - O, if we get but a sight of it. Think of what is to come as revealed in the chapter which we were reading just now. No more pain, no more night, no need of candle. Why? "For the Lord God and the Lamb is in the midst of them". This is the glory, the throne of God and of Jesus Christ in the midst of His people. And there His servants serve Him; there they now know there is no curse. And this state is eternal; it begins in experience; it shall never end. It was in the heart of God in eternity when there were no creatures. It is in the heart of every elect person in time by the power of the Holy Ghost. But here there is a suffering.

"After ye have suffered a while". This is what our faithful Lord Jesus says by His servant Peter. These strangers, strangers

scattered throughout the world - each of whom says at times to God: "I am a stranger in the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me" - these strangers are pilgrims, not at home. They believe there is a home to go to, and sometimes they take glad steps toward that home. Sometimes they doubt and take very weary steps and slow ones, and think they shall never get there. These strangers, they suffer, and in this epistle the Spirit says to them, if you suffer as Christians do not be ashamed. Let none of you suffer as an evil doer or as a busy body in other men's matters, but if you suffer as a Christian do not be ashamed. And this is the suffering of the text; Christian suffering, different from all other suffering, yet some of it quite common to human nature, but by divine grace taken out of the category of human suffering and put into a new category, the category of Christian suffering. I would direct, as enabled, your attention to Christian suffering; then to the period of it - "a while". "After ye have suffered a while"; then what the Lord will do with regard to these Christian sufferers; after you have suffered, He will make you perfect, stablish you, strengthen you, and settle you; and lastly, the ascription, sweet to the heart of a child of God, the ascription of glory and dominion to the Lord for ever and ever, and may we say, as the Scripture says, "Amen".

Christian suffering. I take it that this suffering may be put under three heads. First, the suffering that is peculiarly and bitterly felt from indwelling sin and I do not think I should err if I said this is the keenest of all the suffering of a Christian - indwelling sin. The apostle Paul, as far as I remember reading of him, as he relates his own case, nowhere says, with respect to external troubles that came to him: "O wretched man". But with respect to indwelling sin he says: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And I am sure some of you will appreciate that. You will say, as you know in your own cases, how bitter, this experience of the opposition to godliness, to the Father's love, to the Son's atonement, to the Spirit's grace; the opposition of sin to prayer, to believing, to waiting on God, to keeping Him first. The opposition of sin to all this is more bitter than any trouble of a temporal kind that you have ever experienced, is it not? This is suffering, and it is emphatically Christian suffering. No natural man can suffer this. No man dead in trespasses

and sins can suffer this; sin is his element. A Christian says, I am not in my element with this, this body of sin and death, this plague of leprosy, this corruption, this corroding thing in my soul. I am not at home with it; it is foreign to my spirit. Though natural to my old nature, it is foreign to my desires and my aims and my prayers. Well, my brethren, we are companions in this, that we suffer sin; suffer from sin, because the grace of God is in us. What was once sweet is now bitter through grace. What we pursued with avidity we now turn from with abhorrence, through grace. What once was our delight, is now our pain and shame, through grace. Therefore let no man be ashamed who suffers thus. "Rejoice inasmuch as the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you." So says the Spirit by this inspired apostle. Let no man be ashamed who suffers from indwelling sin. Sin dwells in every child of God; that is his suffering, that is his chief pain. He does not dwell or live in sin; that is his mercy, that is his glory. Let us praise the Lord if we can look at sin and say, we hate you. Let us praise God if we can honestly say to Him: "Lord Thou knowest we would not be this, we would not do that. When we do evil we are grieved; when we are hindered from good we are sorry. This is then the first thing, Christian suffering. And if you want particulars of it turn to the Apostle Paul's experience. "When I would do good evil is present with me and the good that I would I do not. The evil that I would not, that do I". And this was the only occasion on which, as I said, as far as I remember, the Apostle Paul uses that dolorous word: "O wretched man that I am"; that pained exclamation: "O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The second head under which I would put suffering is that which immediately precedes the text. "The devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour". We see him in Genesis, entering into undefiled Eden, approaching a pure woman, Eve; suggesting to her that God did not intend what He said. He knew better than speak as an Atheist; he never was an Atheist; he never will be. He did not speak to her as an Atheist, but suggested that she had made a mistake in interpreting God's prohibition as she had done. Then he ventured, seeing that his suggestion had taken hold of her pure mind and defiled it and cast a mist before her judgment, then he said, God does know, He knows better, He knows perfectly well that if you take of this you

will discern good and evil; you will be as gods. This was the devil; she was overcome; she was conquered, her husband was conquered, and we all were conquered in him. Now that same devil, Jesus calls a liar and a murderer, and as a liar and a murderer he approaches every child of God, more or less, to tempt him. He is called, Satan, an adversary; he is called the accuser of the brethren, accusing them night and day before God. See him going to the Lord Jesus; see that conflict in the wilderness; listen to the vile suggestions of that foul spirit; see the dear, holy, Lord Jesus resisting him and overcoming him.

Say, could the tempter try  
To shake a tree, so good, so green,  
Good God,

we may well pray with good Hart

Good God, defend the dry

That impious "if" he dared to hurl at the holy mind of the Saviour, and he will hurl it at our minds and has done, perhaps numberless times. "If Thou be the Son of God". If you are a child of God, produce your genealogy; bring proof of your new birth; show a holy life. He may say, God's people are called with a holy calling; show now a holy life; show a holy life in your family, in your duties, in your business, in your thoughts. O, the challenge; who can meet it without the blood of Christ? Temptation is a suffering to the saints, and it is not often that they can perceive their union with the Lord Jesus in thus suffering. It is not often that they can see a gracious conformity to Him in their suffering this temptation, nor is it easy to believe that the temptations which distress them will, in the punishment due to them, be inflicted, not on their souls, but on the tempter's. The punishment will fall on his head. God's great and sore and strong sword will punish him; he will be put out of court one day; one day we shall be free from him. The promise runs thus: "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly".

Ye tempted souls reflect  
Whose Name 'tis you profess  
Your Master's lot you must expect  
Temptation more or less

And the third kind of suffering is of a temporal kind, common to fallen humanity, yet taken away from that ordinary universal category and put into this wonderful, blessed category, Christian suffering. Why? Because designed by your heavenly Friend and Father for your good. Is it bodily trouble? Is it something in your circumstances? Is it something that presses heavily upon you? Is it a dashing of some hopes? Is it a killing of some expectation? Is it a thwarting of some ambition, which in itself is quite lawful? Is it a blight here and there? Now listen - O, if your distraction will let you - listen to this. "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him". You say, I have brought it on myself. True, true. God wont contradict that sin is the procuring cause of chastisement in some way. Though He wont contradict that confession, He will say, now it has another character attaching to it. Though it be self-procured, it is inflicted by your heavenly Father; the Lord has sent it. He says "My son despise not the chastening of the Lord" - do not lift your head up as if you were determined to bear the thing with as much spirit as possible, for this is despising - "nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" - do not fall down and say there is no hope - that is fainting. Which is the right way? Just a third way in between these two. And what is that? Listen to the chastisement. "Hear the rod and who hath appointed it". What does it say? "My son give Me thine heart". Look to me, leave the world, leave yourself, leave your things with Me and live on Me, and live to Me. It may say, you have thought too much about this life in this particular. Now this life is a perishing life; look for eternal life. It may say, that pleasure distracted you, took your heart away, employed and filled your thoughts, got hold of your mind, and so occupied it that you had no time nor room or thought for divine things, and therefore I have sent this trouble to call you away. I have sent this affliction to bring you to My footstool. Now when a person blessed with grace is afflicted and is thus instructed, his suffering becomes Christian suffering. Though his neighbour may

have exactly the same kind of trouble, his becomes Christian suffering. My son, I chasten thee. It is the Lord that chastens, it is the Lord that speaks, it is the Lord who means good and will bring good out of this evil, blessing out of this apparent curse; it is the Lord. What a mercy to be thus instructed. "After that ye have suffered a while". I think all suffering must be placed under one of these three heads.

Now what will the Lord do after a while? "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous". And what is to come? "Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby". "Make you perfect". Perfection, in some Scriptures, means "maturity". "We speak the wisdom of God among men that are perfect". Children need milk, must be fed with milk. Strong meat belongs to them who are, by reason of exercise and of age, able to take it. When God matures a person's judgment, deals kindly with his judgment, brings his will to lie straight with the divine will, and instructs a person in doctrine and experience, then he has a judgment which is called "perfect"; there is maturity. "We speak the wisdom of God among them that are perfect", and on this point, the Apostle says to the Corinthians: "Be children in malice; in understanding, men". "Let us go on unto perfection" he says to the Hebrews. Let us leave the first principles of the doctrine and go on unto perfection. And sanctified affliction has this great effect; it will perfect you, bring you to a maturity which belongs to all exercised, discerning, kindly, graciously instructed people. May we, as a church, be made perfect in that particular. It has a meaning in Scripture of "completeness". And when you have suffered a while, and come to the end of your days; when it may be said of you in your manner and your measure, as it is said of David: "Having served his generation by the will of God he fell on sleep". He himself had previously said "Thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me". What concerns you? To be saved. What concerns you? To have the promise given to you, fulfilled in you. What concerns you? To have more felt union with the Son of God, and more gracious communion. "Make you perfect, stablish", set you well down in things; bring you away from that unstableness of mind that so frequently has wrought evil and damage to your spirit. When favoured, in our youth, some of us can say then we could sing, and when darkness came, then

everything was wrong, as if the Lord had changed. Jeremiah made a great mistake when he expected, according to God's promise as it seemed to him interpreting it, expected victory. He said his enemies had victory over him, so that he said, "O Lord Thou hast deceived me and I was deceived". And you may just think that; wonder why the Lord has dealt so unkindly with you. But the day comes when you say this, I was wrong; He was faithful; He was true. I made endless mistakes and errors in my mind and in my judgment. Now I am established. Establishment comes two ways. It comes from repeated mercies; so many of them and some of them so clear and beautiful that when you gather them up one by one and put them all together, you can say

And can He have taught me to trust in His Name  
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?

God establishes people like that. Sometimes it comes this way. You get a sudden sealing of the Spirit. You can say, the Lord has been teaching me this and that, here a little and there a little, like writing a letter, and now the time has come when He has just subscribed all His writing, put His Name to it, put His Name to the work and now I can see that He has been with me even when I thought He was not. "Stablish" you. After you have suffered, after you have been exercised, fearing, giving up, starting again, fainting and been revived, falling and lifted up; after these sufferings the Lord comes and establishes, strengthens. Strengthens faith so that faith can say in the midst of the roaring of the waves, and with the view of a wreck, faith can say, "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told unto me". As God told me, I believe it will be. He was strengthened. "The Lord is my strength and my song". He is the song of His people in the wilderness and they go from strength to strength, and every one in Zion appeareth before God. "Settle you". Not quite the same as stablish. Settle you on your foundation, settle you on the Person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Build you more and more experimentally on the Rock of Ages. Settle you in the atonement, that it shall be your cleansing and your boast. Settle you in righteousness imputed, that it shall be your covering, clothing, and glory. Settle you as to union with the Lord Jesus, that He is your Head; you are a member of His body in particular. "Settle you". You may say, well I believe all that, and not be settled in it. You may

see much in the doctrine and not be settled in it in your experience. But when you have learnt a little here and a little there - when you have had, again and again, your filthy rags set before you, when God has made that out to you - "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee" (Isaiah 57 v 12), then has opened the righteousness of Christ to you; and when the pollutions of your thoughts and ways have brought you to a distressing condition and the blood of Christ takes all away from your conscience - you are settled in the atonement. And when the Spirit of Christ comes and takes of His Person and His things and reveals them to you, you are settled with respect to His Person being your foundation, your only foundation and you can say: "Other foundation can no man lay" for me, or lay in me "save that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ". Beautiful settlement; beautiful settlement. The building has had shakes; it has got nearer to the foundation; it is rooted in it, grounded in it. Happy the man who gets this. Then he sings: "To Him be glory". To Him who has done it in me and for me; to Him who has never forsaken me, never left me really; to Him whose gracious operations I own, by whose gracious operations I have been saved from self; to Him who has brought the atonement to my conscience; to Him who has again and again made testimonies to my soul about God and Himself that I cannot doubt; to Him who, in eternity, loved me and in time redeemed me, and in time quickened me; "To Him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen". Thus we begin the lasting song. Thus we begin the song we shall never cease to sing: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." To the Father be glory and dominion for ever and ever. To the eternal Son incarnate be glory and dominion for ever and ever. And to the Holy Ghost, one Person in the Godhead, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. So say the hearts of God's people; so says my heart. May we never cease to praise the eternal Three, One in nature, One in covenant, though Three in different operations.

AMEN.