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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
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JAMES 5 v 11

"Behold, we count them happy which endure. 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 word of Christ is proved by all the saints to be true - "In the world ye shall have tribulation" "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head". Would His people, in their right mind, another lot prefer? Would they choose to have a path absolutely different from that which their Lord and Master trod? Shall the head only suffer and the members entirely escape suffering? It pleases the Spirit to lead His children into paths which, in themselves, are very painful, many of them strangely crooked, some of them most provoking to nature, irritating to the mind. It pleases God to permit men sometimes to oppose them, and often Satan, who walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, terrifies them, but they prove that their God, their Father in heaven, deals with them graciously, that He has a divine purpose of mercy in thus dealing with them, that the end He has in view is their everlasting good, their conformity to His purpose, His will, and to the image of His dear Son. Their sufferings come to them as from the hand of their Father who chastens them because they are His sons. "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons". The Spirit moved James to write this epistle, and in the first chapter, which we were reading, he declares that the man who endures temptation is a blessed man. Whatever his reason may say, whatever his circumstances may say, whatever his fears may say, whatever the devil may say, the Scripture declares he is a blessed man, and there awaits him a crown, for the Lord shall give unto him the crown of life. O suffering saint, what an end awaits you, what a glorious end

The joy prepared for suffering saints  
Will make amends for all

In this chapter it is clear that the people of God were troubled, they were oppressed. Then, as today, rich men oppressed the poor, and the Apostle exhorts the suffering saints to be quiet. "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the Name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience". See how they endured. Some of them were slain; many were tortured. Says the apostle, "take them", set them before you "as an example of suffering affliction" - not merely being afflicted, but suffering it, enduring it, receiving it at the hands of God - "and of patience" waiting the time when God will graciously deliver you. "Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job", a much tried man, and by his friends, a much misunderstood man. "We count them happy" We have heard of Job's patience, and moreover we "have seen the end of the Lord", what end God had in view in permitting Job to be so afflicted, and further we know that "the Lord is very pitiful", that "He does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men", but He does it for our profit. He is very merciful and very pitiful. Says the apostle in the Hebrews, "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He", the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, "He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness". " We count them happy which endure". Who counts them happy? Ask the world if these poor afflicted and often persecuted people are happy. The judgment of the world is the opposite of this. Who counts them happy? I shall not stretch beyond the Scriptures, if I say in the first place, God counts them happy. Who inspired this epistle, as all other parts of the Scriptures? The Holy Ghost. These are not, in the first place, the words of James; they are the words of God. O, if the Lord counts any of us in this chapel, who are troubled, happy people, what a favour. Does the Father count us happy? Yes, "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons". He delights in His sons. He chasteneth the son in whom He delighteth. It is good to stand well here. Where are the wicked? In slippery places. Does God count them happy? No! What image do they wear? That of pride and self sufficiency, and satisfaction with their lot here. Does God count them happy? He despises their image. What about Asaph? He fretted and failed, and yet His God counted him a happy man and so took him

into the sanctuary and taught him the end of the wicked and the end of the righteous. It is a great thing to be counted happy in your afflictions, to be counted one of God's suffering children of which he approves, approves as He sees them blessed with grace to accept His chastenings, blessed with grace to confess sin and that chastening is deserved. Blessed with grace to lie low and await God's appointed time for succour and for deliverance. You may count yourself very unhappy to be in such and such a case. You may think the Lord is dealing hardly with you, crossing you here and thwarting you there, and straightening you in another place, bringing you into paths you have not known, causing deep valleys of depression, and high mountains of obstruction to be in your path. But, O, the day will come, when you will find that true "I led him about and instructed him". It is not good to have our own way. The Lord says that; in His teaching, He says that; in His dealings He says that. It is not good that we should have our own way but to walk in that way which He Himself has spoken of, opened and made known. And the Son counts them happy. Every enduring saint is a happy person. "He that endureth to the end the the same shall be saved". "Ye are they that have continued with <sup>my</sup> in My temptations and I appoint unto you a kingdom". These enduring ones bear up under their troubles and Christ said they were happy people. And the Spirit counts them happy. He comes alongside of them. He does not despise their affliction in their affliction. He does not abhor them in their trials but He comes alongside of them and manifests grace, gives more grace. Well, if we have the approbation of the Trinity in the path of affliction in which we are called to walk, we must be happy people, although unbelief and an irritable mind and a proud heart, a stubborn will may speak just the contrary. We must be truly happy people upon whom God lays His hand, and upon whom He does, at times, bestow a smile, even when we are in a path of trouble. But there are others who join in this judgment, that is every child of God with faith. Doubtless you have at times looked upon some of the Lord's afflicted people and said, now they have tokens for good, they have evidences of being the sons of God, and you have counted them really happy people as you have seen them humbled by the dealings of God, seen the fruits of grace in them, heard them confess their sins, and have perceived how that the Lord was gathering their affections more to Himself, stamping death and vanity and emptiness and corruption upon every

created thing, and given them hearts to esteem more and more, value more and more highly, divine things. Christ and His blessed gospel, the Holy Ghost causes us by means of affliction more to prize and follow after and cleave to. This then is a judgment that is arrived at by the people of God. "We count them happy". Do not think yourselves in a good state, you who miss the cross. If you miss chastening, you miss a sign of God's love. If you miss His hand, if He is not in some way dealing with you in a way of correction, you will have no evidence such as the Scripture gives in that particular, of being among the children. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth". And if you are not scourged, then look at the conclusion. You are not a son, for if God scourges every son and you miss that scourging you are not a son. "We count them happy". In what particulars can they be counted happy? They can be counted happy in this. They are under the eye and care of their God. He loves them too well to let them alone. Too well does He love them to leave them uncorrected. Hearts full of sin they have and he does not leave them to be swayed altogether and overcome by their hearts. He opens to them their sins, and gives them to be afraid of becoming a prey to their sins. He opens to them His grace, and gives them to perceive what a mercy it is to be under His divine correction and chastening. In that particular they are very happy. O if God cares for us - think of it; you would not call a father a kind wise father if, seeing his son going astray, he took no notice of him and his wanderings and administered no correction; God is wise and He sees us in our foolishness and disposition to wander and He administers correction - then we are happy. Israel, that goodly land of Palestine was a happy land in this that it drank in the rain of heaven, and had the sun shining on it, and the eyes of the Lord God upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, and surely a child of God has the eye of the Lord upon him from the beginning of his life to the end of it and particularly after grace has come. Here a reproof is administered; there a check is spoken on his heart and there a trouble comes to Him in providence, and there a call comes to his heart "Seek ye My face". "My son give me thine heart". O it is a happy state, troublesome to the flesh, but a happy state and faith esteems it to be happy. They are happy in their path because though it is rough, they endure and they get profit. You may say, and say truly, that you are unprofitable servants, after you have done all that God

hath laid on you to do, but you must say this also, God has made trouble profitable. Trouble is a profitable servant to a child of God. Many and many a call to the soul trouble brings "Seek ye My face". "Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face evermore". A suffering Christ has a beauty in Him to the eye of a suffering saint. A mourning Saviour and a mourning saint fit well together. A broken-hearted Saviour and a broken down sinner suit each other well. And this is a happy thing. There is a fitness between Christ and sinners, a suitableness in sinners for Christ, and a suitableness in Christ to sinners who are chastened. Many an errand you have to pay to the throne of grace, many a cry goes out of your heart, many a wail from your spirit under affliction, that would not have been but for affliction. The Lord sends trouble to His children for good. He sends trouble to them for their profit. He meekens their spirit, He subdues their will, He makes tender their consciences, makes watchful their hearts by means of affliction. Afflictions make us see many things which otherwise we should not see. "And we count them happy" in the path of tribulation because it is a safe path. "Oft we're best when dangers fright us". How many times would you have cried to God to preserve you, if chastening had not come to show you your danger? How often would you have said "Hold Thou me up" if some sense of danger and evil had not been present with you? Afflictions do bring people to many heavy cries and many prevailing petitions.

"And we count them happy" in the next place because of the issue. O there is an end. "Thine expectation shall not be cut off". God sometimes gives a saint of His to expect good by means of evil and mercy to come by means of affliction, and that expectation is not cut off. Why, afflicted saint, enduring temptation, Christ appointed a kingdom. This is a blessed end. Time is short; trouble therefore must be short, but the reward "I appoint unto you a kingdom". And they come to this reckoning in their own soul sometimes, as Paul says of himself, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." "We count them happy which endure", which stand up under their troubles, which remain in their troubles, which

do not run away from them. To run away from them is a very natural thing. I expect that, with most of you, when trouble has come one of the first considerations has been, now how can I get out of this? Is there a way out of it? But another consideration which comes in, by the Holy Ghost, is, what has the Lord to say to me by it? "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reproved". Enduring is not running away. Enduring is submitting, waiting, remaining under that that God has laid on. He is a happy man who is brought to this - "because it is God's will, I have it." "In the world ye shall have tribulation" Say what you will, here it is. It is as true as any promise of the gospel. It is as true as God's own blessed word can be, as certain of fulfilment. "In the world ye shall have tribulation". Tribulation is a threshing instrument, it is to separate the chaff from the wheat. This is used by the Lord to set forth what He will do to His children; it expresses trouble. Probably most of you, at least many, will have seen the old fashioned flail that was used to thrash out the wheat. Oh, the strokes of it. God in mercy and love speaks thus to His children. Tribulation, a separation of the chaff from the wheat - "for what is the chaff to the wheat saith the Lord" And to endure this is to submit to it. O it is a great thing to come in your manner and measure to say, with a suffering Christ - "Not My will but Thine be done". And in the endurance of it there is teaching and a good deal of times of teaching. Teaching to pray, teaching us our dependence on sovereign grace, teaching us the corruption of our nature, and the value of the atonement. Teaching us how apt we are to slide and backslide, and how we need the Lord to hold and to fulfil in us that word "I will keep it night and day lest any hurt it. I will water it every moment". You think of it. Now grace sanctifying affliction teaches this. Have not some of you had your eyes opened most painfully by affliction to see yourselves so apt to slide, so ready to turn away from your best Friend, so ready to call that substance, which is a shadow, and turn from substance. O how many of you have found yourselves drawn to the throne of God's heavenly grace by means of affliction and enabled to say "It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes." "Before I was afflicted I went astray" O Christ becomes beautiful; He shines; He is desirable; He is great; He is wonderful to afflict sinners. They are turned as it were out of themselves to Him. They

are turned from the earth to Him and His word shines in their eyes. "I lead in the way of righteousness in the midst of the paths of judgment that I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance and I will fill their treasures." One way of righteousness only. "I lead in the way of righteousness in the midst of the paths of judgment." Many paths of judgment there may be. "Yea in the way of Thy judgments have we waited for Thee O Lord." That is the way God leads you as you are His people, "in the midst of the paths of judgment" and He is an enduring man who walks in those paths humbly depending on grace, cleaving to Christ, following Him, esteeming Him to be better than all riches and all temporal good and feeling, at times, that you can cast your immortal all upon His mercy, look to Him to be saved, saved daily and saved everlastingly. To endure affliction then is to remain under it till God shall bring you out of it. To endure it is to submit to God's will in it. To endure it is to live so in it, as that it becomes profitable to you, and you will be able to look back on it at times and say, that was a good time to me, that was a profitable affliction I had, and I bless God for it. "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" And here we may observe this, that affliction in itself is not an end. It is sent for an end. It is not an end in itself. It is like a messenger bringing some message, like a schoolmaster sent to teach the child or the child sent to be taught. One who, with such an ugly exterior and such hardness and harshness, you can scarcely bear the sight of, yet comes with a great deal of mercy in it, and the end says - Now the Lord sent this trouble with all this mercy. Merciful teaching, merciful humbling under His mighty hand, merciful grace to keep you cleaving to the Lord in the midst of it, merciful instruction showing to you what you are and also somewhat of what the Lord is to you. The end of the Lord here is the end of Job's affliction, and what was wrought by it. And in this I would make two remarks, first God has a most merciful end to answer in sending affliction. When he purges a fruitful branch, what is the end? "That it may bring forth more fruit". When He chastens a praying sinner, what is the end? That he may pray more. When He chastens a believing soul, what is the end? That that soul may cleave more and more to Him by precious faith. This is the end, one end that the Lord has in view - it is called in the Hebrews this - "that we may be partakers of His holiness", be more separated in spirit and life

from the world, and from self. Be more like a suffering Christ. A suffering Christ in His sufferings committed Himself unto His God and Father and a suffering saint has that wrought in him in measure to commit himself unto the Lord. Lord I do not know what this means but I do know I prove myself very weak under it, very unable to bear it, impatient under it. Naturally I wish to get out of it. But O,

"Accomplish in me all Thy will  
Only remember I am dust."

Deal gently with me. Affliction may often come and talk to you about your sins in the past, and the end of it is this. "Remember not against us former iniquities". "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for thy goodness' sake O Lord." And in this way God accomplishes a great end, separation from self. Our own life is death; Christ is our life. Separation from our strength; our own strength is weakness. The strength of God is Christ and we are brought to lean on Him by means of the affliction. "We count them happy which endure" thus because God is accomplishing a great end. Ah the end of a thing is better than the beginning and toward the end of the pilgrimage pilgrims find that there has been something wrought in them and something done for them. Christ is more to them than in earlier days and they see affliction has been the means used by the Spirit to bring this about. When the end of Job's trouble came, God gave him twice as much as he had before. This may not at all hold or be made good literally in our experience, but spiritually it may be very good and true. You may say, I get worse, and affliction shows me myself in such colours as that I hate myself, and I see that I am just a man of sin, a sink of sin and unbelief. But is that all? If you are enabled to speak honestly for God you will say something else. You will say, Christ is a great deal more to me than He used to be. I see a beauty, a worth in Him, a glory. His sufferings draw me; His fulness supplies me; His life keeps me; His hand sustains me; His righteousness, O how beautiful that is in my eyes. You say, sometimes, He visits me, He comes to me, as He went to Jeremiah. He, when in the low dungeon cried unto God and He heard. He drew near. "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee: Thou saidst, Fear not." And thus every child of God will have a testimony of this sort in his own soul, that it is better with



him at the end in some particulars than at the beginning. Though thy beginning was small God will greatly increase thy latter end. We increase in a judgment of things. We judge time things to be what they are, unsatisfying. They are given for a day's use and they die with the day. We judge spiritual things to be what they are, enduring. "Durable riches and righteousness". We judge the Lord to be what He says He is, "Our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble." We judge of earthly glory to be dimness itself and we judge the Lord to be our only glory. Thus the end of God's teaching with His children brings them to a good judgment, a proper spiritual judgment. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things" and he judges affliction among them, and judges the issue of affliction. "Ye have seen the end of the Lord". What was it? It was a declaration, so to speak, namely that "the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Look at your affliction in itself. Does it say so? Does it look as if the Lord were pitiful to you when He takes this away, when He lays that on, when He straitens you where you were enlarged. Does it look pitiful, when instead of relieving you instantly, He permits you to be distressed, distracted, tormented, tempted, and driven hither and thither? No! Wait a while. You will come to it; you will come to it. O the pity of a Father, the pity of a Saviour, the pity of the Holy Ghost. How pitiful this blessed God is to us, how He draws near to us and says "Fear not".

For I will be with Thee, thy troubles to bless,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

We get fresh quickening in these ways. We get fresh drawing to God in these ways. "The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy". That stroke that fetched such trouble into your heart, and such sighs and groanings did not look very merciful did it? But O when you come to see that God reckons more of your spiritual profit than of your temporal good, that He thinks more of the honour of His grace in you, of your benefit by that grace, than all the temporal blessings that your heart covets, and that you fain would have, and you say O bless Him for His mercy, His tender mercy to me. Is He a tender father who never corrects His son? Cruel wicked. He that spares the rod hates his son, and the Lord is so merciful to us that He lays on His gentle rod, and we prove this. Job lived some time in his trouble and he got

into a bad temper with his friends, became very petulant and said sharp words, and made hasty speeches which the Lord did not regard other than as wind. But O the day came when the Lord turned his captivity and you in your affliction may say, sharp things about God's providence and way with you and get petulant and if any saint should come and seek to help you, you might say to him if your soul were in my place then I could shake my head at you, But O the day comes when you can say, I see mercy written on my heaviest troubles and I see tender mercy in the severest dealings of the Almighty with me and He has cared for my soul. Ah, more than I ever cared for my child, you may say, He has cared for my soul. And how has He shown it? He has visited you, He has spoken to you, has said - "Fear not, I will be with thee". "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" for the Lord thy Maker is thy husband. He cares for thee. And so we prove things. We do not live on guessings, surmisings. We live on reality, we live on a good God, on a wise God, on a gracious God who will deal so with His children as to bring them to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I may learn Thy statutes." "Before I was afflicted I went astray". Behold, see this wonder, see this that just overturns all the reckoning of nature, all the voices of the whole world to the contrary. "We count them happy which endure" tribulations that are sent because we "have seen the end of the Lord that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy". Happy shall we be if we are in such a case as this.

AMEN.