

## PARTICIPATION IN THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED.

Preached at Galeed on Lord's Day, 1st December 1940.

*"A partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."* I Peter, v. 1.

The apostle in his epistle to the scattered strangers in various localities, speaks under the inspiration of God the Holy Ghost to the various cases into which God's people come in their pilgrimage; and among other things he addressed a word of exhortation to the elders which were among them. And while some may think that because they are not elders therefore we might pass that by, yet I am not at all sure that God's people are too familiar with the responsibilities, the supports, the encouragement, the discouragements and the ultimate honour that God will put upon those whom He appoints in the ministry of the gospel of His Son. Not to be familiar with the character and work of a gospel minister is to be in that position in which it is not possible, with spiritual intelligence and judgment, to judge the character of those who minister in the things of God. Peter, exhorting these elders, gave them this very important word of exhortation: "Feed the flock of God which is among you." The church is the flock of God, and although the Holy Ghost ministers to the necessities of the sheep of Christ, he has sovereignly and graciously raised up and equipped servants of His, who need His direction and blessing to feed the church of God. They are to feed and not to starve; they are to feed, not amuse, not condone, not make the ways of God different from what they are, but in the language and determination of the apostle Paul, "to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The doctrine of Christ is the only truth which will feed the Church of Christ. Here there is everything for doctrine, experience, practice, edification, reproof and correction; nothing is wanting in the truth of Christ. O for grace to feed the flock of God! The apostle exhorts the elders as to their motives, the objects which they have in view, "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." And although they would realise their deficiencies and shortcomings, yet as God made them faithful, made use of them as instruments, they might look forward with desire to this, that "when the Chief Shepherd

shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

In tracing this very timely word of exhortation, the apostle prefaces his remarks by reminding them that he himself was an elder; he knew their responsibilities, he knew their difficulties. he knew from experience their dejectments, their oppositions, he knew all their case, and because he knew it, he feelingly and kindly and for their good exhorted them, in the language of the apostle Paul, to "take heed to the ministry which they had received, that they might fulfil it." (Col. iv. 17) But he used other arguments to support his exhortations; he spoke of himself as a "witness of the sufferings of Christ." He preached the doctrine of Christ in His incarnation, in His sufferings and in His death. The apostle would confirm them in their ministry by reminding them that he himself had been a witness of the sufferings of Christ. This would bring many sacred and painful memories to the apostle, but more than this, it was to the apostle the foundation of his hope as well as the theme of his ministry. Although God's servants are not in the same position as the apostle Peter, to have been a witness to the sufferings of Christ, yet that is not a material loss, because by faith under the Spirit's teaching, they do witness the sufferings of their adorable Redeemer as He paid the penalty due to their sins, and laid the foundation of their hope of salvation. Then the Apostle said, in the words I have read for a text, "And also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." There is in these two last considerations of Peter a very blessed and gracious relation. He was a witness of the sufferings of Christ, a partaker of the glory which should be revealed, glory which owes its foundation and its application to the experience of the sinner in the sufferings of Christ. Neither Peter nor any sinner could ever partake of the sufferings of Christ; the nearest that a believer may venture to so holy and sacred a mystery is the witness, the reality, the blessedness of them by the Spirit's teaching in their hearts. I know the apostle speaks in the preceding chapter about God's people rejoicing "inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;" (iv. 13), but there is a difference in the meaning of the apostle. In the former of these expressions he speaks of the sufferings of Christ relatively. Every believer by the will of God suffers for the sake of Christ; there is in his experience a very great deal of gracious suffering to which he would be an utter

stranger were it not for the union which he has to Christ. But in the connection of the text he is speaking of the meritorious sufferings of Christ which we can only witness; we can never meritoriously suffer with Christ, can never assist Him in His sufferings, for alone He trod the winepress of the wrath of God. But arising out of this witnessing of the suffering of Christ there is this very sacred experience, this holy blessing of being a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed. This glory is the glory which Christ has secured to hell-deserving sinners by the virtue of His death. This glory is that which is begun here in their experience, but which can only be fully realised when we see Him without a veil between. If I may interject a word here relative to the friend you have lost by death it will be to say that I am fully persuaded by what I saw and heard from her own lips that she knew both sides of this argument of Peter's; she knew by divine grace and heavenly teaching and witnessed by faith the sufferings of Christ for herself, she trusted Him in the hope and for the salvation of her soul, and had the peace and comfort of them often in her experience, especially in her dying days. She partook of the glory which is now revealed to her, a glory over which there is now no obscurity for her; she is at Home, present with the Lord her Redeemer, where her sufferings have forever ceased. You have lost a praying member, a person blessed with grace, with judgment and with fidelity; and this cause lay very dear to her heart. May God in His mercy sanctify her removal to your good, and comfort those who have suffered immediate loss.

In the word I have read the apostle speaks of glory. Glory is the ultimate end to which every vessel of mercy shall come. This is not our rest. A child of God cannot find rest here; the presence of sin in himself and in the world, the vanity of every created thing, the uncertainty of everything here makes it impossible for a child of God ever to realise satisfaction, the only satisfaction that he can get is what God lets down out of heaven by the ministry of His Spirit into his experience.

Here grace is in a state of exercise and trial, here conformity to the image of Christ is begun, here the hammer of affliction and the chisel of trial and sanctified blessing is continually felt in the experience, here there are days of darkness, absence, sorrow because of sin, because of the absence of Christ in the comforts of His grace.

The soul of a believer tends to glory as the sparks fly upward, glory is prepared for the suffering Church of Christ and to this glory the Lord will bring every quickened, believing sinner in the time that He has appointed. The New Testament speaks very beautifully of this glory. The Saviour said that where He is, there shall His servants be. He spoke of going away to prepare a heaven for them, and said that He would come again to fetch them unto Himself, "that where I am, there ye may be also." The apostle Paul in his ministry spoke of the glory prepared for all the Church of Christ, and in his epistle said, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans viii. 18) When the Apostle came to the closing scenes of his earthly pilgrimage and his ministry this was his hope, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." (II Tim. iv. 7) "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not only me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Very wonderfully does John open up in the book of Revelation the glory prepared for the Church of Christ, a glory which is not simply freedom from sin, though that is a very great deal. It will be wonderful indeed to have no sin in our natures, to have no propensity whatever to it, and to be in a place where there is no sin, where it can never enter, where the dreadful monster that has created so much trouble here shall never torment the people of God any longer. It will be glory principally in the beholding of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, a witnessing of the Majesty of His Person, the glory and condescension of His grace to undeserving sinners, and a capacity to understand more fully than we can ever understand here, that our presence there, our happiness there is indeed owing to the grace of God, the sufferings of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost. There will be an experience in heaven of glory that will never fade, never weary, never grow old; it will be a glory as Watts speaks,

"Millions of years my wondering eyes,  
Shall o'er Thy beauties rove,  
And endless ages I'll adore,  
The wonders of his love."

It will be for grace to be consummated, even as grace is the beginning of glory in the soul; and Peter speaking relative to this glory says that it shall be revealed. It has been revealed in measure here and there. I cannot but think that when Jacob had that vision in the wilderness of the ladder set up from earth to heaven, communications going on between heaven and earth, he saw a little not only of the mediation of Christ, but the glory of that heavenly state, the rest prepared for suffering saints. We are assured that in the case of Job that in the midst of all his afflictions in which he desired death, to be removed from his false accusers, that he had faith to believe and could say, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Whom I shall see for myself, mine eyes shall behold and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." (xix. 25-27) It was revealed to David sufficiently to enable him to say, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." (Psalm xviii. 15) The spouse in the Song of Solomon saw it when she said, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." (ii. 17) Isaiah saw it in the travail of the Saviour's soul, and the satisfaction which was promised Him. It was revealed in the New Testament in gospel days more distinctly, for as the apostle said, Christ "had brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (II Tim. i. 10) The gospel reveals a little of this inexpressible glory, and when the truth of the gospel is unctuous and powerful in our experience, what does it do? It weans us from sin and earth, it brings heaven in to our experience; we have foretastes here, we have earnest of that immortal bliss which Christ has prepared for His people. The Holy Ghost reveals this gracious truth to the hearts of His people. They know in their own conscience that there is a real hell and a real heaven, for they have felt the hell of God's displeasure in a little measure in their conscience, and when He forgave them their sins and shed abroad His love in their hearts, they felt that heaven was begun; and yet the sweetest experience that we have ever had in our souls of the heaven of God's glory is but faint when compared with the reality of it. John says, "Now are we the sons of God," and that is a blessing to which some of you are aspiring. Some of you remember the distress you had,

before by God's blessing you attained to it; and once you felt that you were among the people of God, adopted into His family, your soul was full. And yet it is as John says, that "it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." This glory weans sinners from a life of sin, from satisfaction in temporal blessings or comforts; but while it does this it does not disqualify them from serving God, from depending upon Him and living according to the will and fear of God - yea, it quickens them with desire that they may under the influence of that grace of which they have had a glimpse and be found abiding in His will when He shall come.

But I want to notice just briefly this particular truth, that although this glorious future is yet to be revealed, and it shall be revealed, there are many things between us and glory in our experience; sin, fear, Satan and death are all between us, but it shall be revealed. God's purposes of grace shall stand; He is powerful to do His pleasure to His people; but it admits of a present participation. Peter speaks of partaking of the glory which shall be revealed. At some periods in the experience of a child of God there is great distress because of guilt, fear of the law of God; but through His mercy there are moments when we can speak of something felt, something participated in, of that glory which we trust we shall ultimately know in its fulness. How is it that a poor sinner participates in this glory? When God quickens a sinner into life, his felt experience is one of conviction for sin, destitution of everything that is spiritual, yet in reality the implantation of that life in the soul, is let into his experience as a principle of eternal life, that principle which shall be preserved, set at liberty, taken home and blessed with a full participation in glory. When our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake, when the way to heaven is seen in the Person and work of Christ for ourselves, when we realise the unction of his love, the prevalence of His intercession, the glory of His grace in our experience, there is an entrance of living faith into that glory which shall be revealed. When it pleases God to give us a touch, a taste, and earnest, it is a pledge of the glory that is to come; and Toplady says,

"If such the sweetness of the streams,  
What must the fountain be,

Where saints and angels draw their bliss  
Immediately from Thee?

And then he adds,

"O may the unction of these truths  
For ever with me stay,  
Till from her sinful cage dismissed,  
My spirit flies away."

When you have been in trouble, that trouble becomes a sacred memory in your experience, if you have partaken or participated in the glory which He has let down into your soul. There are certain hearing-times in God's house which you will never forget, which are enhanced in your memory by the recollection that you participated by God's good Spirit in His glory. There are supports, there are helps, there are directions which He is pleased to give us, with such applications of His love to our souls that in them we partake of the glory that shall be revealed.

Now my friends, if God has given you such a hope, given you such participation, and you realise that there is such a glory which you long to see revealed in all its completeness, let me exhort you in the language of Peter, "Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot or blemish." II Peter iii. 14) May God add His blessing for his Name's sake. Amen.