

## SERMONS

### GOD'S PROMISE TO WEEPING SAINTS.

Preached at Galeed, Brighton,  
Lord's Day January 14th, 1940. (Forenoon)

*"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Revelation xxi. 4.*

When the Thessalonian believers were troubled in their spirits by the case of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, supposing that that they would be at a disadvantage in the day of Christ, the apostle wrote to them in his epistle for their consolation that he would not have them to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep - "that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. You are mourning the loss of a godly, aged deacon of this church.\* His widow mourns the loss of an affectionate, godly husband, and his family a godly, praying father. But their sorrow is not the sorrow of them that have no hope. The Lord in his case has made death to be gain, dying to be a sacred privilege. God by His grace had made him a believer in the Person and work of the Son of God, and after a long, and often troubled path in life, God has taken him to be with Himself, which is far better. We may well heed the word of injunction, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words;" 1 Thess. iv. 18. As they respect the death of God's people from time to time we may; but how about ourselves? May we comfort one another with respect to that great and solemn day of the Lord? We have no ground in Scripture either to encourage ourselves, or another, unless our feet too, are found in that straight and narrow road that leadeth to everlasting life. There is no ground whatever for encouragement to those who neither know themselves nor yet know the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of their souls.

\*Presumably Charles Tucker who died 3, January, 1940. See G.S. 1940, p. 315.

If my friends, we contemplate the joy that is expressed in heaven over one repenting sinner returning from the error of his ways, that joy will not be less when that poor sinner, after a life of trouble, after many a weary day, at last is more than an overcomer through the blood of his dear Redeemer. As Mr. Irons has said in one of his hymns,

"Anon the pearly gates unfold,  
An heir of bliss draws nigh,  
Again they strike their harps of gold,  
And Hallelujah cry."

If there is, as there is in the case of God's people, a sacred feeling of love and astonishment and gratitude that God should have apprehended us by His grace, should have raised up in our hearts a hope in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, how great will be our love and how wonderful will be the adoration of our souls, when He consummates the work of His grace and when He finishes what we hope He has now begun. One hopes one is not a stranger to the experiences of God's people; hopes one is not deceived in believing that one has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and when we recollect some of those experiences in which we have felt godly sorrow for sin, peace in our conscience, reconciliation to His will, felt the sweetness of the love of Christ and the authority of His truth in our heart, we have said,

"If such the sweetness of the streams,  
What must the fountain be?  
Where saints and angels draw their bliss  
Immediately from Thee!"

But some may think, why refer to the present state of God's people when the passage so obviously points to a future and better state? For two reasons. One is, the glory of heaven is partly revealed or to be inferred by the passing away of our present circumstances and conditions; secondly, because, if we are strangers to the sorrows of believers we have no comfort in this Scripture; this passage holds out no hope nor yet consolation if we are strangers to the sorrows of God's people. How is it with us in our consciences? Is it possible that in all

honesty we should have to say that we have never really felt real grief or sorrow in our hearts because of the solemn realities of death and eternity, sin and grace, guilt and pardon? If we are strangers to these solemn realities, what comfort can this Scripture really afford, and what can it really promise, because there is then nothing of a truly spiritual and vital character in which there is harmony between the word and experience.

Now, tears are spoken of in this passage. Prominence is given to them, and tears are emblematical of sorrow caused, as we are told in the passage, by death, sorrow, crying and pain. In trying to speak to you a little about what it is that causes the tears of God's people, I do not say you can measure how much religion you have by the amount of your tears; some tears have no relation whatever to true religion in the heart. Some tears are caused by a rebellious heart fretting over some disappointment, sorrow, or adversity; and some of God's people have not the same ability, if I may express it thus, to show the intensity of their feelings in a flood of tears even as others. Tears here are not to be understood too literally. They rather indicate real grief of heart and sorrow of spirit occasioned by those things with which the child of God is familiar in his pilgrimage. The plague of sin, our many deficiencies, with all the oppositions we meet with in the way, do certainly occasion inexpressible grief, while they may not draw from the eyes a single tear. I believe that some of God's people have felt that nothing but the love of Christ forgiving such sinners, and such immense guilt, can ever move their hearts and their eyes to tears.

The first thing that is mentioned as occasioning this godly sorrow is said to be death. When the Holy Spirit is pleased first to convince us of our spiritual death in sin, discovers to us the distance we are from God and the perilous state we are in, we feel a sense of death upon our spirit, and in our distress and trouble we are enabled and encouraged to say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." We fear lest we should die in such a state, with our sins unforgiven and our heart at such a distance from God Himself; and how often a believer though blessed with grace, realises death in his feelings! He would not have it so; he would rather experience life, unction, activity and gracious exercises and impulses in the way of truth, but he has sorrow of heart because of the death that he feels upon his heart and upon his spirit, while many a believer in the Lord Jesus

Christ who has no hope but in His precious blood, is in fear because of death. How often he says with the hymnwriter,

"When I can read my title clear  
To mansions in the skies,  
I bid farewell to every fear  
And wipe my weeping eyes."

There is death, too, in all that he feels in regard to his legitimate calling and his family connections from time to time, and this occasions real grief of heart and sometimes may move his eyes to tears.

Another cause of grief of heart is said to be sorrow. Not the sorrow of the world which worketh death, but sorrow which is occasioned by carrying the burden of unforgiven sin in the conscience; the burden of disappointment because, though we have waited and have sought carefully and prayerfully, sometimes with a sense of encouragement that He will be merciful to us, yet we are still without the sense of our sins forgiven. Sorrow because of the ingratitude, the unbelief and the impatience of our spirits under God's gracious though sovereign dealings with us. Sorrow because of the period of time since we received the Word of God with power and joy into our hearts, because of the withholdings of His Spirit; because the word of God is more or less sealed, because the exercises of grace are more burdensome than joyous in our experience. Sorrow because of what we see and observe in the churches of Christ.

Associated, too, with grief is crying. David cried unto God with his voice. It is said in one place that "this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his distresses." Crying to God is associated with the life and experience of the believer. How often he has to cry out like Peter hastily, because of overwhelming temptation and aspersions cast upon the Divine Character; cries out in spirit because the enemy thrusts sore at him, that he might fall; cries out in sorrow of heart because he cannot express in words what he feels in his spirit relative to himself or to his trouble or to the case that may be heavy upon his spirit.

He mentions another thing as occasioning tears, or grief of spirit. He speaks of pain, and physical pain in affliction will often occasion tears when there is a real desire to be patient and

submissive to the will of God. But the pain that believers experience because of their own case and condition is pain of heart. It is a pain which is occasioned too, by the irreligion of our beloved country. Pain is often caused by the impetuosity of inexperienced Christians, who would, if they were able, override the counsels of the aged and more experienced - probably not wilfully, but through lack of experience and lack of knowledge in the things of God. But it causes pain to the people of God who have learnt by experience. Pain is caused by the inconsistencies of professors of religion. And is it not caused by a multitude of things while we pass through this vale of tears? So that the present character and path of a child of God is one in which, while not destitute of hope nor of comfort, nor yet of help, is accompanied with fears, occasioned by death, sorrow, crying and pain.

That brings me to notice the future state of God's people mentioned in the text. This is described in a two fold way: first, by an affirmation, "for the former things are past away." A part of the glory of God's people will be the passing away of those things which have occasioned them sorrow of heart and of spirit during their pilgrimage here. They shall pass away by the authority of Him Who sits upon the throne, and says, "Behold, I make all things new." Just as night passes and is succeeded by day, so the night of weeping shall pass away and be succeeded by an everlasting day in which there shall be no night at all. It is impossible for us to comprehend what this passing away of former things will be and what it must mean in the experience of those who, through grace, have attained the victory over sin, death and hell. How can we realise, (though in faith and with desire we try to anticipate it), the passing away of a body of sin and death, the passing away of all our propensities to sin and to wandering, the passing away of all our deficiencies, our shortcomings, and our unbelief, the removal of everything which here has made the path of a child of God one of sorrow and of pain? Here there are many imperfections. Grace in its principle is a perfect principle; but in our measure of the exercise of it and enjoyment of it, there is a great deal of imperfection. We have to admit that, even of love to Christ and of His ways, our love though real, is too faint and very far out of proportion from what we could wish to feel. Our knowledge, though sufficient to convince us that we are undone sinners, is far from

complete. We know in part; we see through a glass darkly. But there these former imperfections shall pass away, and grace in all its glory and consummation and fulness shall exist through eternity. Here discipline is very necessary. The discipline of tribulation, the discipline of self-examination, the discipline of sorrow and disappointment. All are necessary to strengthen and establish the life of grace in the heart, to purge the dross and burnish the gold. But in heaven this discipline shall be one of those things which have passed away. There will be no necessity for discipline, for the soul shall be gloriously complete in the Person of our Well-Beloved. Here we need grace in prayer. We need the unction of divine truth. We need the exercise of the means of grace. We cannot live without faith and hope, nor yet without desires and yearnings after Christ. But what will the glory of that holy place be when those things shall pass away, when the child of God shall be so complete in blessedness he will have nothing to ask for? There will be nothing absent to make him completely blessed. Faith shall be lost in sight, hope shall be consummated and the glory of heaven will be in the enjoyment of His everlasting grace.

The limits, or limitations of our mortality often make themselves known and felt. The most blessed day that we ever had in our experience came to an end in respect of the comforts of it. The most elevated frame of spirit or of devotion we have ever enjoyed has been called back again to the claims of time and our legitimate responsibilities. But in heaven mortality shall be swallowed up in immortality. There shall be no period to our happiness, no interference to the devotions of the soul. Glory without cessation shall be the lot of God's people.

The future state of these people is also described by a promise, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." God has often wiped away the tears or the sorrows of His people by a sense of His love, in the application of a promise, by a sight of Christ; but alas, our sorrow returns, or is repeated. God reserves for heaven the wiping away of all tears of His people once and for all. We are indebted to the God of all grace if God has given us tears which He will wipe away. There are tears which have no connection with grace at all. The tears that arise out of gracious feelings He will in His infinite love eternally remove. But how will He wipe away the tears of His people? By a sight, an everlasting, glorious sight of our

Immanuel in His glorified Body with all the glory which the Father has put upon Him; for to see Him will be to be like Him, and to see Him is to be with him for ever and ever. They will be removed by conformity to the image of the Son of God. conformity is a thing that God's people seek after when grace is upon their spirits, for they never fully attain to it in this life. But when we are conformed to His image and are in His beauty and holiness all our tears will be removed. The glory and excellence of the worship of heaven will accomplish this. It is impossible to describe it. The Word of God, however, reveals that the sensations of love and of joy and of peace and felicity are so absolutely perfect and sufficient that in the exercises of those activities and glories the soul shall be completely blessed,

"And not a wave of trouble roll  
Across their peaceful breast."

He will remove their tears by leading them to living fountains of waters; in other words, by the eternal unfolding and discovering of the glories, Deity and love of the Lord Jesus and His salvation. What a contrast between the present state of a weary, afflicted pilgrim in the ways of God, with what it shall be when not a sorrow shall possess his soul! It is a prospect which encourages the people of God to hope that it will be true of them. Sometimes they say,

"Reach down O Lord, Thine arm of grace  
And cause me to ascend  
Where congregations ne'er break up,  
And sabbaths have no end."

Now before I leave it I have one word to say,

"How stands the case, my soul, with thee,  
For heaven are thy credentials clear?  
Is Jesu's blood thine only plea?  
Is He thy great Fore-runner there?"