

1531 h
 La R 197 (1531 h)
 Sermon preached at Ebenezer, Clapham by Mr. J. Raven
 on Wednesday evening, January 13th 1937

Text: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."
 I Peter 5 v.7.

The Apostle Peter was led in this epistle to write to the strangers scattered abroad about the tribulations which they must suffer for Christ's sake, among other things. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." And he goes on to speak of their being reproached for the name of Christ, and of their suffering as christians; and you remember that in the first chapter of this same epistle, he writes of their being in heaviness through manifold temptations for a season. And his testimony agrees fully with that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said to His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The words of Christ are of universal application to His people. We may fondly hope to escape, we may cherish the hope and the expectation that whatever path of tribulation other people have, we are going to have a more easy, comfortable passage through this life; our flesh craves for it. We are always lusting after ease in the flesh, we are always looking for a pathway that is free from the thorns of daily tribulation, but the Lord does not give His people any reason to expect that. Those who are truly called to follow Him, are called to follow Him in all places whithersoever He went; to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; to follow Him in His path of temptation, suffering, and persecution. Was He hated? Was He despised? Well, is the servant greater than his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? The poet says, "Would we another lot prefer?" After the flesh we do prefer it, but if grace is in exercise, we shall choose that path which the Master Himself trod, though it means much tribulation, inward tribulation, outward tribulation.

Peter then writes to a people who, as followers of the Lamb of God, have to partake more or less deeply of this cup of suffering, and he knew from personal experience what fearfulness and what faintings of heart possessed poor people in such cases, and this was often manifested in his life's history as a disciple of Christ. Although in some ways a temperamental, impulsive man, yet all his boldness and impulsiveness failed him when put to a severe test, and so he knew what it was to feel his own weakness, and to fall by reason of it. He knew what it was for unbelief so to rise up and prevail against him, as even to deny his Lord with oaths and curses. That must have left a deep wound on Peter's spirit and in his

conscience made tender by grace. Just as you and I may have done some things in the past of our lives, some outstanding things, which have left us very deeply wounded in our conscience, and as long as we live, there are some things we shall never forget; and though we rejoice in the divine assurance of forgiveness, yet we can never forgive ourselves. The remembrance we have has the effect of making us go very tremblingly and mistrustfully of self. Peter knew what that was, and he writes to these people called more or less to suffering, and he reminds them that under their tribulation they are in the hand of God. A very important truth for them to be reminded of, they were under the hand of God. He knew that if they only looked at man, the instruments it might please the Lord to use for their instruction, correction, and chastisement, their hearts would faint and fall as his did; he had only to look at the boisterous waters, and listen to the howling of the tempest, and his heart failed and he began to sink; and a servant girl in the high priest's house was sufficient to set his heart quaking and make him fall foully, as we have already noticed. So he knew how it was to be out of view of the hand of God in these things. When Shimei cursed David, what did David say? Let him curse, the Lord hath bidden Shimei to curse David. And in one of the Psalms we read, "From the men which are Thy hand, from the wicked which are Thy sword, O Lord, deliver us." So Peter here would remind the people of God that it is the hand of God they are under. Did people persecute them? Were rulers hostile to them? Were circumstances adverse? Were they in an afflicted condition? Did the devil rage against them? Did they suffer poverty and loss of worldly goods? Were they cast out by their relations? He tells them here it is the hand of God. Very mysterious it is. Human reason is blinded here, but if the Lord gives faith and instructs by His blessed Spirit, this will be seen and confessed that it is the hand of God. Just as the Apostle Paul again and again refers to himself as the Lord's prisoner, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, not the prisoner of the Emperor of Rome. The Emperor of Rome was but the servant in this matter, doing the Lord's bidding, an instrument in the hand of God for the accomplishment of divine purposes. So the Apostle says he is the Lord's prisoner.

Peter in the preceding verse exhorts to a humbling under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, and if the people of God are led to recognise that, and to understand, believing what that means that it is the mighty hand of God, it will be greatly for their comfort. One said,

"Tis still my Father's hand, I know,
Although it weigh me down"

Then the Apostle knew from experience that to the people of God, who in themselves are but feeble and sinful flesh and blood, these things of which he speaks and which he here speaks of as from the mighty hand of God, have occasioned a good many anxious cares and much fearfulness of heart. God does not expect His people to behave as if made of cast iron; He does not expect them to be without any tender feelings; it is not His will that they should be so many stoics under these things; to be merely stoical under the afflictions that God lays upon us is to be despising the chastening of the Lord, and this the people of God are cautioned against. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." A person said to me not long ago respecting trials, he merely maintained a disposition of 'Well, there it is, I cannot help it.' I pointed out that to treat the hand of God upon us with contempt is no mark of godliness. Said the Apostle Peter, "Casting all your care upon Him." The Holy Ghost moved him to write this, because the Lord knows the weakness of our frame, He remembers we are dust. He reads all the fearfulness in the hearts of His people, and He knows how anxious cares do rush in like a flood at times, and they feel things. You do not need me to enlarge upon this. When adversity comes to you you feel it, you taste the bitterness of it, your mind is deeply perturbed by it. If affliction visits your home, or invades your body, it is acutely painful, not only to the body but the mind; it causes depressing anxiety, and the Lord knows it does. That is a beautiful, blessed word in the 103rd Psalm "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust". And so it is out of the fulness of His tender, divine compassion that He moved His servant, the Apostle, to write this to the burdened people, burdened under the hand of God in many ways upon them. "Cast all your care," all anxiety upon Him, "for He careth for you." I remember a minister many years ago preaching upon this text, and he said how in the first place the word care meant anxiety, but in the second place it did not mean anxiety. Casting all your care and anxiety upon Him; but God is not anxious, there is no anxiety in the mind of God. He knows the end from the beginning, and knows perfectly well all that He is about. There is no perturbation in His mind, no uncertainty, no anxiety; He dwells in His own eternal imperturbable calm.

"Our lives through various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,
While Thy eternal thought moves on
Thy undisturbed affairs."

Yet He condescends to take knowledge of, and to pity, and sympathise with, and bear with the anxieties, the cares of His poor people. The burdened state of mind, He pities them in it, pities them burdened with grief and

anxiety, and kindly says to them here in a way of gracious invitation, "Casting all your care," everything that makes you anxious, "upon Him." For instance there are providential cares; things in your daily life fill you with anxiety, bring much vexation, fill you with perplexity. Says the Holy Ghost by the Apostle, Take all this and cast it upon Him, go as well as you can and turn it into prayer at His footstool. A dear friend said to me not long ago, You would be surprised if you knew the little things I have to pray about. Little things in his daily life, at his work, difficulties that confronted him, something he could not see his way through and he had to pray about it, and he found the Lord often very gracious to him in answering. O, it is good when we are helped to turn these things into prayer; it is good when, by the mercy of the Spirit there is a gracious habit of prayer in the soul. If we neglect prayer, there will be a great lack of this. I do not think Nehemiah would have prayed unto the Lord as he did, when before the king as the king's cup-bearer, "Then prayed I to the God of heaven," I do not think his heart would have gone out so quickly in prayer as it did if there had not been the gracious habit of prayer. And it has been a rather searching point with me sometimes when faced with something difficult, perhaps in a position of danger, or perhaps some sudden need has overtaken me, I have been faced with it, and afterward I have had to reflect that in it all I did not pray. What does that mean? When I was in that position of need or danger, and never lifted up my heart to God, what does it mean? Lord, teach us to pray; so work in us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may give ourselves unto prayer, so that when any difficulty arises, though it may seem to be only a small affair in our daily lives the first impulse of the goodness of the Spirit working in our hearts will be to lay it before the Lord. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

And then in connection with this way of prayer, there is this too spoken of, and to be pondered. "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." In order that poor people in their need, under their burdens of anxiety, grief, and perplexity, and under their burdens of sin and guilt too, their wretchedness and their shame, might have the right, the privilege and the power to lay their cases before Him, the eternal Son of God incarnate, the Lamb of God, did pour out His soul unto death. He shed His infinitely precious blood upon the accursed tree, that poor people might have the blood-bought right to pray. What a vileness, what guiltiness, what folly appears in our forgetfulness to pray, our backwardness to pray, when we consider it in the light of that tremendous cost, that the privilege of prayer, the gift of it to us, should

be so costly to the Lord Jesus as it was, it cost Him His own most precious blood, and we should so slight it. One says, "I prize the privilege of prayer," and then complains "But O, what backwardness to pray." Well it is not only those cares which are occasioned by our temporal concerns, and you know how weighty they can be. You know, some of you, with what tremblings you go to your business in the morning, with what a sense of insufficiency, with what fears you face your daily task. You feel you have neither strength nor wisdom equal to the occasion, and perhaps you have to tell the Lord sometimes, Lord, Thou knowest I am mentally altogether unequal to my daily task, I am a dull-witted sort of person, and I do need much help from Thee, if I am to give satisfaction to my employers. Casting all your care upon Him. But there is this, the very important and difficult matter of walking before others, and before God as becoming one professing godliness. O, that is a great matter to one who fears God. How much he needs the help of divine grace to walk in the Church. "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Some of you that are Church members may feel that you have everything in yourself, that if left to it, would make you a troubler in the Church. If left to yourself you will be a very unprofitable member in the Church; the brethren will not get much edification if you are left to yourself. Perhaps you deeply feel that, and have a good deal of anxiety about it, you fear you may be unprofitable and hurtful, instead of profitable and an instrument of edification in the Church. Well, turn that into prayer, lay that anxiety, - sometimes a very keen, cutting anxiety, before the Lord, that you may be enabled to walk as you should before the Lord, that you may be a profitable member of the Church, that you may be to the praise of the glory of His grace, that you may be helped so to walk with the brethren, and to hold such communications with them as shall tend for their godly edifying, and yours. And then your walk before the world. Does not that cost you anxiety? Your conduct in your families; are you concerned about it? Are you at all heedful in these matters as to whether your walk in your family, and before the world, and those with whom you come in daily contact, is worthy of the Name of God whom you profess? If you fear God this will be very heavy to you. What matter there will be for prayer and supplication; what a consciousness there will be of the need of the help of divine grace, continual supplies of grace out of Christ's fulness, that you may adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things. That you may adorn! That you may express the excellence of it, the beauty of it, the spirituality of it, the heavenliness of it, the holiness of it, in your walk before God. And then

you feel how miserably you have failed, and that makes you anxious, that loads you with care. Well, the Lord help you, bring the load of anxiety, and the load of guiltiness that is yours because of your shortcomings before Him. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." It would be well for us to be more concerned as to how we live, to be more watchful, and to be more often praying, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." We talk about the gospel according to Matthew, the gospel according to Mark, Luke, and John, what is the gospel according to you and me? "Casting all your care upon Him."

Then there will be this also, if you are a God-fearing and exercised person, - a concern about your present spiritual condition, the state of your soul's health, and how matters are between you and your Lord. I wonder if we have sufficient tenderness of conscience and sufficient gracious liveliness of spirit to be at all concerned about this matter? Whether we are at all sensitive as to our nearness to the Lord, or our distance from Him? As to whether we hear His voice or whether He is silent? As we are spiritually healthy and tender, we shall know something of the feelings expressed in the Song of Solomon when the spouse was deeply concerned about the absence of her Beloved. "Tell my Beloved that I am sick of love." You know when Mary Magdalene had lost her Lord, she had seen Him taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain, and laid in the sepulchre, and she came and not even His body was there, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." Her heart was filled with perplexity and sorrow. You know what it is to have a little fellowship with Mary in that, you know what it is in your experience to have lost your Lord. Having known His presence, known what it is to be under the sweet light of His countenance, and now to be at a distance, in a wretched, wilderness condition. He is silent to you, and if any were to put to you that question which was asked in Mansoul, 'When did you last see Emmanuel?' What would be your answer? Well, those who love His Name, those to whom His presence is life, and happiness, and peace, O, when He is absent, how restless they are. One says,

"'Tis paradise if Thou are near,
If Thou depart, 'tis hell."

Rutherford speaks of many challenges. When in spiritual adversity, when banished from his ministry, he had many challenges, many accusations. O, had the Lord banished him from his pulpit for his sins? He could see so many reasons why He should have done it. And so with you; you can see so many reasons why He should have left you. Have you not slighted His spirit, grieved Him, wantoned with His favours? May the Lord help you to bring all the anxieties thus occasioned in your heart, all the weight of them, and cast them upon Him. Then says the Apostle, "He careth for you." O, the sweetness of it, the divine loving-kindness and tenderness that is wrapped up in this word, "He careth for you." O, it just means this, not one concern of ours, whether temporal or spiritual, not one concern of ours is small if we belong to Him. O, if a person is one of a broken heart, if he is a mourner over inward defilement, if a trembler at God's Word, if his desire is towards God's Name and a remembrance of Him, if he is one thirsting for God, if the fear of God in any measure is alive in his heart, the eye of God is upon that person. "The eye of the Lord is on them that fear Him, on them that hope in His mercy." "The Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not His prisoners." He has spoken very graciously in the case of those that sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land.

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