

Divine Arithmetic

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 3, 1845

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:2, 3, 4

This Epistle was written to "the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad." These were not the Jewish tribes; for after that nation had rejected the Lord of life and glory, God the Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost to raise up a spiritual church consisting of believers in the name of God's only-begotten Son. The twelve Jewish tribes ceased to have a standing as the people of God; and the Christian church was then established, and succeeded in their room and place. These twelve tribes scattered abroad, (so called because they succeeded into the room and place of rejected Israel,) are the same people as those to whom the Apostle Peter writes, "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:1, 2.) The occasion of these elect strangers being spread abroad through these various countries, we find in the Acts of the Apostles, where they are said to have been scattered through the persecution that came upon the church after the death of Stephen. (Acts 8:18, 19.)

These twelve spiritual tribes thus scattered in various places of the world, at the time that James and Peter wrote their

Epistles, were undergoing severe persecutions and trials; and the storm had come upon them so unlooked for and so unexpectedly that their heads were almost bowed to the ground before it.

This is the general effect of persecution. When the cloud first breaks upon our head, it comes so unexpectedly, that it often bows us down before it. We are not prepared either for outward persecution or inward temptation, when the Lord first touches our hearts. We need therefore to be supported under persecution, and comforted under temptation, before we can be brought to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

James, then, writes to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, enduring a great fight of afflictions outwardly, and a severe conflict with temptations inwardly; and he bids them not be discouraged by these trials that had come upon them. He sets before them a sum in spiritual arithmetic—one not taught in schools or colleges, but one of a divine nature, made known to the soul by the teachings of God the Spirit. He says, "My brethren, *count* it"—here is a problem for you to solve, a rule-of-three sum to calculate—"count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

In taking up these words this morning, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to look at them in two points of view, in order that I may be enabled as the Lord may direct, more clearly to unfold the meaning of the Spirit therein.

I.—*The nature of these temptations.*

II.—*Their fruits and effects on the soul.*

I.—The text speaks, you will observe, of "*divers temptations.*" These words do not altogether convey the full force of the original. By "divers," we are not only to understand *different*, in point of quality, but we are to understand also *numerous*, in point of quantity; many and different. And by the word "*temptations,*" we are to comprehend not merely seductions to sin, powerful assaults of the enemy, and all that is usually implied by the expression "temptations;" but we are also to understand by it "trials." So that would we give the full force of the two words, we must use this kind of circumlocution—*many and different trials and temptations.*

But James speaks also of believers *falling* into them, in which there is something of an experimental nature implied. The idea conveys the impression of a person walking for a given time upon a smooth road, and then on a sudden coming into a rough one; or of a person travelling along a firm path, and suddenly finding himself sinking in a quagmire; or of one who has hitherto been advancing along a flowery meadow, and unexpectedly falling into a pit where he is torn by briars and thorns.

But the word "fall," implies not merely the *suddenness* of the change, but the *helplessness* also of the creature to extricate itself from these spots of danger and difficulty.

Is not this, then, a singular circumstance, that the Apostle James, writing by divine inspiration, bids his suffering brethren "count it all joy," esteem it as a pleasure, value it as a blessing, and estimate it as the richest of mercies, that they should fall into quagmires, that their feet should be sore and weary with walking on rough and rugged stones, and

that the flesh should be torn from their skin by sharp briars? This is, as I before hinted, an arithmetic not taught in the schools, but one to be made known by nothing short of divine teaching in the heart and conscience of the Lord's family.

But James has respect to the *effect* produced thereby. He is not looking upon trials simply as trials, nor temptations merely as temptations; he is estimating the fruit to be produced by them. To use an illustration. A person ignorant of agriculture, if he were to see the sower scattering large quantities of seed upon the ground, would think it a great waste of the precious corn; but he that understands the nature of ploughing, sowing, and reaping, would know that this seed thrown into the ground is consigned there with a view to harvest. So spiritually. The trials, temptations, exercises, and sorrows that God's people have to pass through, are the precious seed, which springs up in the appointed time, and bears a bountiful crop. So that, just in the same way as we count it gain instead of loss when the farmer scatters his grain into the furrow, by comparing it with the crop that is to spring therefrom, so are we to view the troubles and trials which God's people endure, not as so much loss, but as real and positive gain; for out of this apparent loss, as in the case of the seed, will the bountiful crop of eternal glory come. As the Apostle declares, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4:17.)

The word "*temptation*" has two significations; *first*, that which we more particularly understand by *temptation*; and *secondly*, that which is conveyed by the term *trial*.

There are several points of difference between temptations

and trials. For instance: all temptations are trials; but all trials are not temptations. Temptations spring from Satan, our own hearts, and a world dead in wickedness. Trials spring from God; for "the Lord trieth the righteous." Temptations are connected with and act upon our carnal nature. But trials are connected with and act upon our spiritual nature; because they try faith, hope, love, and all the other graces and fruits of the Spirit. Temptations are more or less connected with sin; but trials are not necessarily so connected. There is therefore a broad line of distinction between temptations and trials.

Now all the Lord's family have to pass through each of these. They all have a sinful nature, and therefore must know *temptations* as springing out of that sinful nature. And as all the people of God have a spiritual nature, so they must be conversant with *trials*; for these are adapted to, and spring from the very existence of that spiritual nature. So that every one who is possessed of a carnal and a spiritual nature, in other words, every quickened child of God must know temptations and trials in his own personal experience. For the same reason, every child of God will from time to time be discouraged and cast down by these temptations and trials; and yet he will one day or other, when he reaps the spiritual profit, (for he cannot do it at the time), "count it all joy" that he has fallen into these "divers temptations."

Let us endeavour, then, with God's blessing, to trace out a few of these *temptations* and *trials*.

i. And, *first*, let us look at some of those *temptations* that peculiarly beset God's living family.

1. What is *the world* to a child of God but one great scene of temptation? But is the world anything but man, fallen man,

in the aggregate? Is it not the actings of sinful hands, the desires of sinful hearts, and the words of sinful lips? In a word, is not the world entirely made up of evils that you and I feel daily and hourly working in our corrupt nature? Just, then, as in our new nature we have spiritual communion with invisible things above, and with divine realities revealed in the word of truth; so, in our carnal hearts, we have a sensual, earthly communion with the world and all that is in it. And just in the same way as our spiritual nature loves, delights, and centres in heavenly things, so does our carnal nature love, delight, and centre in earthly things; for it never can rise above them. As long as we live in the body, our carnal nature will have sensual and earthly unions with the basest things; and there is nothing too vile or abominable for our carnal nature not to have close, sensual, earthly communion with. This, then, being the case, and there being a new principle in the child of God opposed to the evil of sin, separated from it by the power of the Spirit, bent upon eternal realities, and possessing a measure of the mind of Christ, it is through the opposition of this new principle, the temptation is felt to be temptation.

The men of this world have temptations. Satan tempts them; but they are not felt by them as his temptations. He tempted Judas and Peter; but how different the temptation in the case of Judas and that of Peter! In the case of Judas, there was no spiritual discernment of the temptation, no resisting principle, no inward conflict: his covetous heart fell in with it, was caught with the hook, and ruined by the snare. Peter was overcome in spite of his godly fear and a heart made honest by the grace of God, in spite of his love to Jesus and his faith and hope in him. He was not caught by a bait as Judas, but suddenly overwhelmed and carried away by violence, in spite of and in opposition to his better principle.

When Satan tempts the men of this world, they fall in immediately with his temptations; they are carried away by them, drowned in their lusts, and, if grace prevent not, end eventually in destruction or despair. The same temptations assault the child of God; but they are *felt* by him to be temptations: he has in him a nature utterly opposed and averse to them; he has eyes that see, a conscience that feels, and a life that groans under them: and yet, to his shame and sorrow, he often finds himself entangled therewith.

2. Some of the Lord's people are sadly tempted with *infidelity*. I had to struggle under this temptation for many years before ever I knew that a child of God was tempted by it. I never heard it described from the pulpit; and the first place I ever saw it touched upon was in Bunyan's "Grace Abounding."

Many of the Lord's people, I believe, are painfully harassed with a *reasoning mind* producing every sort of carnal argument to tempt them to disbelieve the revelation which God has given in his word. This, where the heart is altogether infidel, is not felt to be a temptation; the carnal mind embraces it, and denies God with daring front; it espouses the cause of infidelity with open arms, and hates and abhors the truth. But with the child of God it is one of the most acute temptations, one of the most fiery trials he ever can pass through; for it saps the very ground of his hopes, and brings him to this point, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" It fills his heart with distressing sensations; for he has in him a believing principle which is grieved by these vile suggestions. He not only finds this world a barren wilderness; but a cloud of darkness rests upon the next. He knows himself to be a sinner; yet when infidelity comes in, tempting him to disbelieve the deity of

Christ and the work of the Spirit, it leaves his soul without a refuge. There the workings of infidelity must be a distressing temptation to every one who is made alive in his soul.

3. Others of the Lord's family are tempted *to blaspheme and swear*. I do not know that I have sworn an oath for these twenty years, certainly not since the Lord touched my heart; but I have had many times the working of it within, though, through mercy, it never has escaped my lips. What a temptation this is to a child of God! But was not Job tempted by it, when his wife, who should have strengthened and encouraged him, proved his tempter, and said, "Curse God, and die?" Was not Peter tempted with this, when he broke out into oaths and curses, and denied the Lord of life and glory? Was not Jeremiah more than tempted by it? It is true, he did not curse his God; he was saved from that, through mercy; he was kept from passing beyond that bound but he cursed the day of his birth and the man who slew him not from the womb. (Jer. 20:14-17.)

4. Others of the Lord's people are tempted to commit the *unpardonable sin*. Some persons say, 'the unpardonable sin cannot be committed now.' But I want to know this. Is not Jesus "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Is not the Spirit, the Third Person in the glorious Godhead, unchanging and unchangeable? Has his power ceased in the hearts of God's people? Then, if men could sin against the Holy Ghost in the days of the Apostles; if men's hearts are still the same, and if the power of the Spirit upon God's people is the same now as then—why should not men now commit the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, as well as then? I believe it is committed by many. But none of God's people can commit it: there is a blessed hedge set round about them; they may sin deeply and foully, and fall into the basest transgressions: but they can never break the bounds so as to

commit the unpardonable sin: they can never trample upon the blood of Christ, blaspheme the Holy Ghost, or count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Satan may work in their mind all sorts of abominable things, and fill their hearts with all kinds of obscenity (those who are acquainted with these things best know to what daring lengths the accuser of the brethren can go); but he never has, and never will to the end of time plunge an elect vessel of mercy into the unpardonable sin. God himself will keep him, so that he never shall break through the bounds. But there are seasons when he will be sadly tempted by Satan to think that he has committed it; and in a fit of despair his carnal mind may even sometimes wish to do it, that he may know the worst of it. But God the Spirit will keep him; the heavenly Pilot will preserve his bark from making shipwreck upon this fearful rock.

5. But there are temptations to *sin* also. Some temptations are of a horrible kind; suicide is among them; for it is a sin to which every principle of our souls is utterly averse. But other temptations are of a seductive kind. There are temptations that drive, and temptations that draw; there are temptations that hurry on with fearful violence, and temptations that allure the soul by the cords of sensual lust. It is difficult to say which are the more dangerous. If there be a precipice, it matters little, whether we are driven down it, or fall from it unawares. If we fall, we fall, whether it be by violence or seduction.

Many, then, of the temptations which God's people are exposed to, seduce, allure, and draw them into things that are dishonourable to God, and grievously wound their own conscience. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" the various seductions and allurements to sin, known only to those who painfully experience them, are

continually endeavouring to draw away the child of God from the strait and narrow path. So that he often escapes by the very skin of his teeth; and merely by the mercy of God holding him up. If he walks on, it is in such a perilous path that none but the everlasting arms could hold up his soul from disgracing the cause with which he is connected, and distressing his conscience throughout the whole of his life.

ii. But we pass on to consider what is intended by the word "*trials*." I have before observed, that trials and temptations are distinct. God is not the author of temptations; he cannot do evil, nor tempt any man to commit it. That holy being Jehovah, can never, if I may use the expression, soil his fingers by touching evil. We therefore read, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James 1:13, 14.) 'But is it not said,' some might reply, (Gen. 22:1), 'that "it came to pass that after these things God did tempt Abraham?"' I answer, the word "tempt" there does not imply that God seduced Abraham into evil. It is a mistranslation, and means simply that God tried Abraham; that is, by putting him into the furnace, he exercised his faith, and proved whether he was obedient to him in all things. And therefore Paul says, "By faith Abraham, when he was *tried*, offered up Isaac." (Heb. 11:17.)

Trials, then, are of various kinds; but their object and end is one and the same; it is to try the graces and fruit of God the Spirit in the soul, and more especially the grace of faith. All the afflictions that God's people pass through are trials for their faith, whether they are afflicted in body, in circumstances, in mind, or in that way which each knows most painfully for himself. But what is the effect of the affliction? When it comes upon you, is it not to try your faith,

and prove whether it is genuine? When your faith is put into the furnace, does it not separate the dross which is so mingled with it? Do not trials reduce faith into its true compass, and winnow away the chaff from the grain? Do they not bring faith to hang more closely upon the Author and Finisher of it? We may think we have great and strong faith when we have no trials, and all things are going well and smooth with us; but let painful trials come, sharp afflictions in providence, severe persecutions, bitter convictions, an arrow from God's quiver, or something that tries our faith to the centre and cuts our flesh to the very quick—does not our faith then at once seem to sink into so small a compass as scarcely to be visible? Yet at the very time our faith shall be all the stronger, for it will hang more upon, and flee more unto its blessed and bountiful Giver and rely more simply upon a Three-one God.

Now every one of God's children must meet with trials; some are without, and some within; but each has a burden peculiar to himself, which he oftentimes thinks to be heavier than any others. It is with us in grace, as it is sometimes in nature; when one part of our body is afflicted, we think it to be the very worst place to bear the pain, and that we could endure it better in some other part. So spiritually: our trials come to us in the tenderest part, and are generally considered severer trials than any other which God's people go through. Each feels his own burden and trial, and suffers under his own sorrow; and being ignorant of the trials of another, each believer is tempted to think his trials are beyond most others sharp and painful. But let us consider.

II.—*Their fruits and effects.* James describes these as following one another: *first*, that they *try faith*; *secondly*, the trial of faith *works patience*; *thirdly*, that patience has her *perfect work*; *fourthly*, that when patience has had her

perfect work, we become *perfect and entire, wanting nothing*. These fruits and effects I shall endeavour now to trace out.

I have already observed that James bade his suffering brethren "count it all joy" when they fell into these divers temptations and trials: for he was looking at the end, and viewing the crops, the rich harvest, to be produced thereby.

1. It is for the *trial of faith*. If we have a grain of spiritual faith, that faith must be tried as with fire; as saith the Apostle Peter, "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:7.) It has been said, with great truth, "Untried faith is no faith." We can never therefore fully and satisfactorily know that we have faith till faith has had a trial, and has come triumphantly out of it.

But what is the first effect of trial? In many cases the first effect is to stun. It does not produce in our souls a seemingly favourable effect; it overwhelms and overpowers. When temptations to infidelity and blasphemy have come upon you, to deny or curse God, or temptations to sin and the seductive pleasures of the flesh, or some sharp family or bodily affliction, has not the first effect of it been to stun, stupify, and overwhelm your soul? I know, through painful experience, that it has been so with me. We are thrown down by the blow, and there we lie upon the ground stunned, like a man who has had a knock-down blow, not knowing where we are. But after a time the soul rises again, and is revived out of its state, like the man who has had the knock-down blow, and begins to lift up his head.

There is then a revival of the soul. But with this revival there is sometimes rebellion. Rebellion does not always work at the first; the stunning blow strikes down rebellion, as well as apparently the life of God within. But when the soul revives rebellion will work; peevishness, fretfulness, hard thoughts of God, complainings that we are thus dealt with, angry askings why these trials have come upon us; or what can be the profit of these afflictions. All this while rebellion works most painfully in the carnal mind; and of all the trials that God's people have to endure, rebelliousness is one of the most distressing. What! a creature of the earth to rebel against the all-wise Jehovah! that glorious Being, who could turn us to destruction as easily as we trample upon a beetle, and with one frown send us to hell! that a puny wretch, like man, should dare to lift up his arm against the Almighty! that ever his mind should rise up in awful waves of rebellion against such a holy, wise, and gracious God! This is a trial that puts faith into the furnace, touches it to the very quick, and proves whether or not it is the genuine faith of God's elect. Where real faith is not in the heart, this trial will drive a man from the paths of God, into the world, or into despair, or into drunkenness and open sin, and sometimes into suicide.

But where there is true faith, the living faith of God's elect there is a secret cord that will keep the soul in the paths of God. However fluctuating, weak, and wavering, or however tossed to and fro, and apparently driven from its centre, yet there is that secret band which links the soul to the throne of the Most High, never suffering it to go beyond a certain point; and this keeps it secretly and mysteriously, yet powerfully, from breaking through the bounds. All this is necessary and indispensable; there is no alternative; for faith must be tried.

There are writers and preachers that will admit there are such things as trials and temptations, and will even allow that many of God's people pass through them; but then they seem to set forth a path that may be travelled without them; such as "being drawn by love," and going to heaven safely and smoothly, without being assaulted by Satan, tempted by the world, entangled by fleshly lusts, or being put into the furnace of affliction. But all God's living people know it to be a truth, that wherever there is faith in the heart, however weak and small that faith may be, it must be tried. It is "the trial of faith," not faith itself, which is "more precious than of gold that perisheth."

2. Now this "trial of faith," which every child of God must pass through, produces a certain effect, set forth in the text. "The trying of your faith *worketh patience.*" And patience can be produced in no other way. Men cannot gather patience out of the word of God, as they gather a plum from a tree; they cannot pluck patience out of the Scripture as we may walk by a hedge-bank, and pluck a violet out of the hedge. No: patience is a grace of the Spirit, a fruit of the Holy Ghost; it must be produced inwardly, and communicated and worked in our heart by a divine hand.

But, what is patience? It implies two things: *first, endurance;* and *secondly, submission.*

i. It implies, first, *endurance*, according to those words, "*Endure* hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 2:3.) Endurance is necessary to gain the victory. Do we not read, "He that *endureth* unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 24:13.) If a man runs a race, we know he must have endurance in order to arrive at the goal. In the same way we must learn endurance; and this can only be learnt by passing through afflictions and trials. Does the

soldier learn warfare merely by being drilled upon the parade, and going through the appointed exercises? This may do for the yeomanry or militia, but it will not do for active service. A man must be engaged in the battle, face the enemy, hear the roaring of the artillery, see the flashings of the sabres, and often suffer grievous and painful wounds in his body; and then, after many campaigns, he learns to be a soldier. So spiritually. Am I to sit in my arm-chair, read the word of God, ponder over David's, Paul's, and Peter's experience, see the trials they endured, and learn the theory of spiritual warfare thereby? It may do to make a hypocrite, with a varnished face and a smooth tongue; but it will not do to make a "good soldier," enduring hardness as one of those whom the Lord is leading to victory. These learn endurance by trials, afflictions, temptations, and sufferings, and by more or less of the daily conflict. As the back is strengthened by carrying burdens; and the sinews and muscles of the arms enlarged by exercise; so the soul learns to endure hardness by having weights to carry, struggles to endure, and battles to fight.

ii. But again. The word "patience" implies *submission*. What is the grand point that God is bringing his people to? Do we not read that God has predestinated the elect "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren?" (Rom. 8:29.) Are they not said to "have the mind of Christ?" (1 Cor. 2:16.) And do we not read, that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps?" (1 Pet. 2:21.) But what was the most prominent point in the life of Christ? Was it not to do the will of the Father? Did he not say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me?" (John 6:38.) When enduring his dolorous sufferings in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, to which earth never has and never can witness a parallel—when the

agony of his soul pressed the bloody sweat through the pores of his skin—and he was being "made perfect through sufferings," was not this the height of his obedience, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done?" (Luke 22:42.) Now if we are to wear the image, and have the mind of Christ, we must learn submission to the Father's will as he did. But how can we learn submission, if we have nothing to submit to? What is the use of my talking of having the grace of submission to God's will, if that will never thwart mine? if that will be never unsearchable by my intellect, and as much beyond mine as heaven is beyond earth? If that will never cross mine in any particular, what can I know about submission? I may talk about it, think I understand it, and flourish a few words respecting it; but as to the internal grace of submission, I cannot know it, except I have trials, and God works it in my soul. I will tell you when we are able to submit.

We need to see three *things* prior to submission. *First*, we must see the hand of God in the trial, and that it is brought upon us by the Lord himself. We cannot see this at first. When bodily or family afflictions, cutting trials or sharp temptations come upon us, what is their keenest edge? We cannot see that they come from God. The Lord brings the trial; but he hides the hand that brings it; the cloud appears in the sky, but we see not the face of God behind it. But after we have endured the trial, we are brought to see that the Lord sent it. This was Job's trial. If Job could have seen that God sent the trial, he could have borne it: but the Lord had hidden himself. Job went backward and forward, but he could not behold him. But the moment God appeared to speak through the cloud, Job saw the hand of the Lord; he laid his hand upon his mouth, and said, "Behold, I am vile!" He fell into his right spot; submission was brought in his soul. But when there was nothing but the cloud, and no divine hand

seen, he was full of rebellion and peevishness; he could not feel submission, for he could not see the hand of God in it. Thus to see the hand of God in a trial is the first step to submission.

A *second* thing necessary to produce submission, is, to believe that we are interested in those words, "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. 8:28.) We cannot see this at first. I have at times been fully persuaded that no good could come out of an affliction exercising me. It has been so contradictory to flesh and blood, that I have thought the time could never come when I should see the hand of God in it, or feel any good springing out of it. But when God enables us to believe (for he alone can) that a blessed crop will one day spring up out of it for our benefit and his glory, then we are brought to feel submission.

But we need also a *third* thing to produce submission, and that is, to be fully persuaded that the trial or temptation was absolutely *indispensable*; not merely to believe that God sent it, and that good will come out of it; but to be brought to this point, to be satisfied that good could come in no other way; that the heavy trial, the severe temptation, or the cutting affliction was really necessary, to come from the very quarter it did, to be laid upon the shoulders at the time it was, and to be brought into the heart in the precise way in which it came. When we can see and believe these three things, then we feel true submission.

3. But there is not only the *work of patience*, but also the *perfect work of patience*. There is a difference between the work of patience, and the perfect work of patience. The work of patience is to submit; but till patience endures without murmuring and submits without repining it has not had its perfect work. The trial must go on, and the sufferings be

endured, in order that patience may be fully ripened. When murmuring is fully silenced, infidelity thoroughly subdued; peevishness and fretfulness ceased, rebelliousness taken flight, the soul softened at the footstool of divine mercy, and melted into a flood of genuine contrition and godly sorrow—when thus viewing the hand of God, we submit to his righteous will in all things, patience has its perfect work. It is now perfected, and brought to full maturity; it is not then merely the blossom, nor the unripe fruit, but the matured crop of patience, manifested in its implicit submission to the divine will.

4. But the Apostle adds another fruit and effect of patience—*"That ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing."* There are three fruits then produced by the perfect work of patience; 1. *perfection*; 2. *entirety*; and 3. *wanting nothing*.

1. *Perfection*. How can we understand these words? Is there such a thing as creature perfection? Certainly not. We must not interpret one part of God's word to militate against another, nor explain its meaning so as to clash with the experience of the Lord's family. The inspired word can never contradict the teachings of the Spirit in the heart.

By "perfection," we may understand two things, *first*, the soul's complete standing in Christ; its perfect acceptance in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Son of God. But we never see that we cannot become perfect by our own strength, wisdom, and righteousness, till patience has had its perfect work: we may have the doctrine in our head, and understand the theory of it; but the experience of it we cannot have till patience has had its perfect work. But when this is accomplished, the soul is brought to submission, and it becomes manifestly clothed in the obedience of Jesus. Whilst we are fretting, murmuring, and rebelling against the Lord's

dispensations in providence or grace, what faith is there in the Son of God? what testimonies or intimations of mercy are there from the Lord? or what fruits and effects are there of his grace? But when we are brought to lie still, then patience has its perfect work, and the soul shines forth manifestly clothed in the Person and work of the Redeemer.

But by *perfection*, in the Scriptural sense of the word, we may *also* understand maturity and ripeness in the divine life—what the Apostle calls being "of full age," (Heb. 5:14, *literally*, "perfect.") This maturity and ripeness in the divine life is always produced by trials and temptations, and God's working through them the grace of patience, and bringing forth its perfect work in the soul.

2. But there is another word added, "*entire*." This means 'having every part complete;' literally, 'possessing the whole of everything allotted to us.' And this respects not the standing of the soul in Christ, but the work of the Spirit upon the heart. The new man of the soul is proportionate in all its parts; every member and grace of the Spirit grows together. There is no enlarged head and withered heart; no strong arm and feeble limb; no dwarf, giant, nor deformed cripple among the family of God. The new man of grace is perfect in all its parts and in all its proportions. And when the new man of grace grows thus altogether, the believer is "*entire*," every part having its full proportion. You may have observed many persons in the religious world, professing to have faith, strong faith, almost to remove mountains, who have no humility, simplicity, brokenness, nor contrition; no tenderness of conscience, godly fear, deadness to the world, nor separation from the things of time and sense; an enormous faith, but a most scanty proportion of its fruits. Is not this a delusion? and is not hypocrisy stamped upon the very profession of it?

The Lord, then, in order to give every member and grace of the Spirit its due proportion, brings trials, temptations, and exercises; and this discipline causes every branch of the new man to grow together in perfect harmony. As faith grows, hope enlarges, love increases, humility deepens, patience strengthens, consistency brightens, the life is changed, and the soul becomes more truly conformed to the image of Jesus. Trials, temptations, and exercises produce this, by winnowing away, purging out, and separating what is carnal, gross, and sensual. So that by cutting off and cutting out that which is earthly and carnal, they leave the new man of grace to grow forth in all his blessed proportions. Am I afflicted? it strengthens my faith. Is my faith strengthened? my hope is increased. Is my hope increased? my love is drawn forth. Again. Is my hope strengthened? prayerfulness, panting after the Lord's presence, and desires after the blessed revelation of himself increase in proportion. Do these things increase? They produce more patience. Does patience increase? It produces more consistency. So, just as one grace flourishes in the soul, there is a beautiful growth in all. Faith is not like a sucker that grows from the tree, drawing away all its sap, which must be plucked up in order to preserve the parent stock; it is rather the stem, from which all the branches grow in beautiful proportion. The faith of the Christian is not the twining ivy that lives upon, and eventually strangles the parent stem; but a divine root, from which all grows in just proportion, in beautiful and blessed harmony. A believer thus becomes entire: "one grace is not starved that another may fatten; one grace is not weakened that another may be strengthened. But faith being strengthened, patience has its perfect work, and the believer becomes entire; not that he becomes more perfect in Christ, but because he has every fruit and grace of the Spirit growing in exact proportion and harmony.

3. "*Wanting nothing.*" Before he was afflicted, he went astray; but now he keeps God's word. Before the trial of faith, he was spreading all abroad; but after it came, it shut him up in a narrow compass. Before, he little knew whether the anchor of hope would bear a hard strain. Before, he was not certain whether his love was genuine, or whether he had true patience. There were many fruits of faith unripe, many graces of the Spirit in imperfect exercise, many members of the new man apparently feeble. But when trials came, the Lord through them produced patience, and eventually brought forth its perfect work.

Thus the soul becomes not merely actually, but also manifestively entire: it lacks nothing. Every grace and every fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in blessed harmony and beautiful proportion; not a single limb or feature of the new man is defective in the soul. Jesus himself is in the heart. Do we not see it so? Those who are most tried, have they not most of the likeness of Christ in them? Where am I to look for humility, prayerfulness, love to God's people, simplicity, uprightness, the image of Christ? In an unexercised, hardened professor with the doctrines of grace upon his lips, and as dead to all vital godliness as Satan himself? I may see a distorted likeness: I may see a charnel-house white-washed over, full of dead men's bones and uncleanness; I may see a clean outside cup and platter; but I shall look in vain beneath the varnished face for the beautiful image of Christ in his soul. To see that, I must go to the perplexed, exercised, suffering children of God walking in the path of affliction, put into the furnace of suffering, and at times well-nigh drowned in the waters of sorrow. *There* you will see the mind and image of Christ; *there* you will see those who are "perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

Now, do you think you have had the sum worked out? We have had a problem to handle and bring out the solution. There were these figures—"divers temptations;" and the sum to be brought out was, "all joy." Take the mass of troubles, multiply the figures as much as you please, you will still find the sum total to be "joy." Well it might puzzle the acutest schoolmaster to bring out this. But when we see what the Spirit does in the heart of God's people, what sweet arithmetic does "the wonderful Numberer" (Dan. 8:13, *marg.*) bring forth! This we may not now see; but when God the Spirit shall calculate the sum for us, then we shall see and feel too, that divers temptations, many afflictions, and grievous sorrows are to be counted all joy, if they work in us the mind of Christ, conform us to the image of Jesus, and "make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." If this be the sum, and this the solution, then the most afflicted people, the most deeply tempted, and the most painfully tried, have reason to bless God the most. Above, there are no degrees of joy or glory; but as regards this time-state we may surely say, if small afflictions bring out but a small sum total of joy, very great afflictions will bring out a great sum total of joy. If a row of three figures is to bring out only a row of three figures of joy, then a row of ten figures of temptation and trouble will bring out—ten figures shall I say?—a hundred of spiritual joy below, and a thousand figures of joy in glory above untold and untellable. The Apostle says, "count it all joy." He was a master of divine arithmetic. Nor was his brother Paul below him in the noble art of spiritual calculation; for he counted the sufferings of this present life not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in him; and casting up the figures for the Lord's people as well as himself, says to them (2 Cor. 1:7), "Our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."