

## The Furnace and its Fruits

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"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, 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." 1 Peter 1: 6, 7

The Scriptures contain a deep and inexhaustible mine of vital truth. But how are we to penetrate into that mine, and turn up some of those inexhaustible riches? Two things are absolutely needful before we can dig into this mine, and lay bare its rich contents. *First*, we must be brought into those states and conditions of vital experience to which the Scriptures are suited. The word of God was written for the poor and needy, the tried, the tempted, the exercised, the distressed, the cast down, and the afflicted. If we, then, are not brought into those states for which the Scriptures were written, to us they are but a dead letter. And *secondly*, we need that the blessed Spirit, when he has brought us into that state of soul to which the Scriptures are adapted, and to meet which they were written, should enlighten our understanding to see, apply the precious truth of God with power to our heart that we may believe, and seal heavenly instruction upon our conscience that we may feel what is thus divinely revealed.

What were the Scriptures written for? To make the people of God wise unto salvation. Not to furnish empty professors with notions and opinions to battle one another with; not to provide us with a little Sunday reading; nor to buoy us up

with superstition and self-righteousness. They were written for the instruction, consolation, and edification of God's poor and needy children. Unless, therefore, we are brought by divine teaching into those states of experience for which the Scriptures were written, we may have wondrous light in our head, but our heart will be destitute of the power of vital goodness.

We gather from the Scriptures of the New Testament, that the primitive believers to whom the Epistles were addressed, were enduring for the most part a great fight of afflictions; they were persecuted without, and deeply tried within. They doubtless, at first, as we in times past, did not believe that they must "through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven." They thought that to believe in Jesus must surely bring nothing but peace and happiness. The bright side of things they saw; but the dark side was hidden from them. But after a time God saw fit that they should become acquainted with the dark side as well as the bright. Persecutions, temptations, oppositions, conflicts, and a variety of trials that God's people are ever exercised with, befell them. Their minds now began to sink; their faith to stagger; their hope well-nigh to give way; and therefore the Apostles were inspired by the Holy Ghost to write the Epistles not only to instruct, but also to comfort and encourage them in their path of tribulation.

This we find Paul setting before the church of God: "Unto you," he says, "it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil. 1:29.) So he tells Timothy, (2 Tim. 3:12) "If we suffer (with Christ,) we shall also reign with him." And again, writing to the Romans, he says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." (chap. 8:18.) James says, "My brethren, count it all

joy when ye fall into divers temptations." (chap. 1:2.) Peter writes, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." (1 Pet. 4:12.) And especially, in the words before us, he addresses himself to comfort and encourage their often cast down spirits, by telling them that there was a "needs be" for the afflictions wherewith they were exercised, and that all should end eventually in "praise and honour and glory."

We may observe, I think, two leading features in the words before us. *First*, their state of affliction and suffering through "manifold temptations;" with the reason why the Lord saw fit thus to exercise them; and *secondly*, the blessed fruits that would one day spring out of them. The Lord enable us to look at these things in the light of the Spirit; and the Lord set before me a door of utterance, that I may speak out of the fulness of a believing, exercised heart, what I see and feel in the Scripture before us. With God's blessing, then, we will take it up sentence by sentence, and clause by clause, and thus endeavour to trace out the mind and meaning of the Holy Spirit as revealed in it.

I.—1. "*Wherein ye greatly rejoice.*" Carnal joy is killed to a child of God. I do not mean to say, that the carnal mind is killed. We have too bitter and painful experience to the contrary. But the sources of carnal joy are killed. Why? Because those things which in time past did afford joy, are now discovered to be empty and destitute of the pleasure once found in them. Health, strength, wealth, honour, worldly amusements, sinful pleasures—all these things could once delight and gratify the carnal mind; but God in mercy has put bitterness into this cup. Our carnal mind may still be amused by them for a time. But O, what a gloomy retrospect! and how it pierces the conscience, that we could take a moment's pleasure, or derive an instant's happiness

from those things which are so hateful and abominable in the sight of God! But if there be any real joy, or happiness, or consolation, it is only in Christ, and what of God he is made to us, and what he is pleased to make known to our souls concerning himself—his blood, his righteousness, his love, his preciousness, his suitability, his tender compassion, the riches of his grace, his glorious Person, all that he is, and all that he has for the living church of God. If ever, as we pass through this wilderness, we feel one drop of solid joy, of true happiness, it must flow, it can flow only from one source—the manifestations of Christ to our souls.

*"Wherein ye greatly rejoice."* This joy may be very transient: we may have to look upon it through a vista of many years; and doubts and fears may becloud the mind whether we ever rejoice truly in Christ, or whether our joy might not have been "the joy of the hypocrite" that perisheth. And yet we are brought to this point—we can find joy and peace in him alone. Sin, the world, the things of time and sense, business, amusement, pleasure so called, afford now no joy; there is an aching void, a feeling of dreariness and misery connected with everything short of communications of mercy, favour, and love. So that though we may not come up to the whole of this divine description, and be enabled to say, 'we greatly rejoice at all times, in all places, at all seasons, in the Lord;' yet we can come to this point—we can rejoice in no other; yet we can take real pleasure in nothing else. One smile from the Lord, one word from his lips, one gracious breaking in of the light of his countenance, does, while it lasts, communicate joy; and from no other quarter, from no other source can a moment's joy be drawn.

2. But the Apostle here does not suppose that the people of God are *ever* rejoicing in the Lord. His language is point blank against that. "Wherein we greatly rejoice, though now

*for a season*, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." They rejoiced in Christ; but they were not so enabled to rejoice as to have for ever done with sin, with sorrow, with doubts and fears, with heaviness of heart, and dejection of spirit. The word of God knows nothing of such a path. We are "in heaviness *for a season*." It may be long or short, as God sees fit. This "season" in some cases may be very frequent; in others, almost continually; nay, in some persons it may be extended well-nigh through their whole lives. I know, and doubtless you know, children of God of whose religion we have not the shadow of a doubt; yet if you go to them from time to time, what is the language of their lips? (and we are sure from the way in which they speak, it is the language of their heart)—'Ah! I am still in the same spot; still cast down, dejected, with little peace or comfort; sometimes almost drowned with melancholy, despondency, and well-nigh despair.' But whether the "season" should be short, or whether it should be long, God has not defined, and we cannot. One thing, however, is clearly evident, according to the declaration of the Holy Ghost before us, that there is "a season" during which the Lord's people are "in heaviness."

And what is it to be "in heaviness?" Let us look at the contrary of heaviness. A contrast of the opposite often throws light upon a word. What is opposed to heaviness? Lightness, frivolity, carnal ease, dead assurance, a floating I know not where in the air without any solid foundation for spiritual joy and peace. To be "in heaviness" is, then, to be the opposite of all this,—to have a burden tied round our shoulders, a load pressing upon our conscience, our spirits depressed, our minds dejected, our hearts labouring, and our souls groaning unto God on account of the difficulties and exercises that we meet with in the way.

3. But the apostle tells us the cause of this heaviness. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through *manifold temptations*." What is the meaning of the expression, "manifold temptations?" The word "temptation," not merely means what is generally understood by the expression, such as the suggestions and fiery darts of Satan, or incitements to evil; but it includes also all that is conveyed by the phrase *trial*. And the word "*manifold*," not merely signifies many in number, but various in kind. Look, then, at the state and case of the Lord's people here described by the pen of inspiration. It is not one trial that they have to pass through, nor one temptation to grapple with, but a whole series or succession of many and various trials and temptations. And the effect of this is to produce heaviness. How many of the Lord's people, for instance, have to wade through *providential* trials! And are not these a source of heaviness? When a man desires to be honest and upright, and yet things in providence go out against him, if his conscience be tender in God's fear, must it not, and will it not, be a source of pain and trial to his mind sometimes lest he bring a reproach upon the cause wherewith he is connected? Sometimes the feeling arises from a desire to do what is right, and pay every man his own; sometimes from a fear lest the enemy should point the finger of scorn at him, and say, 'This is your religion; this is your profession; to get into debt, and pay no one.'

Again. Many of the Lord's people have to pass through what the church of old experienced—*persecution and opposition*. How the primitive believers were especially tried in this fire, and had to pass through this furnace, persecution and opposition continually staring them in the face; so that they had to carry, as it were, their lives in their hand! In our days we are not made to suffer in this outward persecution what the church underwent in time past. But we have persecution

and opposition still to endure. And if we are faithful in God's cause, we have "the scourge of the tongue," and much opposition to pass through; so that we have need to set our face as a flint, if we contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

But again. *Afflictions in various shapes and forms* will ever be the lot of God's people; and each knows best what his soul is most deeply exercised with.

Most of the people of God have something that presses heavily upon them; and very often the thing that cuts most painfully, and lies upon their heart most weightily, they cannot breathe forth into the ears of a single friend. And sometimes, strange as it may seem to say, they cannot breathe it forth even into the ears of the Almighty. There is something peculiar in most of the children of God that seems to lie with the greatest weight and power upon the conscience. They can sigh under it, and groan beneath it to him that reads the heart; and he who searches the heart, and tries the spirit, sees the painful trials, exercises, and afflictions under which his poor child is labouring; and yet he has no power, at least but rarely, to lay that very trial, in word, before the footstool of mercy.

But besides these *trials* that the family of God are more or less deeply exercised with, there are *temptations*, that is, what we understand peculiarly by the word temptation, exercises of a spiritual nature, as opposed to trials in providence, or afflictions from God. The temptations, for instance, that spring from our own evil hearts, our own corrupt, deeply corrupt nature; such as unbelief, infidelity, strange suggestions and attacks from the adversary of our soul, unbecoming thoughts of God, and the workings of our carnal mind upon divine things, with a variety of exercises

most painful to be felt, and yet perhaps scarce to be hinted at, are all included.

Now the effect of all these temptations is, to cast the mind down, bring heaviness upon the spirit, deject and depress the soul, and lay it low, very low in the dust of self-abasement and self-loathing. Temptations to doubt our interest in the blood and obedience of the Son of God; temptations to question the reality of the work of grace upon our heart; temptations about the Trinity; temptations with respect to the inspiration of God's word; temptations to give up our religion, and go into the world; temptations to turn our back upon the people of God altogether; temptations presenting themselves in the house of prayer to distract our thoughts and when we come to the footstool of mercy, there to seek the Lord and pour out our heart, some temptation that carries our mind away to the very "end of the earth."

Thus, through these numerous temptations the soul is "in heaviness." It cannot move lightly or easily forward. Weights and burdens lie upon the shoulders, and difficulties, obstacles, hindrances are strewed thickly upon the path; and thus the soul, through these "manifold temptations," without and within, spiritual and providential, is "in heaviness" and cast down, dejected, depressed, and desponding. And is this your state and case day by day? Do you find *that* without or *that* within which makes you go groaning along, a poor, burdened pilgrim, sighing, mourning, lamenting after the Lord, and carrying a weight that lies upon your conscience, a weight you cannot shake off. Now if this be your case, has not the pen of divine inspiration traced out the feelings of your soul? Lightness, frivolity, dead assurance, empty notions, a name to live, a graceless profession—'O' say you, 'God keep me from these awful deceits; let me rather be in heaviness all my days, cast down, dejected, exercised, tried

in providence, tempted by Satan, and having a daily conflict with the evils of my heart; O, let me rather be in heaviness all my life than be puffed up by the delusions of the devil as an angel of light, or drawn away by the world into an empty profession.'

4. But there is a "*needs be*" for being "in heaviness through manifold temptations." These things do not come by chance. "Affliction springeth not out of the ground;" it is not a matter of uncertainty; all, all is under the divine disposal. There is a "*needs be.*" It is in grace as in providence. The child is chastised; but never without a "*needs be.*" He must be a cruel, hardhearted parent, who will chastise his children without cause. He must be a very wretch to do that. To beat his child, and chastise it cruelly to gratify his own malice! A man must be almost an incarnate fiend to act so. He cannot have the heart of a parent to treat his child harshly and chastise it, or even to lay the weight of his finger upon it, unless there be some solid ground. Can we, then, ascribe to the Parent of all who fear his great Name—to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, what we dare not ascribe to man? If he chastise us, if he lay affliction upon our loins, if he bring trouble into our soul, if he spread difficulties and trials in our path, if the rod of his correction cut deep into our flesh—can we, dare we ascribe for a single moment unto God that he brings these things without cause? It would be treason against the Majesty of heaven to indulge the thought! Never; never. There is, then, a "*needs be.*" We may not see it: it may take us years ere we see the "*needs be;*" and for the most part it does. I doubt not you have been where I have sometimes been, and have almost said when a sharp trial came, 'We never shall see the hand of God in *this*; that we are sure of; it is so painful, so mysterious, so dark;' and in the unbelief of our mind, in our hasty spirit, we *think*, if we dare not say, 'The hand of God cannot be in *this*; the

time never can come when I shall see any good come out of *this.*' Yet, when we look back, we can see that good *has* come, that solid profit has been communicated to our souls; and we would not have been without the trial on account of the solid profit that has come out of it. Thus, as to the afflictions, trials, exercises, and temptations that your poor soul is *now* exercised with—you may not see the "needs be;" yet there is a blessed "needs be." Where would you be without them? I ask. If *now* you are carnal, worldly-minded, and frivolous with the trial, what would you be without the trial? If you are so worldly with a load upon your shoulders, what would you be if you had no load upon your shoulders? God alone knows what evils we are kept from by having loads and burdens to bear. God alone knows the snares from which he delivers our feet by laying affliction upon us. O into what carnal ease should we not slip, if God did not keep our souls alive by exercises! O into what worldly-mindedness, pride, and covetousness should we not fall, if God by affliction and exercises did not whip us out of the path of worldly-mindedness into the path of tribulation and suffering! O what empty professors and graceless hypocrites should we be, if God were not pleased from time to time to exercise our souls upon the solemn things of eternity, and by various trials, temptations, and exercises, his Spirit working in them, draw the desires of our heart to his most blessed Majesty!

There is then a "needs be." But *you* cannot see it. No; if you could see it, you would be as wise as God is. It is God's wisdom to conceal a matter; and your wisdom and mine is to submit to God, who is able and willing to make all things work together for our spiritual good, though we know not when, and know not how.

III.—But our text leads us to see more particularly *the good* which is to spring out of these manifold temptations, and

which we said, if God enabled us, we would consider in our second place: *"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."* What! is there faith in the heart under all these trials? Yes, there is, in every quickened child of God: and that is his mercy, as well as his distinguishing feature. Worldly men, carnal professors, wretched hypocrites, have all their trials, afflictions, and temptations; but they have not living faith in their souls, to work in them and under them, and thus bring them safely and clearly out of them. There is the difference. But if there be this faith in our heart,—if God has quickened your soul and mine, and raised up by his mighty power (for nothing short of God's power can do it) one spark of living faith within, it must be tried; for "God trieth the righteous" (Psa. 11:5), and it is "the trial of your faith," not the faith itself, which is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth."

1. But what is it that tries faith? Reading the Bible on a summer evening? having our family prayer with all due regularity? coming to chapel twice on the Lord's day, and attending all the prayer-meetings? Good things in their way; I would not say a single word against any of them. But we may do all these things, and yet have no faith. What is it, then, that tries faith? Why, inward exercises, painful conflicts, powerful temptations, and all that work within which is carried on in the bosom of the elect. Now, if there be no faith, there will be no trial of faith; but if there be faith, there will necessarily be the trial. Nay more—just in proportion to the strength of your faith, will be its trial. If you have little faith, you will have few and feeble trials; if you have great faith, you will have many and strong trials. And this thing shows to me, as much as anything, the emptiness—the emptiness, I say—of that dead assurance

which we find so much of in the present day. There are no trials connected with it, no deep exercises, no powerful temptations, no severe afflictions, no inward conflicts. It is a sort of faith that dances over conflicts, slips over trials, and flies about unweighted by temptations. And this very thing proves its rottenness; for if it were living faith in a living soul, there would be trials proving it, bringing it to light, and showing that it is of the operation of God in the soul. Nor has this dead assurance any fruits; no humility, no brokenness, no contrition, no tenderness of conscience, no godly fear, no separation from the world, no living to God's glory. There is not a single fruit of the Spirit attending it. And by these two things—by its being a faith without trial, and a faith without fruit—it is proved to one who has eyes to see, not to be the faith of God's elect: for the faith that God himself is pleased to raise up in the hearts of his poor and needy family, has both trials and fruits; and by these two things it is manifested to be genuine. But O, how painful it is to have faith tried! We would gladly have sweet views of Jesus, blessed glimpses and glances of his Person, tokens of his love, the gracious comings in of his favour, and the droppings in of his mercy and tender kindness. But no trials. O no! we would not have one—no afflictions, no powerful temptations, no painful conflicts, no suggestions of Satan, no horrible workings of a depraved nature. We should be glad to be free from all these things. As much peace and comfort as we may; but none of those painful things that give such trouble and exercise to the tender conscience. But God has put them together; and no man can, as no honest man will try, to put them asunder. If I have faith, I must have trials with it. The Lord gives no other but tried faith. He says, "Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." (Rev. 3:18.) It is "the trial of your faith" which is "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

2. But the Apostle here speaking of the trial of faith, directs our thoughts to the way in which faith is specially tried. He compares it to "gold," and not merely to gold, but to "gold tried in the fire." Now, what is this figure? It is a very common one in the word of God, and very expressive—that of the furnace. But what is the gold put into the furnace for? To make it gold? O no! It was gold before. To turn the dross into gold? O no! Let the ore be put into the fire as long as you please—the dross does not become gold, the gold does not become dross. So it is spiritually. Afflictions do not create faith—afflictions do not turn nature into grace, nor grace into nature. Grace is grace, nature is nature, in the furnace as well as out of the furnace; just as gold is gold, and dross is dross, in the fire as well as out of the fire. But what is the effect? To separate, to bring to light, to purge away the scum and dross. Is it not so spiritually? If we have faith, we have a deal of dross mixed with it; presumption, self-righteousness, unbelief, pride, lofty thoughts of self—all this dross and filth is apparently (not really, but apparently) mingled with the few grains of faith that God may have dropt into our soul; and nothing but the fire can separate them. Now, afflictions, tribulations, and temptations are the furnace which God makes use of to separate the dross from the gold. How? By bringing it to light. Suppose I am in a trial—say, a providential trial; I want God to appear for me in providence. God does not appear. What is made manifest? Unbelief, murmuring, rebellion, repining—questioning God's power, or God's wisdom, or God's goodness. How my unbelief and infidelity are brought to light by these means! Or say that I am labouring under some powerful temptation to doubt the being of God, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the work of the Holy Ghost, or horrible thoughts that I may hint at, but no more. What is the effect? O what a turmoil takes place in the bosom! O how false faith flies away

at the first touch! It cannot stand this. Infidelity drives all before it. But what do we learn by these temptations? Our own weakness and helplessness and miserable condition. The infidelity and scepticism that are mixed up with, and form part of, our carnal mind are brought to light and discovered; and thus the scum and dross are manifested in the process. But after awhile, little faith begins to lift up her head. And how does she manifest herself? By crying to the Lord, by groaning out her desires into his ear. And the Lord is pleased, now and then, to drop in a word, to encourage drooping faith to lift up her head; and as faith begins to lift up her head, she lays hold of some of God's promises, as suitable to her case. And thus faith becomes manifested as faith, and unbelief becomes manifested as unbelief.

Again. I am in some *temptation* that brings to light all the hidden evils of my heart. O how snugly does sin lie curled up in the carnal mind! O in what secret corners of the heart do our lusts lurk like sleeping vipers! But some temptation comes that stirs up, brings to light, and makes manifest these sleeping vipers, these torpid toads, and they begin to hiss and discover themselves to our astonishment. 'O,' says the soul, 'that ever I could be such a wretch. I have been told, and I thought I believed what a fallen creature I was; but that I should have such pride springing up in my heart, such covetousness, such enmity against God and his truth, such sensuality, such internal defilement—O, I could not have believed it if I had been told it by an angel that I was such a wretch, such a monster of inward filth, sin, and evils.' Is not this doing the soul good? Here is the furnace: out of it come the scum, foam, and filth of our carnal mind. You thought perhaps you were making great advances in holiness, had nearly climbed to the top of the tree, and were getting so spiritual and heavenly-minded, that sin was almost killed. But it was not dead; it was only sleeping; just torpid

for awhile. But these temptations have brought to light some of the evil that always was in your heart. It slept there, though you knew it not; it was covered up, concealed, perhaps smothered over with a huge cloak of profession, or plastered in with some untempered mortar. But temptation has brought it to light. Has faith nothing to do here? Yes. This is "the trial of faith." Faith begins to groan out its desires to the Lord to be kept from evil, and to walk in the strait and narrow path; it comes unto the Lord, and, as he enables, pleads with him; and, as he gives, lays hold of some promise suitable to its tried, tempted, exercised state.

And is not this proving that we have faith? It can be proved in no other way. We may think, vainly think, what a vast stock of faith and strength we have, when all the time our faith may be little else but presumption. There are hundreds of professors in this metropolis who think themselves strong believers; but could you take the scales of the sanctuary, and weigh their faith in them, you would scarcely find a grain. Presumption, profession, notions in the head, and dead assurance, pass with thousands for the living faith of God's elect. And so it would pass with you and me, if God did not see fit to exercise our souls upon the solemn things of eternity. If we had no trials, temptations, afflictions, nor inward conflicts, and were destitute of the many painful things within and without that we are now exercised with, we should sit in our arm chair of carnal ease, and be as puffed up with a few empty notions as they. But we cannot; if we fear God, we cannot. Our exercises, trials, and temptations keep us from this carnal ease. There is conscience speaking in our bosom, and that will not let us rest in a name to live while dead. There are inward workings, sometimes night and day, and sometimes every hour, which make us dread to be deceived by the delusions of Satan, or to take up with all empty profession of godliness.

This, then, is the effect of the furnace. The furnace does not make nature to be grace, or grace to be nature. Grace is still grace; nature is still nature. But the furnace brings nature to light: nay more, the furnace brings grace to light. And thus faith is known to be faith by the trial which it has to endure.

3. And the Apostle says, this is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth." It will not do to tell this upon the Stock Exchange, that living faith in a poor broken-hearted creature, perhaps dying in the workhouse, is better and more precious than all the bullion in the cellars of the bank. But it is so in God's sight, and should be in ours, if we viewed it as God views it, and saw light in God's light. Yes; if there be one spark of living faith in the soul, one grain of the grace of God in our heart, it is better, a thousand million times better, than if we had all the possessions and all the wealth of the men of this world put together. Doubtless, we cannot often think or feel so; yet our feelings and unbelief do not alter the fact. The reality is the same, though our poor unbelieving mind is often denying, or putting a false gloss upon the words of immutable truth.

4. But when will it be found so? *"At the appearing of Jesus Christ."* In that great and solemn day which is fast hastening on, when the Lord Jesus Christ will "appear the second time without sin unto salvation," (Heb. 9:28.) then, "the trial of our faith," if we possess it (the heart-searching God knows whether we do possess it or not), *"will be found unto praise and honour and glory."* Little "praise" belongs to it now. The world will not praise it,—that we are well convinced of. Empty professors will not praise it,—that we are sure of; because if we are right, they are wrong; if our religion be of God, it cuts up their's root and branch, and leaves it not a foot to stand upon. Satan will not praise it,—that is very certain; for he

fights with bitter enmity against the grace of faith in the soul. And our carnal minds, we may be very sure, will not praise it, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. 8:7.) We must not even expect the church of God very often to praise it; because God is jealous of his glory, and knows what poor empty creatures we are, pleased with the good opinions of men. Thus, if we are exercised children of God, our faith will not have praise from the world, from graceless professors, from the devil, from our own carnal minds, and very little praise even from God's own children. But it will be our mercy if it "be found unto praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ." It will be our mercy if he then salutes us with his own gracious lips, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." (Matt. 25:34.)

And to "*honour*." Worldly honour we may not expect to have; God forbids us to desire it, though our carnal mind longs after and loves it. It is a bad mark if we seek it—a worse mark if we get it. But if the Lord Jesus Christ in the day of his appearing is pleased to honour our faith with the smile of his approbation, and crown it with immortal bliss and glory, we shall not need the applause of creatures; we shall not need to pine after the honour of man that perisheth, or of the sons of men who are as grass. We shall have a crown of honour that surpasses all—an exceeding and eternal weight of "*glory*" in the presence of God and of the Lamb. O what can equal this!—to have the trial of our faith thus unto eternal glory! O ye suffering saints of God! ye tried and afflicted children of the Most High! raise up your thoughts as God may enable you—lift up your eyes, and see what awaits you. Are you tried, tempted, exercised, afflicted? It is your mercy. God does not deal so with every one. It is because you are his children, that he lays on you his chastening hand. He means to conform you to the image of his Son in glory, and therefore he now conforms you to the image of his Son in

suffering. 'O but,' you say, 'I cannot believe it is so!' No; if you could, it would not be much of a trial. This is the trial of faith—to go groaning on, struggling on, sorrowing on, sighing on; believing against unbelief, hoping against hope; and still looking to the Lord, though there is everything in nature to damp the hopes and expectations of your waiting souls. Yet all will end well with the people of God. Their life here is a life of temptation, of suffering, and trial; but heaven will make amends for all. And if our faith is now tried as "with fire," it will one day, "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In that day when the secrets of all hearts will be brought to light, the faith of thousands will be found to be little else than presumption; but the faith of God's dear family will then be crowned with "praise and honour and glory;" and they shall see the Lamb as he is face to face, when all tears are wiped away from all faces.