

DELIVERANCE IN TRIALS

The item directly below is a discourse by A. E. Williamson as reported in the 1908 Convention Report, Put-In-Bay Island, Ohio, Aug. 29—Sept. 7, page 50.)

Dear Friends: Our subject this afternoon is based on the 19th verse of the 18th Psalm: “He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivereth me, because He delighteth in me.” This Psalm was written under peculiar circumstances by the Prophet David. An explanation in regard to its writing is contained at the top of the Psalm, as those of you who have a reference Bible will notice. “A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.” The deliverance which David experienced from the hand of Saul was evidently intended by God to inspire David with certain expressions which would typically represent the deliverance of a David class with which I trust nearly all of us here this afternoon are very familiar—a class of persons whom the Lord has been selecting from amongst the nations of the world during this Gospel age, who shall become heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, as God had anointed David, the actual David, to be the inheritor of the Kingdom of Israel. And as God overthrew Saul and all the other lesser enemies who attempted to interfere with the Divine purpose and to prevent David from becoming a King of Israel, so God proposes to overthrow the devil and every lesser enemy who has been seeking to interfere with the attainment of the Kingdom by that special class, the Body of Christ, which is seeking at the present time to make its calling and election sure. I am certain from the reading of this 18th Psalm that David was not describing his actual experiences in connection with the overthrow of Saul at all, because the first 18 verses of the Psalm describe, in what would seem to be the most extravagant language, things which are represented as having happened to David himself. David never had these experiences so far as the historical record goes. So we must believe God directed David to describe to us the experiences of his antitype, of which we trust that we ourselves are a part, if we have fulfilled the conditions which the Lord has laid down for us, and which we are striving to live up to by His grace.

There is a great deal more we could say on this particular portion, but our time is so limited that we are obliged to go at once into the significance of the expression David uses with regard to the blessing the Lord has richly prepared for this antitypical David class.

There are two special separate phrases in the text: “He brought me forth into a large place.” A large place, then, is one of the blessings which has been the experience of the Lord’s people who are seeking to be the antitype of David, and to be the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. The second phrase is: “He delivered me because He delighted in me.” A deliverance, then, because the Lord delights in us is an experience that it is our

privilege to enjoy if we are of the faithful David class. In what sense is this first phrase “He brought me forth also into a large place,” applicable to us? I answer that the phrase, “A large place,” specially emphasizes freedom, release from bondage. Every one of us, members of the human race, were in the bondage condition. We were under the great bounden state of death, by reason of Adam’s sin, and we by the grace of the Lord heard that wonderfully refreshing invitation which Jesus uttered in the 11th chapter of Matthew, verses 28 to 30, where He says, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And when we, by the grace of God, came to Christ and recognized that He was able to take away from us the laboring condition, the burden state, the condemnation of death, when Jesus broke the bonds that tied us down to the state of death and condemnation, we had rest; we had liberty, the condition of freedom that is properly described in this text, as being a large, blessed, refreshing place that God graciously gave to us when we could not find it in any other way. But we did not stop there, dear friends. We knew that there was more in the large place than would be experienced by merely justification by faith. We had the first blessing, the blessing described in the 5th chapter of Romans, 1st verse. “Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We had that, but we wanted more, and the Lord gave us more, and the Apostle describes what that further blessing is, and what the richness of the large place of the present time may be, in that same fifth chapter of Romans, second verse, where the Apostle goes right on, after describing justification by faith, and says, “By whom we also have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” That is the blessed large place, dear friends, which every child of God who properly appreciates the privileges of the present time, is permitted to remain in—the blessed privilege in which the most of us here at the present time are permitted to enjoy. The large place of God’s peculiar favor is to have taken a step beyond mere justification and by reason of the favor we receive our justified state, we take the step of consecration. We gave ourselves to the Lord, and when we gave ourselves to the Lord, the Lord gave us something so blessed, so transcendent, so wonderful, and gracious, that it is almost impossible for us to really conceive the wealth of favor the Lord manifested in it.

The Lord has given us the privilege of rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. When we were justified, dear friends, we were not rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God; we could have rejoiced, if we had understood it properly, in the hope of the glory of restitution, in the hope of the glory of being brought back again to the condition of perfection on the human plane, which Adam had lost in the Garden of Eden; we could have rejoiced in the justification and freedom from sin, cleansing from unrighteousness, which does not bring to us anything more than a hope respecting a favor here on the earth as restored perfect human beings in the time God has appointed for the work: but those who have made a covenant of consecration to the Lord. Those who have given themselves wholly and unreservedly to do the Lord’s will, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, rejoice in the sense that they have taken hold upon a heavenly inheritance, upon a

glorious privilege of being seated with Jesus Christ in His throne in a heavenly condition, reigning with Him throughout the Millennial age, and pouring out blessings upon all members of the earth who shall then be richly converted, strengthened and granted favor at the Lord's hand. And the Apostle Paul in writing his letter to the Ephesians, second chapter, fourth to sixth verses, calls our attention to this blessed favor of this peculiarly large place we are permitted to enjoy today if we have made a proper covenant of consecration to the Lord. This is what the Apostle says, "But God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It is a large place that God has given to us who have properly appreciated His favor and grace; He has made us to sit together with Christ in heavenly places. What does it mean? What does this peculiar language signify that the Apostle here makes use of? I answer that the Apostle is reminding us of the fact that we by God's grace are called to be spirit beings; we are called to have fulfilled to us that blessed suggestion of the Apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 1:3-5, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." God has graciously reserved in a heavenly condition an inheritance for everyone who maintains his faith in the Lord, and his covenant of consecration, unto the end of his Christian experience. That individual who has thus been called to be an inheritor of a heavenly blessing is the individual who must be prepared for that inheritance at the present time. It is absolutely necessary in order to be in the glories of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, in order to have fulfilled to us the completeness of the picture of David, as in the type, the one who ruled over Israel in the purpose of God in a typical sense if we are going to fulfill that picture in the Kingdom of Heaven, and rule with Jesus Christ over the world, it is necessary that we shall be prepared for that glorious inheritance by our experiences today. And that class of persons who are today seated with Christ in heavenly places, whatever that experience means, will be the class of persons that shall be seated with Christ in the glorious completeness of the heavenly place in God's due time.

Well, then, how shall one occupy today such a wonderful position as is described by that text, "Seated with Christ in heavenly places"? I answer that the way one fulfills it is by realizing what Paul meant in Colossians, first chapter, first three verses: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." Here the Apostle reminds us that we are called to a heavenly inheritance, and if we shall attain it, it is necessary we shall recognize that as human beings we died when we made a covenant of sacrifice, and placed ourselves on the altar of the Lord, and when we did thus die as human beings, we were from that

moment to be inspired with spiritual hopes, spiritual aspirations, spiritual longings; and we were to let these spiritual thoughts so thoroughly permeate our minds that we would be properly said to be thinking and doing so far as possible along spiritual lines, even while we are in this present life. The Apostle reminds us that this is necessary in order that we should reign with him in the glories of the future.

But now this form of expression is sometimes so stated that it goes above our heads so that we do not really appreciate what is the practical application of such a statement to our present life. We hear the expressions, "Seated together with Christ in heavenly places," "Set your affection on things above," and "Forsake your father's house and your own people," and we understand these are symbolical expressions, and that they mean something that is very important; but sometimes in our eagerness to grasp what is intended we fail to realize how we are to apply the expressions. Dear friends, we want to apply the matter in an exceedingly practical manner, to have the blessings of the large place which our text suggests as being possible in the present time; we must recognize that to be seated with Christ in heavenly places is to take thought respecting our heavenly inheritance from things of our daily lives.

I had the privilege of talking with a dear sister not long ago, when I was on a tour through Ontario, who emphasized to me the practical difference along the line of making applications to daily life of the requirements of our consecration. She told me that she had not made a consecration for a long time because she did not know how to bring it down to daily life. She had heard the phrase made use of at a baptism service that a person properly consecrated must give up everything he has, and she said, "If I gave up every ambition I have, I would simply have to sit down in my parlor and read the Dawn and the Bible all day long, and then I would never be able to get my housework done." Now, dear friends, that is one of the practical difficulties. How can we set our affections on things above, and at the same time attend to the housework, and the office work, and the farm work, and the shop work, and all the other incidentals that pertain to our still being in the flesh? I suggested to the sister it was like this, as the Apostle stated it in the 10th chapter of 1 Corinthians, 31st verse, "Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Now there does not seem to be any particular relationship between eating and drinking and setting our affections on things above, but, dear friends, if when we go to the table and recognize that it is necessary to provide sustenance for our physical nature, in order that we may be able to do whatever is required to be done during the day, if we have our minds filled with the thought that we want to use that physical sustenance for the strengthening of our bodies for the Lord's work, that is setting our affections on things above. When we are thus seeking to make use of the mere temporalities in order to develop spiritual characters, we are seated together with Christ in heavenly places; we are being prepared for the Kingdom condition. It seems almost preposterous to suppose any connection, for instance between a dear sister trying to cook dinner for the men who are coming home at 12 o'clock, and getting the meat scorched,

and going to Heaven and reigning with Christ in the eternal glories of the Kingdom; there does not seem to be any relationship at all; but there is that practical intimate relationship that if she does allow the meat to get scorched and at the same time allow her temper to get scorched, she is not getting very ready for the Kingdom. By God's grace, having His Holy Spirit working in our hearts, and producing these qualities which shall enable us to be patient under the little experiences and daily trivialities that come to us, and try our tempers, and seek to sear our minds, so that we shall be forgetful of the eternal interests, when we are seeking to make use of these things for emphasizing in our minds spiritual qualities, we are seated together with Christ in heavenly places.

Was there any relationship, do you suppose, dear friends, between getting ready for the Kingdom of Heaven, and being seated together with Christ in heavenly places, when coming in last Saturday morning at 2 o'clock and finding the hotel unprepared for the friends to get sleeping accommodations, and having to go through the hotel and find out where the bedding was so that they could lie down and get a few hours rest before the other people came in? Was there a relationship between these two conditions? Apparently none on the surface, but the dear friends who were seated with Christ in heavenly places, and who were seeking by the Lord's favor to be prepared for the heavenly condition, were endeavoring to exercise patience, and self-control, and that spiritual quality, aided by that practical condition which was trying to the physical state and which would have completely overwhelmed most people, was the condition that would enable those dear friends to grow in grace, and in such a condition of development the Lord would recognize His people were seeking to fulfill the conditions of consecration they had taken upon themselves, and in due time, by repeated performance of such patience, self-control, and devoted desire to fulfill the Lord's will, get these ready for the complete inheritance that the Lord has apportioned for the faithful in His own due time. That, dear friends, is the large place it is the privilege of you and me to occupy today, and yet unless we shall have that devoted interest in our hearts to carry out His will at this present time, we shall not be able in the fulfillment of the Divine purpose to reign with Christ in glory and to help bless all the families of the earth, who are still groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for the manifestation of these very sons of God who are now being prepared for such a wonderful position as shall then be their portion, when they shall have the privilege of blessing everybody else. If we by the Lord's grace are paying particular attention to what are the privileges of our large place today, then, dear friends, we shall have no doubt in our minds with respect to what is the large place, and the Divine favor that is apportioned to us in the eternal future.

The second phrase of our text reads, "He delivered me because he delighted in me." Who dares to say a thing like that? Who amongst all the Lord's people who have named the name of Christ, and have made this covenant, and who are seeking to be prepared for the heavenly condition, dares say: "He delivers me because He delights in me"? We can understand how Jesus could say it without a particle of boasting, as He actually did so,

when in His prayer to His Father He said, “I know that Thou hearest me always, because I always do those things which are pleasing in Thy sight.” But how can you and I take such expressions as this into our mouths, and declare with any confidence that God delights in us, and that he hears us always because we do the things that are pleasing before Him? We all realize we could not make use of any such expression from the standpoint of our individual condition in the Lord’s presence. We are absolutely unable and incapable of carrying out any conditions of righteousness that would permit us to say we are pleasing, or that the Lord delights in us in any proper sense, but when we recognize that the standing we have before our Father is the standing of members of the Body of Christ, then we realize that the whole matter is thoroughly explainable. As members of Christ’s Body it is possible to realize that the favor of the Lord is with us in just exactly the terms the Prophet makes use of. God tells us that because He delights in us, and He delights in us because we are members of that class who have given up their own wills, and have covenanted to be completely subjected to Jesus Christ, their Head and Lord, and to follow all the directions and instructions that He shall indicate to them in that relationship.

My hand is a part of my body, and as such a member performs certain services that no other part of my body would be capable of performing, but the things that hand performs do not bring to that hand any credit or any acknowledgement that it is a very capable individuality and that it is entitled to any particular expressions of praise and approval. Whenever there is any expression favorable or unfavorable for any act performed by that hand, the expression is made use of with regard to the head, because it is the head which contains the intelligence and which communicates the instructions to the hand. So when we occupy membership in the Body of Christ, and have the blessed membership, where we are permitted to perform some service as a finger in our dear Redeemer’s Body, seeking to do something that would show our love for Him, the approval or disapproval is not expressed with regard to the individual, since the individual is striving to manifest complete subjection to the will of Jesus Christ, our Head and Lord; but all the expressions are made use of with regard to the Head. Because the Head is perfect, therefore the expressions that are made use of are approving expressions; so that in our little functions and capacities, without any real ability to do God’s holy will, but because we are under the subjection of our dear Master and Lord, because we are covered by the robe of His glorious righteousness, therefore we realize that it is possible for God to approve the things that we are striving to do, and God can permit us to take into our mouths this very expression that otherwise would be utter presumption and inappropriate for us to express —“He delivered me because He delighted in me.”

Now there are two particular respects in which God delivers those in whom He delights. While David was making use of this phrase with regard to his complete entrance into his kingdom power, and his release from all of his enemies, and while we are properly to understand that this has a future application to all the members of the Church of Christ

who make their calling and election sure, and are eventually delivered into the glories of the Kingdom of Heaven by the power of God, nevertheless there is an application of the passage to us in the present time; and if we do not experience the fulfillment of the Divine favor and His special promise of deliverance today in the ordinary sense, then, dear friends, we shall never experience the fulfillment in the completest sense when the Lord gathers His faithful home to the glorious condition of the future.

In two different respects, in the present time, God's people are privileged to enjoy deliverance, because God delights in them. The first respect is that God delivers us from certain experiences He does not want us to be in, and the second respect is that God delivers us from certain experiences He does not want us out of. Those experiences the Lord delivers us out of because He does not want us to be in them, are our worries, our anxieties, our irritations, and the general conditions of vexations which usually trouble the minds of humanity in general. It seems to be rather a harsh thing to say, when we consider the many occasions for irritation and vexation, but it is the proper thing to say that God does not want Christians to worry; they have no business to worry. And when we realize we are allowing these conditions which rasp our natures, and sear our minds, and prevent us from exercising a proper appreciation of the loving favor of God, and being in peace, when we allow such unfavorable condition to develop in ourselves, we may realize, dear friends, that we are not delighting God, and thus we are not coming up to the fullness of the privileges that the Lord has graciously bestowed on us at the present time.

We notice a very marked contrast between the conditions which we are permitted to enjoy in connection with deliverance from worry, and the condition in which the world in general is permitted to be while they are associated with everything that is inclined to make them worry. When we consider the fact that the whole world of humanity at this present time is going pell-mell into a time of trouble which was not since there was a nation, and when we realize the conditions that are actually existing today, conditions of financial distress and disturbance and upsetting, we know that the world is worrying in a way that it never had occasion to worry before, and that it is going to worry a hundred-fold more before it gets through with the experience, and God wants them to do it. God wants the world to worry. Why? because God knows the world will not come to the place where they can realize that God alone can help them out of their terrible condition, until it comes to that situation where they know they are at their last extremity, and there is no scheme or arrangement which humanity can introduce which will bring about any more favorable condition. Jesus himself emphasized particularly the experience that the world should have when He said, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, looking forward to the things that are coming to pass upon the earth." Hearts failing them for fear, worrying, wearied with distress, vexation and anxiety with regard to the things that are upon them, out of which they know no means whatever to extricate themselves; and God has determined that experience shall be theirs so they shall realize how needful it is to turn to

God and seek His methods for release from the distressing situation. But God does not want us to have an experience like that. God has not apportioned any such conditions of worry for us, but we have been graciously given the peculiar promise His Word contains in that precious reminder the Apostle brings to our attention in Phil. 4:6, where he says, “Be careful for nothing.” Emphasize the second word in this text in the way I have emphasized it. Divide these two syllables and put all the force on both of them, Be careful for nothing—full of care for nothing. Do not have this careworn, anxious state of mind with regard to any of the things that pertain to this present life. “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Here the Apostle reminds us that we, by the Lord’s grace have a peculiar relationship with Himself, so it is not appropriate that we should be full of care, not appropriate that we should be anxious with respect to our experiences, either present or in the immediate future, or at any other time. We are to realize the favor of the Lord is graciously with us to relieve us from care, to deliver us out of worry, to separate us from these anxious difficulties that the world in general is permitted to have. Then the Apostle goes on to tell us that the proper way of relieving ourselves of these conditions is by prayer and supplication, not to ask the Lord to remove from us conditions he knows would be proper for us, but to tell the Lord about these conditions which are inclined to stir up a state of worry, so that we might be relieved from the worried condition; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Now notice in the next verse the Apostle particularly tells us the result of being without fear, without anxiety, without this state of worry that the world is permitted and expected to have, and that we are to be delivered out of if we are trusting in the Lord as a result of being careful for nothing: “The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Now, dear friends, if the peace of God is keeping our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, where is the reason for worry? Where is the reason for allowing ourselves to be distressed and vexed, and being irritated by the conditions with which we are surrounded? There is no reason. So the Apostle Peter emphasizes the same thing in 1 Pet. 5:7, saying, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” Now, if you have cast all your care, all your anxiety, on the Lord, because he does the caring for you, then why be disturbed with respect to any of the conditions of the present life? Deliverance from our worries is the special deliverance that the Lord has graciously made for us in the present life.

You know, dear friends, how the Apostle Paul in 1 Thess. 5, particularly called our attention to the peculiar conditions which exist between the Christian on the one hand and the worldling on the other. He is talking about the time of trouble, about the very conditions we are facing in the near future, and he is telling us the Lord’s people are in such a state of being delivered out of their worries that they have no reason for being anxious in any sense of the word, and you who are familiar with this particular passage of

scripture remember the Apostle distinguishes between the world as the persons who are not under the favor of God by the pronoun of the third person and he speaks of the Lord's people who are under His peculiar protection by the pronouns of the first and second person. "But of the times and of the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." The Apostle uses the pronoun of the second person twice, ye have no need that I write unto you; and there he emphasizes the fact that the Lord's people are separate from the world in general. "For ye yourselves [pronoun of the second person] know that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." Here the Apostle emphasizes the fact that the Christian is on guard with reference to the things that might otherwise worry, because he knows something that the world does not know anything about. He knows the purpose of God, and therefore when the dark clouds of the time of trouble come across the horizon, and obscure the rising sun, he is not discouraged in his faith, but he trusts the Lord will fulfill His gracious promise and dissipate the whole evil condition eventually and bring out all the glorious light of the Millennial Day for the blessing of all humanity. He is not worried, but the verse also emphasizes the class that are worried. It is as though the Apostle told us there was a special little class that knows all about the favors of God, and they are going to be peculiarly placed under His loving care, and the people on the outside, not in this special condition of divine favor, do not know God's plan, and therefore they have all the reason in the world to be worried. The 3rd verse says, "For when they [the third person class, the outside class] shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them [the third person class, the outside company, the people who are not entitled to peculiar favor, because they are not in the large place; they have not made a covenant with the Lord and rendered themselves wholly subject to His instructions and to His grace]."

The fourth verse goes on to emphasize again a class of persons who are placed in the favor of the Lord, the second person class: "But ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief." (Verse 5.) "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night nor of the darkness." Ye, the first person class, the saint class, the favored ones, are not of the night, nor of the darkness. (Verse 6): "Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they [the third person class, the outsiders who are entitled to do all the worrying, because they have not the favor of the Lord, and are not delighting in the Lord's care] that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation; for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." He has appointed the world to wrath, the wrath of the great day of trouble, and the wrath of these conditions which are going to break up every present institution of evil and selfishness, for they are to be properly prepared for the conditions of blessing of the Millennial age. He hath not appointed us to a condition of wrath or trouble; He has appointed us the great salvation, the glorious condition of the eternal kingdom of heaven, and He has appointed, to us, dear friends, in the present time, while we are being

prepared for that inheritance, deliverance out of our worries, out of our vexations that otherwise would harass our minds and interfere with our faithfulness and devotion, and the completion of our covenant of sacrifice, and the development of the characteristics that shall be in harmony with the glories of the kingdom to which we are invited.

Upon the other hand, dear friends, there is a class of experiences every Christian is expected to go through, a class of experiences the Lord does not deliver us out of, a class of experiences with regard to which the deliverance is manifested in that the Lord leaves us in the experience, and that condition the Apostle has represented by our trials, our afflictions, our testings. Now here is the point, dear friend, where a great many of the Lord's people make a serious mistake; they realize the precious assurance of the Word of God that He intends to deliver us out of certain conditions, because He does not want us to remain in them, and they imagine that that promise applies to our trials and difficulties; so when they get into trouble, when they realize they are being afflicted, they stand before the Lord in an excessive agony and say, "Why did the Lord let me have this trouble? Why did He permit me to go through this terrifying affliction? Did I do some terrible wrong in God's sight? Was I sinning against my covenant that the Lord found it necessary to so grievously chastise me and bring me into affliction?" And they sorely grieve in their minds and worry with respect to the afflictions, when they ought to be considering that it is a means of blessing and uplifting and refreshment and preparation for the kingdom of heaven. It is not improper for a Christian to ask himself, "Have I sinned?" but when the individual realizes the answer from a properly instructed conscience, that he has not knowingly and willingly sinned against his covenant of consecration, it is not proper then to worry with respect to his afflictions and to come to the conclusion that God is dealing with him unjustly. He must realize that there were other reasons for having trouble than merely because one has committed a transgression.

There are four different conditions into which every consecrated Christian may have affliction. The first one may be properly classified as troubles that come because of transgression against the covenant. If we have thus transgressed, and realize that there has been some failure to fulfill that which we ought to be reasonably doing, we can stop right there and say, That is the reason the trouble came and we must proceed just as quickly as we possibly can to get rid of the wrong thing in our heart and in our conduct, so that we might get the blessing of the Lord and the removal, as soon as the Lord thinks it wise, of the affliction He sent because we were not doing that we covenanted with the Lord we would do. But if we do not find transgression, some wrong condition in connection with our covenant, there may be one of three other things.

We may find that we have been committing a great transgression against our human nature. If we are transgressing the natural laws, we are neither to blame the devil or God, but we are simply to recognize it is our own unwisdom which has produced that particular experience, and we are to learn a lesson from it, and be more careful regarding

natural laws, and not to transgress them, unless it is in the service of the Lord where we are to understand that the Lord's work transcends every earthly interest. But if we are afflicted because we have violated nature's laws, we are not to think that it is because of sin, we are not to consider that it is because of righteousness, but we are to consider that it belongs to that second class, and we are to put the responsibility just where it belongs.

If it is not because of sin, and if it is not because of violation of nature's laws, then we realize that there may be a third reason for these experiences, and that third reason is the one which the Apostle Peter refers to in 1 Pet. 4:12, where he calls our attention to the blessed privilege of suffering for righteousness' sake: "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 you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Dear friends, if it is that third classification, there is no reason in the world for worry about the condition we are permitted to be in, but it is an occasion for rejoicing. Think it not strange but rather rejoice to realize that the glory of God rests upon us, because we are earnestly striving to proclaim the glorious truth God has given to us, and that therefore we are permitted to suffer something in harmony with the covenant we have made with the Lord. It is a blessed experience, something to fill our hearts, that the Lord should permit us to graciously suffer something for His name's sake.

But, dear friends, if it is not any of these three experiences, then there is only one other classification in which we can place it, and that fourth condition is that God has permitted that experience in order to develop our characters, and it is not because the Lord is angry with us. It is not because God wants to wreak vengeance on us, it is not because the Lord feels we are so unworthy of His loving grace that therefore He wants to chastise us with some terrible rod, but it is because the Lord loves us with the fullness of His great heart, and desires that He shall produce in us these characteristics that shall prepare us for the large place of the heavenly inheritance in the future. And so He permits to come to us trying conditions and afflictions and testing arrangements that from time to time we might realize the refining, the conditions which shall produce in us separateness from dross, separateness from unrighteousness, and such a holy state in our characters that we shall eventually be permitted to enjoy the precious testimony of the Lord that we are prepared by the experiences He permits for the loving favor that shall be our portion beyond the veil.

It is this class of experiences to which Peter refers again in 1 Pet. 1:7 where he says, "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 honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Here the Apostle compares this trying, this testing, this trial, and complete refining of our characters, to the chemist putting a lump of metal into a crucible. He

knows that the lump of metal contains certain streaks of gold he wants to extract from it, and in order that he may make the extraction it is necessary to treat that metal to fiery heat, and so he applies the fire and causes that there shall be a great deal of agitation and disturbance in that crucible, and that the baser metals which are not what he wants to make use of shall eventually be separated from the gold, and shall drop to the bottom, and that there shall come to the surface the precious golden particles he is desiring of making use of in some particular ornamentation. And this the Apostle is evidently bringing to our attention in this picture. He allows the heat to become so intense that it causes a thorough disintegration, a complete separation, and a gradual accumulation of all the golden particles upon the surface and if that gold could speak there might be some expressions of antagonism to so fiery an experience, but the chemist would not take any note with respect to such expressions; the fiery trial which is to try the gold which perisheth must be a very particularly hot trial, and the chemist proceeds; he does not permit it to become too intense and his labor be lost, but he does permit the heat to be so intense that it will accomplish the separating work he has designed. And when, in due time, after the agitation process has completed its work and the boiling and stirring up work has been finished, and the grosser materials have gone to the bottom where they belong, and the golden particles have come to the top where they are desired, then finally the chemist watches to see that there is a smoothing out on the surface, and the golden particles are all together, quieted, stilled, because the work is complete, and then, looking upon that which he has done, when he sees his likeness reflected in the surface of the gold, he knows that his work is finished. He puts out the fire; he skims off the gold from the top and takes it into his laboratory and works it up into the ornament that he knows will be for some distinguished service, something that will be honoring to himself and that which he was taking so much pains to get together. And, dear friends, every Christian is going through just exactly that experience, and it is with respect to these experiences particularly that the Lord delivers us while He leaves us in them. He does not promise that He is going to cause a separation of these experiences from us until the work is complete, until the fiery trial of our faith, which is much more precious than gold which perisheth, shall have produced the finished character which shall make us an honor and a praise to God in His kingdom where He can use us to His eternal glory forever and ever.

And so, dear friends, when we find such experiences coming to us that we cannot classify in any of the other three conditions, then we know the Lord sees some particular means whereby He can produce in us better conditions that shall be worthy of the inheritance of the heavenly place, and we are to have that patient, submissive, devoted attitude of mind and heart that shall be willing to go into the crucible and have the intense, fiery heat applied to us, so that there may be produced in us the proper conditions the Lord wants to see, and that the Lord can use in the eternal future. And when we have gone into the crucible, when we have realized the terrible agitation and the troubling, and the disturbance, we are inclined to cry out against the great alchemist who deals with us and is trying us and bringing the golden particles together; we are inclined to ask the Lord

that He shall relieve us from this terrible situation, and these intense sufferings, and the Lord graciously listens to our earnest pleadings and our mistaken ideas with respect to what is good for us, and gives us answer according to the expression the Apostle makes use of in 1 Cor. 10:13: “God will not permit you to be tried above that which you are able, but will with the trial provide a way of escape, that ye may be able to hear it.”

Dear Friends, we have specially and particularly emphasized the last phase of that verse—God will provide a way of escape; not to be delivered from trouble, not to be taken away from the experience of affliction and testing, but provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it, that we may be able to endure the severe experience, and have developed in us the qualities the Lord realizes are absolutely essential that we might enter into the wondrous condition of the eternal future. So from time to time as we have these experiences the Lord hears the broken prayers, the mistaken petitions, and tempers the heat suitable to our condition that we shall not be burned up, that we shall not be completely destroyed, that we, as New creatures, shall not be overwhelmed for the Lord is not going to produce any such condition as that. He is a master chemist, and knows exactly the amount of heat necessary to produce this disintegration and separation from the grosser earthly, fleshly, conditions, and the bringing together of the particles of golden spiritual character that shall eventually assemble themselves upon the surface of the crucible, and make themselves known to the dear Lord. The Lord knows just exactly how to do that separating work. When we mistakenly offer petitions that we shall be delivered from these experiences, He will simply answer in His own wise way, and instead of taking us out of the difficulty, will allow us to continue in the experience with the blessed grace and comfort and strengthening assistance that shall permit us to endure it until the work is finished and the Lord has gathered the golden qualities to Himself in the glories of the Eternal Kingdom.

Our beloved Apostle Paul had just this kind of an experience, and prayed most earnestly to the Father that he might be released from it, and his experience is a blessed lesson to us. “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.” (2 Cor. 12:18, 19.) Without going into it at length, we believe this thorn in the flesh was that disfigurement of face which the Apostle received, and that partial blindness which came to him at sight of the miraculous appearance of Jesus on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians. But the Apostle says this thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan. Sometimes it is hard for us to understand how it could be a messenger of Satan when this disfigurement of the face came from the appearance of the Lord Himself. The way we understand it is not that Satan sent this thorn in the flesh, but that Satan found this disfigurement of face, found this trouble in the Apostle’s physical condition, and used it as a buffeting experience. The Apostle is using the picture of one of those long oriental thorns sticking in the poor Apostle’s flesh and the devil seeing that instrument of torture takes hold of the end of it

and wiggles it around so that he may trouble the Apostle still more; and in that way the Apostle was beginning to get worried and realized he was having a trying experience. Apparently he was thinking about the interests of the truth, that he was an ambassador of Christ, and this disfigurement of face and poor eyesight would interfere with the proclamation of the glorious message, and he wanted to be relieved from that condition, and the devil was helping him on as much as possible, although the Apostle at first did not understand it; and the devil was stirring up the Apostle to believe that he had to ask the Lord to be relieved from this condition so he might be better able to serve God's holy truth. The Apostle did the very thing that every Christian ought to do when he finds an experience like this coming to him: when he begins to feel worried, he is not to stay worried, but go to the Lord and talk to Him about it, until the Lord gives the answer with which we are to be perfectly satisfied.

Now, dear friends, Paul's experience does not justify us in asking the Lord to take away our thorns in the flesh. Paul's experience tells us what God would say if we did ask Him to take away our thorns in the flesh, and we are to take the answer to Paul for our own, and not ask the Lord for that experience. But we can talk to the Lord about it, telling Him all about our experiences and ask Him for the promised grace which will enable us not to worry, or to be delivered out of our worry, but to realize the blessed condition of peace while we are permitted to remain in the crucible; and so Paul says, "For this cause I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me." And God answered Paul's prayer.

Our dear old Bro. Weber, who was Vice-President of our Society, and whom we trust is now with the Lord in the glories of the Kingdom of Heaven, used to say some things in rather a quaint, old-fashioned way, and this is one of his expressions: "I believe that God always answers prayer, but sometimes He answers no." And that is just exactly what God did for Paul; He answered no. But Paul realized that God's no was so much grander than any yes God could have uttered that he was delighted that the answer came just as it did. The next verse says, "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you, my strength shall be made perfect in weakness." It is just as though the Lord had said, "Paul you do not understand this situation yet; you are worrying about the truth; you are worrying about the great service to which you have been called; but Paul, I know how to look after the truth; I know how to look after the work; I know how to make all things glorify me, even if it is a disfigured face and poor eyesight, and a hindrance from the physical standpoint; Paul, I am thinking most about your personal development, and I put you in the furnace of affliction and have ordained that you shall have the golden quality extracted, and that there shall eventually be prepared the complete new creature which shall then glorify me in my Heavenly Kingdom; Paul, if I were to answer your prayer in just the way you have asked it, and take you out of this particular furnace, I would have to put you in another furnace right away, so that you should be made ready for some other standpoint, and there would not be any saving with that view in mind; and, therefore, Paul, I am just going to leave you where you are. But when I leave you where you are, I

am going to give you grace, I am going to give you help, and I am going to see to it that a way of escape is provided for you—not to deliver you out of it, but to see that you are able to bear it.”

And so Paul realized that God was answering his prayer in a far better way than otherwise could have been; and when Paul got the matter clearly before his mind—and it took three times of praying to get it clearly before his mind—he broke out in a most wonderful exclamation of praise to God. The Apostle says, “Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” As though the Apostle were saying, “If the Lord is going to give me so much more grace in proportion to my experience in trouble, then I am going to leave myself thoroughly and completely in His hands so as to have all the grace and blessing in proportion to the weakness and difficulty. I would rather a thousand times have the experience of the thorn in the flesh with the grace, than that the Lord should take away the thorn and likewise take away the proportion of grace as well.”

Thus, dear friends, the Lord did deliver Paul by leaving him in the furnace, and the Lord is delivering us by leaving us in the furnace, extracting the gold, seeing that there is produced that surface accumulation of characteristics of spiritual development until all have been completed, until the work is finished, until the agitation has ceased and a peacefulness that is to result has come, and then the Lord looking on the finished work sees that the fire is no longer necessary, and He puts it out; He takes the golden qualities He has been producing through this fiery experience home to the Kingdom of Heaven; and when He gets them there in His heavenly laboratory, what is He going to do with them? Isa. 62:3 tells us, “Thou shalt be for a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.” That is what God is going to do with all the golden qualities of all the members of this specially elect class that He is gathering when He has them joined together, as one glorious crown for the praise and honor and glory of our Heavenly Father throughout all the eternity of His wondrous favor.

Dear friends, let us thank God that He has invited us to so glorious a privilege, and let us seek to remain in the large place of present favor and consecrated determination to think on the things that are spiritual and to enjoy deliverance from the state of worry and irritation and vexation, and deliverance into the condition of trial and test, until by His loving favor we shall have worked out in us these precious qualities of spiritual development of which the Lord can say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter thou into the joys of thy Lord.” Amen.