

The God of All Grace

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon emphasizes the sovereignty and goodness of God's grace, which is available to all people and is the source of all blessings and comfort.

Scripture: Psalm 68:28, Isaiah 40:29, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 6:10, Philippians 4:13, Colossians 1:11, Colossians 1:23, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Suffering And Grace", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the importance of enduring suffering as part of the Christian journey, emphasizing the need to trust in God's grace and strength to make us perfect, establish us in faith, strengthen us in trials, and settle us on the firm foundation of Christ. He highlights the contrast between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that awaits believers, urging them to seek comfort and relief in God's Fatherly goodness during times of affliction. Bradbury encourages believers to find strength in weakness, to be steadfast in faith, and to rejoice in the assurance of eternal glory, offering a doxology of praise to God for His everlasting glory and dominion.

Transcript

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 5:10,11)

The apostle Peter in the chapter before us is concerned about those whom the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great and glorious Head of the Church, had set apart for the ruling, teaching, and feeding of His living flock. At the commencement of the chapter he identifies himself with them in the glorious heights to which they had been raised, and also in the mournful depths into which they are oftentimes cast. He says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ." A man who is not a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and destitute of the fellowship of His sufferings, will cut a sorry figure in the pulpit in the estimation of the tried and tempted children of the living God. Peter was not only a witness of the sufferings of Christ, but also "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Not simply a partaker of a "hope of the coming glory," but "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." "Feed the flock of God which is among you" that is, Feed the flock with food convenient and suitable for it. O for wisdom and guidance to feed the people of God aright. Some will have savory food. Clean beasts will have clean provender. Babes are satisfied with milk, but it must be from the breasts of Divine

consolation. Those who are of full age delight in deep draughts of the good old generous wine of the covenant. "Feed the flock, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." God's own sent ministers, whom He teaches rather to suffer affliction with His people than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, will disdain to seek the favour of the great, the influential, and the rich; but, with a ready mind, love to wait upon the poor and the needy, the sick and the sorrowful, the tried and the tempted, wherever these may be, in the halls of the great, or in the huts of the lowly. The messenger of mercy loves to be wherever a poor broken-hearted elect vessel of mercy is to be found, to blend his joys and sorrows with those of a suffering member of the body of Christ.

It was my lot on Friday last, after dinner, to try to get a nap. Just as I was dozing off I heard a step. I was not very well pleased. My wife came to the door and informed me that a man, who lived at a distance and whose time was precious, wished to see me. I went and sat down by the man. We conversed with each other and he opened up his heart to me. I was thoroughly ashamed of myself as I experienced a little softening inside, such softening as I like. He told me that twelve months ago he was brought to this place when the truths of God from these faltering lips and from this exercised heart were made life and power to his soul. I felt there was no mistake in what he said. If a man comes to me ready to burst with matter, I am careful of that man; but if one comes diffident and retiring, with true humility, half afraid to speak, I am inclined to receive him at once to my heart. But why should there be any diffidence in speaking to ministers upon spiritual and eternal things? I know something of that state of mind. It arises from knowing so little of the man out of the pulpit, and from the solemnity of the subjects pressing upon the mind. I know what it is to look with profound veneration upon the very steps of the man from whose lips God's glorious truth has been spoken with life and power to my heart. After conversing with my visitor I felt a fluttering within which I cannot express, and a trembling of the lips so that I could not say the things that I would. As he narrated his state and condition, and the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to his soul, I felt my heart united to him. He said, "I retire from the Grove after service on Sundays without the annoyance of criticism or controversy, but melted with a sweet sense of loving oneness with a suffering Saviour. I am a poor man, but I wish you to accept this money toward the Repairing Fund, with the hope of doing more." This is what I love to see. It was an evidence that Jehovah's testimony from my lips is made life and power to the waiting hearts of His people as they are brought to the footstool of sovereign mercy, to the feet of a precious Christ, their chains knocked off, stripped of their filthy rags, clothed in the pure white robes of Jesus' righteousness, and kept by His almighty power.

"Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage" that is, over God's Clergy. His people are His clergy. The ministers of the Gospel are the servants of the clergy. You may rest assured, if God's clergy, God's heritage, God's lot, God's inheritance, or God's people are manifested to the heart of a God-sent minister, he cannot lord it over them. There will be seasons when he must act with decision and determination, and when there is a necessity for him to rule and not be ruled over. It is for a minister of Christ to deal out to the waiting and wanting flock of slaughter those comforts and consolations which are only known and felt in experimental oneness with a once-suffering Christ, and also, by the authority committed unto him by the great King-Priest, to maintain his rule and power in the Church over which he is placed. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another." Hard work that, when self is uppermost; but when the Lord Jesus Christ appears in the sovereignty of grace and love, it is no work at all. "And be clothed with humility." Peter does not say, Be of a humble mind; but, "Be clothed with humility." Our clothing is outside and uppermost, where it is seen and judged. So the humility of God's

giving is not merely for the closet, the prayer-meeting, or the chapel, but in the general walk and conversation. "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." (1 Pet. 5:5,6) Mark that. "Under the mighty hand of God." If you are not there, you may try all your lifetime, but you will not be able to humble yourselves. "That He may exalt you in due time." Spiritual and gracious exaltation does not take place according to our expectations, but in due time, which is always God's time. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." (1 Pet. 5:7) I like that. Peter writes not to those who could boast of their having cast their care upon Him, but to the careworn and weary. See how blessedly he writes of the Bearer of the cares of His people. "He careth for you." I love these present-tense blessings. "He careth for you?" When? From the very moment of our appearance in this world, through all our experiences of toil, trial, and tribulation, in every difficulty we encounter, in every danger we fear, in every darkness we dread, the truth stands true, "He careth for you." Many times we have words of this class set before us. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) "Perfect love" that is, the love of the covenant Three" casteth out fear." These are continually true of God's own children in living union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Be sober." To whom is he writing? To elect ones, to redeemed ones, to regenerate ones, to those in possession of an heavenly inheritance, and blessed with the rich and magnanimous grace of Jehovah. "Be sober." What does it mean? Does it allude to intoxicating drinks? Well, it may. There are those who are so carried away with this view of the matter that they can see nothing but teetotalism here. It has been my lot to know many intemperate tee-totalers, very intemperate in their judgment and declarations, many of which have been very sweeping, for which may God have mercy on them. Be sober in the judgment you pass upon those who differ from you. Think twice before you speak once. May we ever be crying for the Lord to set a watch upon the door of our lips. Be sober in your temper. Depend upon it, that is as very necessary injunction for me. "Be vigilant" that is, on the look out, watchful "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8) He is not an idle devil, but marvellously industrious. Good old Hugh Latimer said he was the most active bishop that ever lived. He is here and there through every spot of his diocese doing his own work. I believe that Satan is more particular in his acts than many of his brood, in respect to obscenity, profligacy, and uncleanness. "Seeking whom he may devour." You remember the tract entitled "Old Alice Banks." Ah, I oftentimes wish I had Old Alice's tumble down cottage to step into, to sit by her bedside, where I have experienced many blessed foretastes of that glory which God has reserved for His tribulated ones. You well remember my friend saying to her, "I say, you must be very careful, for the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." I think I can see the dear old woman now with her quaint response, "Ay, ay, that's true; but what about those he mayn't devour?" What a mercy it is for us to know that to those who are within the bounds of God's holy mountain, where nothing can hurt or destroy, Satan is a chained devil, and can only go the length of his tether. He may worry, but he cannot devour. He may annoy, but he cannot destroy. He may perplex, but he can never cause one for whom Christ died to perish. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith," (1 Pet. 5:9) and in no other way, "knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." (1 Pet. 5:9) The mind is here led into the contemplation of the sufferings and tribulations of all those who are passing along the beaten track to glory. Then comes the precious and soul-absorbing truths of the text, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

We will notice,

THE ILLUSTRIOUS TITLE "But the God of all grace." THE GRACIOUS CALL "Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." THE NECESSARY SUFFERING "After that ye have suffered awhile." THE CERTAIN BLESSINGS "Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." THE GLORIOUS DOXOLOGY "To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." I. THE ILLUSTRIOUS TITLE "But the God of all grace." Many are the titles given to God in the New Testament Scriptures, and, if you will notice, you will see that the titles given are always in keeping with the blessing bestowed, or with the subject under consideration.

In every instance I find this to be the case. Let us look at one or two portions. See Romans 15:5: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." Turn to the 13th verse: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Come with me to 2 Cor. 1:3,4: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Come to Ephesians 1:17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Turn to Hebrews 13:20: "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Amen." But in our text He is set before us in that grand, glorious, and illustrious title, "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE." Let us look at it minutely. The God of grace? No! "The God of all grace." Not the God of some, but of all grace. If He is the God of grace to you and to me, He must be the God of all the grace we have experienced, and that we shall experience in the wilderness. He must be the Author and the Giver of all the good things which flow from His everlasting covenant of grace, through the wounds, blood, righteousness, and intercession of Jesus, and that by the Spirit of grace and supplication to the people whose hearts are graciously wrought upon by Him.

Ah, my dear friends, the revelation of this glorious title of Jehovah, "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE," appears to me as His axe applied to the root of that upas tree of Arminianism which would make Him the God of grace so far, the God of grace to a certain extent, the God of grace as long as you believe in Him, but the God of judgment and wrath the moment you believe not. But, in spite of all the devil and his pious fraternity may say and do to the contrary, our God is "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE."

Here is a precious truth to the sons and daughters of Zion, cheering to the hearts of those who often mourn over their want of faith, and trust, and confidence in Him; who weep in secret at the footstool of sovereign mercy because they would, but cannot, believe. You will find it in 2 Tim. 2:13: "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

What is grace? The simple meaning of the word is, free, unmerited, undeserved favour. God's grace is manifested in His loving concern and watchful care over undeserving and hell-deserving sinners. It is His everlasting, immutable, uninfluenced favour to those who do not deserve it. Ay, and more than that. It is His favour proving itself more than a match for all the spite, the enmity, the opposition, and the obstinacy

of those whom He is determined to save in Himself with an everlasting salvation. His grace is so rich and so rare as to teach me that I cannot be damned if I would. You look here! The determination of my wretched nature was to have my fill of sin and folly, and I would have it today if left to myself. Such is the propensity of this carnal mind of mine. Left to myself only for a moment, where am I? Where I should not like you to see me. But He sees me, who ever judges of His child according to His dealings with him in the Son of His love. O God, Thy favour is so rich, so rare, so full, so free to me in the everlasting covenant of Thy grace. As I meditate upon it in the light of this precious portion, this glorious title given of Him, "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE," I ask the question and seek for an answer, not from human feelings, but from the written Word, from a "What saith the Scripture?" as it is made plain and clear to me by the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost. This alone will gratify and satisfy my waiting and wanting heart. What is the nature of God's grace? You know that precious hymn of dear old John Kenta hymn which God has oftentimes made life and power to me a hymn we frequently sang at Barrow Hill with the spirit and the understanding, but which we have not sang often since I have been amongst you,

"Sovereign grace o'er sin and abounding,

Ransom'd souls the tidings swell;

'Tis a deep that knows no sounding.

Who its breadth or length can tell?

On its glories

Let my soul and for ever dwell."

SOVEREIGN GRACE. What is meant by sovereign grace? It means grace that is revealed, communicated, and applied by Jehovah, the absolute and supreme Disposer of the fate of men and angels. He alone has the right and power to bestow it upon whom He will, when He will, where He will, and just because He will. He cannot go out of Himself for a reason why He should convey or communicate His grace to any person in the whole of His creation. The riches of His grace abound toward His elect, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself. (Eph. 1:6-9) In the contemplation of this grace, let us dwell upon it according to the Scriptures, and not according to our preconceived notions or finite capacities.

Turn to Rom. 9:11, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." This was said in reference to the acceptance of Jacob, and the rejection of Esau. Look at verse 13: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Paul then brings in Moses as a witness to the sovereignty of JEHOVAH'S grace. "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

So then." This is the conclusion of the whole matter. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." What is mercy? It is simply grace bestowed upon miserable sinners. It is God's grace having respect to the misery of those whom He separated to Himself in the counsels of eternity. This brings us to notice that which Nebuchadnezzar so blessedly and clearly declares in Dan. 4:34,35: "And at the end of days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth

for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

What is the army of heaven to Him? Simply the performer of His will in heaven, and earth, and hell. What are the inhabitants of the earth to Him? Reputed as nothing. Look at Isaiah 40:12-17, ye who think yourselves to be something. Carry this home with you, and may God in His grace cause you to think of it: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand?" All the waters of sorrow, affliction, temptation, and tribulation, through which His poor children pass to glory, are measured in the hollow of His hand.

"And meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?" Oh! says Mr. Arminian, I directed Him in my prayers this morning. A pretty director of Deity you are! Hide your impudent face from view. "With whom took He counsel, or who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?"

Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket." Think of that. The nations are as a drop of water falling from the side of a bucket to be for ever lost from view. "And are counted as the small dust of the balance." Small dust that will not turn the scales. That is you and that is me. Pretty creatures we are to encourage pride. Think of our nothingness, and think of His grace, and we shall acknowledge His sovereignty at every step.

ELECTING GRACE. Turn to Romans 11:5, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." God, in His rich and sovereign grace, in His distinguishing and discriminating mercy before the worlds were framed, pitched upon, and chose to Himself, a definite number of persons, not one more, not one less, who should be brought into living union with the Lord Jesus Christ, be saved by Him with an everlasting salvation, redeemed in Him with an eternal redemption, regenerated in Him with an irrevocable regeneration, and preserved in Him unto eternal glory. This is God's election. God's choice. God picking out, from the rest of mankind, those whom He would have near to Him in blessed association and fellowship in the Son of His love, just because He would, and giving, no other reason to you and to me, but warming our hearts with His love, and causing us to praise and adore Him for His free electing grace fixed upon us, and for bringing us into the rich and blessed apprehension of the same.

REDEEMING GRACE. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. 1:7) Redemption from hell, redemption from the grave, (Ps. 49:15) redemption from death, (Hosea 13:14) redemption from the curse of the law, (Gal. 3:13) redemption from all iniquity, (Titus 2:14) redemption from deceit and violence, (Ps. 72:14) redemption from the power of our wretched selves. You see this redemption by the life's blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is according to the riches of God's sovereign electing grace.

"Eternal, free, electing grace

Redemption's boundary sets;

And those whom Jesus died to save

The Spirit ne'er forgets."

Redemption by grace is eternal (Heb. 9:12) and perfect. It cannot be mended. It cannot be marred. See Ps. 49:8: "For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever;" or, according to the Prayer Book version, "let that alone for ever."

SAVING GRACE. Salvation experimentally realized is a succession of deliverances from Satan, sin, and self, from regeneration to glory. It is according to that which the now-glorified and redeemed Atheist expresses so blessedly in one of his hymns:

"Sweet peace is the gift of the crucified Man,
Who purchased the Church with His blood
And bore, for His people, the curse and the ban
Of a holy and sin-hating God.
He'll cause you to know that His peace is a gift
Which cannot be purchased with prayers:
A boon to a wreck on the ocean adrift
A rescue where RUIN appears.
He glories to save not the Half-ruined soul,
But the soul that feels Utterly lost;
The DEAD, not the DYING,
He came to make whole
A Lazarus once lived to boast.
He saves us at first, and He saves us again,
Each day full a thousand times o'er;
The flesh and the devil, the world and its men,
All ceaselessly call for its power.
He fights for His saints, yea, the battle is His
They know it and leave Him to war;
They give Him His glory, while He gives them peace,
A Conqueror crowned in His car."

We need a daily salvation from self, from the accursed influences surrounding us, from our wretched tempers, and from the vile corruptions of the flesh. This is secured to us in the person and work of Jesus, and is all of grace, all of grace."

CALLING GRACE. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9) God's calling is from sin to salvation, from death unto life, from darkness to light, from the hug of the devil to the embrace of Jesus. This call is effectual, heavenly, holy, irresistible. It must be wholly of grace, because settled and secured in Christ before the world began, and made a grand reality in the fullness of time by the grace and indwelling of God the Holy Ghost.

PROVIDING GRACE. What would election, redemption, salvation, and calling be to us without gracious and covenant provision? We came here this morning hoping for a gracious supply. I did. Turn to 2 Cor. 8:9. Here we have providing grace. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." The poverty of Christ. What was it? His experience in the days of His flesh of all the spiritual necessities of His redeemed ones. a terrible poverty it was, and all this that we might be enriched with the unsearchable riches of Christ. See Romans 8:32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" All things necessary for life and godliness provided in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are brought to the realization of spiritual poverty, we have the gracious promise of

ABOUNDING GRACE. See 2 Cor. 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work." Blessed be God, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Peter might lie, and curse, and swear, but God's sovereign grace abounded in forgiveness and restoration over the whole of it. My sins may to a mountain rise, but abounding grace, like Noah's flood, will submerge the whole. Every sin, every iniquity, every infirmity must be hidden eternally from the view of God.

EXCEEDING GRACE. 2 Cor. 9:14, "And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you." This is not only the fountain full, but the fountain overflowing and reaching all the elect of God throughout all the ages of time, coming even to us, and in us.

REIGNING GRACE. Romans 5:21, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." That is the grace dear to my heart. Grace as a glorious sovereign. Grace personified in JEHOVAH-JESUS our King. If a king reigns, he must have subjects to reign over. Is the power and authority of reigning grace known and felt in you and in me? I will tell you what grace reigns over feelingly in me. It reigns over imperious lusts, carnal affections, corrupt inclinations, obstinate dispositions, foolish thoughts, infidel suggestions, and hellish injections. If it were not so, it would be all up with me. But it does, and here I am this morning a monument of God's sovereign, saving, abounding, exceeding, and reigning grace, stammering out a few words to its glory, and for the comfort, consolation, and joy of God's dear children.

But look here! "The God of all grace" does not depute His grace to the hand of another. If He elected me before all worlds, and redeemed me from the world, He will also separate and keep me from the world by His constraining grace. This brings us to notice

II. THE GLORIOUS CALL "Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." What are we to understand by that word called? We find it many times in God's most Holy Word. The old Puritans

represent God's call as outward and inward. There is the outward call of the Gospel. See Prov. 1:24, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded." Some take this as referring to the reprobate. I do not. I tell you why. Because of its gracious connection. Look at the preceding verse: "Turn you at My reproof, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you." Is that the lot of the reprobate? No. It is the gracious lot of all the election of grace. He stretches forth His hand and calls, but until He does something more than this, no child of His will ever obey the call. Until He takes hold of His child, the child will never come to Him. Until His words are made life and power, His child will remain at a distance from Him occupied with some of the trumpery baubles of time and sense. The last thing a child of God will do is to submit to His righteousness as revealed in the Son of His love. As we look at the whole of the subsequent portion of Proverbs 1, we shall see that it accords with the perplexing experience of God's living family. "Many are called, but few are chosen." You see this illustrated in the called and chosen army of Gideon. (Judges 7) Many came at his call, but few went down to the water and lapped like a dog, giving evidence of their election. So many flock together at the preaching of the Gospel, but only those who can cower and stoop, and prostrate themselves in the dust, only those who can hide their mouths in the dust, only those who can cry, "Unclean, Unclean," only those who can take the place of the dogs, like the poor woman who knew something of both the devil and the Deliverer, who can say, "Lord, I am satisfied to be Thy dog if I may but sit under Thy table to catch a few crumbs falling therefrom" only such are the chosen ones, called by rich and irresistible grace. They hear the voice of the great King in whose word is power, and love, and life. Under the sycamore tree He stood and cried, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." He did not parley with Zacchaeus. He did not say, "Zacchaeus, I have a blessing for thee if thou wilt come down for it; I have mercies for thee if thou wilt only receive them; I have salvation to offer thee if thou wilt only accept it." That is Arminian rubbish. The Lord Jesus Christ torments not His children after that fashion. He commands and He gives. He asserts His authority, and manifests His love. See Luke 19:9, "This day is salvation come to this house." That is the way our precious Jesus calls and lovingly compels His loved ones to obey.

"Called you unto His eternal glory." This sets forth irresistible calling, final preservation, and eternal glorification. He has not called us to a little fleeting glory here, to the experience of some glory from which we may fall away and be utterly lost; but to eternal glory. Both Peter and Paul put glory as a present possession. In the first verse of this chapter Peter says, "I am a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Look at 2 Peter 1:3: "Him that hath called us to glory and virtue." You see this again in Rom. 8:30: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Blessed be God, all the elect are glorified in the Divine purpose, and God shines in their hearts to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Glory is in them, and they are in glory. The glory of the Father's grace, the glory of the Son's righteousness, the glory of the Spirit's power. In Christ Jesus, who is the glory of God the Father, all the election of grace are eternally glorified. Turn to John 1:14: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory (the glory of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." Peter writes of this glory as seen by him on the Mount of Transfiguration: (2 Pet. 1:16) "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Have you ever heard that voice? If you have, then the Father is well pleased with you. In the person of Jesus, God is glorified in you and you are glorified in Him. In the person of God Incarnate, God risen, God ascended with great triumph into His kingdom in heaven, and by the power of God the Holy

Ghost the Church of Christ stands glorious in the glory of their Head. Thus God is the glory of Israel, and Israel is the glory of God. (Isa. 46:13) "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." (Isa. 45:25)

"FREE grace from God the Father flows,

To save the multitude He chose;

Accepts, forgives, and justifies,

Renews, preserves, and glorifies.

Free grace is seen in God the Son

He makes His Church cause His own;

Takes all her guilt, His merit gives,

By Him, in Him, with Him she lives.

Free grace, by God the Holy Ghost,

Regenerates the ransom'd lost;

Finds out and conquers God's elect,

And will to endless life protect."

Joseph Irons

Last Sunday morning I was led to speak from this very blessed portion of God's most Holy Word, when I endeavoured to seek for the instruction, comfort, and establishment of His children from that grand and illustrious title: "THE GOD OF ALL GRACE." In dwelling upon those two words, "all grace," food for the flock appeared to multiply at every step. And no wonder, for here we have a subject which has not only engaged giant minds in theology, but one into which those bright and glorious intelligences surrounding the throne of Jehovah desire to look. See 1 Pet. 1:13, "Which things the angels desire to look into." What things? The very things which are preached unto poor worms of the earth by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Not by Peter, though he opened his mouth and apparently found matter for consideration. Turn to Eph. 3:10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." "By the Church." By those highly-favoured and eternally-loved sinners to whom the Gospel is preached by the power of the Holy Ghost, angels learn the mystery of redeeming love. It is a marvellous subject, a subject which appears to stagger angelic minds. Just think for a moment, and that by the guidance of God the ever-blessed Spirit, and not by any speculative movement of the mind, that the place in which we are now assembled is filled with those bright and glorious messengers of love who ever wait upon God's Zion in performing the bidding of Zion's God. Ah, my dear friends, this is fact. Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant might be opened, "and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17) These were ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation in those days. Has God altered His plan of grace, or His design of working toward His own? Not at all. He says, "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6)

It is our blessed privilege to sing with the Spirit these sweet words.

"Incarnate God, the soul that knows

Thy name's mysterious power,

Shall dwell in undisturbed repose,

Nor fear the trying hour.

Angels unseen around the saints

Their guardian pinions spread,

To cheer the spirit when it faints,

And raise the drooping head."

Angels are not alone in admiring and adoring this grand, this vast, and glorious title, but the Son Himself loves to open up and declare the same to His wanting and waiting brethren, while the Holy Ghost loves to glorify it through the person of the Son, in the hearts of Jehovah's willing and worshipping people.

"THE GOD OF ALL GRACE." Sovereign grace. Electing grace. Redeeming grace. Saving grace. Justifying grace. Providing grace. Abounding grace. Reigning grace. And all this uninfluenced, invincible, inexhaustible, and immutable. No change or diminution here. He is "the God of all grace." He has treasured up all grace in His covenant, holds it at His own disposal, gives it where He will, and stops the mouths of all cavillers. He communicates when He will, and He won't be hurried.

He has His own time for everything, so that there can be no mistakes. He waits His own time, and teaches His people to do the same. As He is a waiting God, so they are a waiting people. (Isa. 30:18) This "God of all grace" calls certain persons to be near to Him and with Him in eternal glory. Who are they? You have them set before you in that glorious golden chain described in Rom. 8:29,30, "For whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." He did foreknow. He did predestinate. He did call. He did justify. He did glorify. It says not, He will glorify; but, "Them he also glorified." When? Some say, in calling; others, in sealing; while others would have us wait until the consummation of all things before the throne up yonder. But we love present-tense realities, and in this matter we love to look at God's written Word, and dwell upon the pouring out of the heart of the great and glorious Covenantee.

See John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me, with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Read the 10th verse: "And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them." If the great and glorious Covenantee is glorified in them, they cannot in God's account stand apart from the glory for a single moment. The glory of God in Christ Jesus is not only manifested to them, but it is revealed in them. Read the 22nd verse: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are One."

There we have the glory given. Read the 24th verse: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." Are we to wait for this until the winding up of all things, until the final perfecting of the one body when the last member is caught up, and the last hoof is taken out of the mud and mire of sin and corruption? I answer unhesitatingly, No. This is glory reserved in God's covenant, glory revealed in God's Christ, glory given to God's saints, glory enjoyed in this life.

Glory with Christ. Where? Listen: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) Where God's elect are gathered by the power of the Holy Ghost in the name of Jesus, there He is with them. Where are they this morning? They may be found in dens and caves of the earth, or far off on the sea, or in prison cells, or in chambers of affliction. Well, wherever they are, He is there also. John knew something of this when he wrote, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) There we have the glory of God, in the person of Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word, beheld.

Look at 1 Peter 1:8, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." This is present glory, the foretaste of that which is to come, when, without the clouds of sin and sense to hide Him from our view, we shall see Him as He is and be for ever like Him. What a mercy! Called to His eternal glory. To the glory of His Godhead, to the glory of His manhood.

Marvellous sight! Humanity seen in Him without sin, spot, or pollution. There is the glory of His righteousness. Do not you like it? Ay, say you, it is the joy and rejoicing of my heart to know that I stand accepted and approved before my God in a robe of His own providing, the glorious robe of His righteousness. In the glory of His salvation we stand. In the glory of His intercession we appear before the throne. In the glory of His sympathy, which comes by the grace of the Holy Ghost to our anxious and careworn spirits, we wait for the period when we shall appear with Him divested of the burden of the flesh and free from all corruption.

"Who hath called us unto His eternal glory." Look at that. It is not, Who is calling us; but He hath called us, not to a temporal, or fleeting glory, but to a glory which knew no beginning and can know no end. Can you find its commencement? Only with dear old John Kent,

"A monument of grace,

A sinner saved by blood;

The streams of love I trace

Up to the Fountain, God;

And in His wondrous mercy see

Eternal thoughts of love to me."

When you are lifted there, you are lost. I love that kind of losing.

"Lost in Godhead, love, and blood."

A wonderful expression, but marvellously true, expressed in that precious verse,

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,

My rising soul surveys,

Transported with the view I'm lost

In wonder, love, and praise."

If He as called us, it is to His eternal glory. Has He called you? Oh, yes, say you, but I experience my inability to obey the call. So do I. Article 17 of the Church of England says of the elect, "They which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling." Let me ask, Have you obeyed God's call? The word "obey" appears to stagger you. I will tell you in a few words how I obeyed. When God commanded me to obey His commands, I discovered my utter inability to obey Him. When He called me I was like poor Mephibosheth at Lodebar, "a place of no pasture." Nothing to eat, nothing to drink, clothed in filthy rags, not fit to appear at the King's table, and lame of both feet. How could I obey the call? Obey by being carried, and the Lord Himself must be the Carrier, or the Appointer of the carriers. Jesus in a mysterious manner called the man sick of the palsy unto Him. Some of you may be ready to say that the man was not called. Well, the man would never have come to Christ if there had not been a secret and mysterious call. See! He was carried to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, when He saw the faith of those carrying him, beheld the desire of His own heart, and the work of His own hands. When Jesus saw their faith, not the faith of the man, but that of those who carried him, He had compassion upon him, and healed him. There may be a father within these walls this morning carrying his wayward son to be the only One who can restore him. I know there is one, and that one is he who now speaks to you. There may be a mother carrying to Jesus a daughter grievously vexed with a devil, a husband carrying an unregenerate wife, or a wife carrying a graceless husband in sighs, groans, and tears to the Master. Mark you, where there is the Master's gracious call, there will also be His careful carrying. This must have been the case with me, for I am sure I should have been far off from Him now had it not been for His gracious call the performance of His covenant promises, in which is secured to us full immunity from all possibility of failure in our obedience to the call.

"Who hath called us unto His eternal glory." This is all by Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and in Christ. And as Christ is in the glory of God the Father, so are we. As He is the Brightness of the Father's glory, so are we in Him. Look at that blessed declaration in Isaiah 46:13: "I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off; and My salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory." Called by Christ to the experience of identification with Him in the glory of God the Father, we are comforted with the fact that as the whole heart, mind, and looks of the Father are concentrated upon the Son of His love, therefore He views with delight all whom He sees in Him. As He sees Him, so He sees them. Christ, Head, and members glorified together in the purpose of the Father, by covenant decree and unchanging love

"'Twas with an everlasting love

That God His own elect embrac'd,

Before He made the worlds above,

Or earth on her huge columns plac'd.

Then, in the glass of His decrees,

Christ and His bride appear'd as one;
Her sin, by imputation, His,
Whilst she in spotless splendour shone."

Here Kent describes the Church in glory and splendour before the worlds were framed. As Jehovah the Spirit brings His own to the apprehension of what they are in Him, they discover their natural filthiness, corruption, and depravity, while the cry of the heart is, "I am black;" but the declaration of His grace-filled lips and loving heart is, "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." That is glory. Can we believe it? Only as He brings the precious truth home to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, and He works His own precious faith in us. It is thus we, as members of His body, His flesh, and His bones, realize something of the glory we possess in Him. This is a mystery of grace which the carnal mind cannot understand, and those who know nothing of the chastening of love, those who are ignorant of the spirituality of Jehovah's law, those who are destitute of the fellowship of suffering with Jesus, can never comprehend. They may be able to read it in the Book, quote Scripture to prove it, and to describe every doctrine of grace to a nicety, yet be utterly destitute of their saving, comforting, and life-giving power, and have no part whatever in the glory of Christ as revealed in His person, love, blood, righteousness, and intercession. I have no desire to occupy the judgment seat in reference to others, or to make the hearts of the righteous sad which God has not made sad; but I cannot but notice and condemn the drawing-room Christianity so prevalent on every hand. There are thousands who sing, "Onward, Christian soldiers," who hate the Christ of God, and scorn the very idea of conflict. Hundreds profess to be watchmen on the walls of Zion; but as a quaint old fellow once said, "They use wooden swords that will not cut." Amateurs appear to fight, but the fight is all a sham. Now such soldiers as these can be very brave in their own way; but when the testing time comes, when the Captain sounds an alarm for war with the world, the flesh, and the devil, where are they? We cannot have communications from "the God of all grace" and our triple enemy leave us at our ease. This brings us to notice

III. THE NECESSARY SUFFERING "After that ye have suffered a while." Have we the call to God's eternal glory? We have the call to suffering also. Has Christ left us the legacy of peace in Him? In the world we shall have tribulation. (John 16:33) Do I enjoy the loving embrace of my covenant God? I must also experience the buffetings of the devil. Is the communion of saints my happy portion? The world's persecuting taunts will oft annoy me. Am I privileged to rest upon the bosom of everlasting love? I shall also be tossed to and fro upon the billows of trial and temptation. Do I rejoice in the blessed assurance of Divine forgiveness and of my oneness with a precious Christ? My mother's children will be angry with me. Do the consolations of Christ abound in me? The sufferings of Christ are also in me. (2 Cor. 1:5) Look at the sufferings of the saints, from whence do they spring? Not from the dust, and not by chance. That is a mercy, and a glorious mercy too. When an all-wise God calls us to suffer, the suffering comes, and suffer we must. We were appointed to it, and it was appointed for us. See 1 Thess. 3:3,4: "That no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation: even as it came to pass, and ye know." Is it not a marvellous mercy for me to know that every affliction I have experienced during the past week has come from a loving Father's hand? The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and the body feels its own aches and pains unknown to all beside. Well, there is not a pain of the body, not an anxiety of the mind, not a care of the spirit but what comes in all wisdom, and is accompanied by infinite love. Have you had any of them? What have you done with them? Does not conscience accuse a little at the remembrance of the fact that you have taken them to any one but to Him who calls you in love to Himself? Gracious Lord,

enable me ever to carry my anxieties, cares, distresses, and sorrows to Thee. Thou alone canst comfort me under them, and deliver me from them in Thine own good time.

Sufferings must and will come. They come in various shapes and hues. Have you ever noticed that sweet part in the Liturgy of England's Church, "We commend to Thy Fatherly goodness all those who are in any ways afflicted in mind, body, or estate?" Let us think about that. Do we commend all afflicted ones to the Fatherly goodness of our God? Do we? Well, we commend to His goodness those we have an interest in, and whom we like. But what about those we do not like? Now, in the heart-searching presence of Him with whom we have to do, and before whose throne we must shortly stand, what about these things?

I desire that God by His truth may ransack every nook and cranny of this deceitful heart of mine, and give me to experience the inflowing of His love by the gracious indwelling of His blessed Spirit. See! "We commend to Thy Fatherly goodness all those who are in any ways afflicted in mind, body, or estate, that it may please Thee to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions."

Yes, I like that. I liked it when I was a child, and I like it still because of the spirit of true Christian sympathy breathed in it. You may rest assured if we are called to God's eternal glory, we shall be called to suffering too. If we are called to experience spiritual oneness with a risen Christ in the heavenlies, there to enjoy sweet fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit, (Eph. 2:6) we shall also experience conflict with wicked spirits in the same spot. (Eph. 6:12margin) The very place of favour we are lifted to is the scene of suffering, and that from the hands of wicked spirits.

You see this in the case of our suffering Lord, as recorded in Matt. 3:17,4:1, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." The same striking contrast in experience in 2 Cor. 12:1-10. Paul was in the third heaven, blessed with extraordinary revelations of the heavenly glory, yet there was given unto him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure.

A man in Christ, yet a man in the grip of the devil. A man in the third heaven, yet a man beaten and bruised by Satan's buffetings. A man knocked hither and thither by Satan's fists until he was at his wits' end, yet graciously encouraged by sweet words which dropped from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Thus, if I am brought to God's eternal glory by Christ Jesus; if I am brought to experience the sweetness of my Saviour's love, and the charms of His person, in respect to the very revelation He makes to my heart, suffering is sure to be mine.

Does He tell me He has redeemed me with His precious blood? That is glorious? But Satan is almost sure to taunt me with my shortcomings, and will say: A pretty character you are to profess to be a redeemed one. That is grievous. Does the Spirit assure me that I am justified and accepted in the righteousness of God's dear Son? Satan is sure to appear at my right hand to accuse and resist me. Do I experience pardoning mercy? Accursed unbelief is sure to question it in the court of conscience. Am I blessed with delivering grace? The devil wont be long before he taunts me with being in my old place of fleshly ease, doubt, fear, and indifference.

"After that ye have suffered a while," or, for a little time. Just notice this as set forth in that wonderful second epistle to the Corinthians. It is an epistle of contrasts from the beginning to the end. We have noticed in chapter 12, the remarkable contrast between the third heaven and Satan's grip. In chap. 4, we have a string of contrasts. Read verse 15: "For all things are for your sakes." Think of that "all things," not

some things, but "all things are for your sakes." All things in heaven, and earth, and hell. "That the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God." You see, in God's revelation of Himself, we cannot get away from His glory. "For which cause we faint not." Why? Because all things are for our sakes. "But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Is the old tabernacle being taken down pin by pin? Do we experience weakness and weariness day by day, and sometimes long to get home? We shall be blessed by daily renewings. "For our light affliction." Why light? In contrast to the glory? That will not do. In contrast to the weight of glory? No, that will not do. In contrast to the exceeding and eternal weight of glory? No. What then will satisfy you? That which God declares. You may rest assured of this, that a God-given capacity can only be gratified and satisfied with that which is eternal and infinite, hence the apostle says, "A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." You cannot exhaust that. Look at the weight of the affliction, light. Look at the duration "for a moment." And then comes the glory "A far more exceeding and eternal weight." That appears enough to crush poor feeble worms of the earth, and so it would but for Him who bears the glory for them. It is precious for me to see Jesus my Sin-bearer on Calvary's tree. Jesus my Burden-bearer all through the wilderness. Jesus my Glory-bearer both here and for ever.

"Oh! I am my beloved's,
And my Beloved is mine;
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His 'house of wine.'
I stand upon His merit;
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

"He brings." How? In His arms. In His bosom. In His heart. When to the heights of glory He will bring us through the gates, not ajar, but flung wide open, He will take us, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which will meet our gaze at that moment, would crush our souls into nothingness were it not for the performance of the covenant promise: "He shall bear the glory." (Zech. 6:13) He is my Glory-bearer up yonder, and ever will be. It is mine with so bright a prospect, though "a poor vile sinner," deserving nothing but His frown and eternal damnation at His hands it is mine to look forward over the hills of doubt, and fear, and sin, to that moment when He will say to me, "Come, thou blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34) Well, my dear friends, with such grace in possession, and such glory in prospect, is it not astonishing, when we are called to suffer, whatever the suffering may be, in mind, body, or estate, but especially if our characters are defamed, then we are up in arms to defend ourselves? Are the weapons of our warfare carnal? The sooner God dashes them from our hands, the better. When we are called to suffer for His name's sake, I ask again, where are we? Ofttimes painfully humbled at the feet of Jesus, and all that we may be partakers of His holiness, and bearers of His patient spirit. When the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory is but faintly experienced in the soul, the glory of His pardoning love, His justifying grace, His restoring mercy, and His preserving care, it is then we are enabled to leave our all in His most

gracious hand.

IV. THE CERTAIN BLESSINGS "Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." "Make you perfect." What are we to understand by these words? It is a blessed fact that all the Church is perfect in Christ Jesus; (Col. 1:28) but this speaks of a perfection, or ripeness of spiritual experience, with which some of the children of God are blessed. A tree buds, blossoms, and brings forth fruit; but green, or unripe fruit, is unpalatable to the taste, and not good to eat. Persons of experience partake not of unripe fruit. At each stage we behold the perfection of God's handy work, but in wisdom we wait until the fruit is ripe before we pluck it. The husbandman waits with long patience for the precious fruits of the earth, and after sunshine, shower, and shade, after many changing seasons, he joyously gathers them. So it is with the child of God. His perfection of experience is not generally arrived at in a short space of time, but in the appointed time of the Father, the heavenly Husbandman. What, then, does the Holy Ghost by Peter mean when He says, "make you perfect?" This is a prayer for the scattered, tempted, and afflicted saints, that when they are called to suffer persecution, called to endure divers temptations, called to bear crushing weights of tribulation, called to the experience of Christ's sufferings abounding in them, when their hearts are surcharged with sorrow, and their spirits overwhelmed with sadness, they may be upheld with the sweet assurance of their oneness with the gracious Burden-bearer, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. 2:23) It is no small mercy to know our oneness in spirit with Him, who, in the hour of fierce temptation, murmured not, and under the repeated strokes of His Father's rod, rebelled not. This is the perfection of a God-wrought experience, to know, whenever Satan assaults, the world persecutes, and the Church is suspicious of me, that I stand in the sight of my God and Father perfect in the perfection of Christ, and that His perfect love, shed abroad in my heart, casteth out all fear that has disturbed and distracted me. I love to sing:

"In Him the Father never saw

The least transgression of His law:

Perfection then in Him they view.

His saints in Him are perfect too."

Turn to Hosea 13:13: "The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the breaking forth of children." Many of God's children linger amid the birth-pangs. They appear to love the regions of sorrow, travail, and soul distress. Meet them when you will they fill your ears with their murmurings, repinings, and complainings. They are over anxious to pour out to their fellow-mortals the tale of their griefs and sorrows, and the ill-treatment they receive from all their surroundings. Why is this? To seek a little sympathy which is not worth receiving. Human sympathy which is not worth receiving. Human sympathy sought for in a fleshy spirit is a bitter burden. But the loving sympathy of a once-suffering Saviour is worth having.

"Jesus, my sorrow lies too deep

For human ministry;

It knows not how to tell itself

To any but to Thee."

May we be brought to experience this more and more.

"Oh, to be brought to Jesus' feet,

Though sorrows fix me there,

Is still a blessing; and how sweet

To seek His face in prayer;

Though sighs and tears its language be,

If Christ be nigh and smile on me."

"Stablish." This word signifies permanency. You find it in several portions of Luke's Gospel. See chap. 9:51: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." He was determined, and nothing could move Him from His purpose. Turn to chap. 16:26: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." A gulf which could never be removed. Come with me to chap. 22:31,32: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Though Peter failed and fell, his faith failed never. His faith was of the operation of God, and neither men nor devils, Peter's sins, Peter's waverings, nor Peter's doubtings could ever mar the fair beauty of that faith which existed not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:5) Peter's faith had many a shaking, yet it remained fixed upon the covenant verities of his God, upon the immovable and irrevocable decrees of Jehovah, and upon the person, love, blood, and righteousness of Jesus. A faith so fixed by God, reconciles the heart to His mysterious and oftentimes perplexing providences, and nothing in earth or hell shall ever be able to remove it from its resting-place. Peter does not say we are to arrive at God's perfection and this stablishing by our praying, believing, and repenting. Oh, no! He begs of God to do it all for us.

"Strengthen." Why are these who are stablished in Christ to be strengthened? Because they are oftentimes faint, and weak, and weary. See how we read of their weakness and of His strength in Isaiah 40:29-31: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall be faint and weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." Paul, experiencing the strength of Christ and perfection in Him, says, in 2 Cor. 12:5-10: "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. 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." This is a lesson for those who are ever ready to hawk about and parade their experience to the annoyance and perplexity of many of God's children. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Paul had no strength out of Christ. He was "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." (Eph. 6:10) He could "do all things through Christ strengthening him." (Phil. 4:13) He was "strengthened with all" not some "might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." (Col. 1:11) God having commanded strength for His people

in His covenant, and secured it to them in the Son of His love, performs it in them by His Spirit, in response to their supplication: "Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought in us." (Ps. 68:28)

"Settle." O what a mercy to be grounded and settled in the faith and hope of the Gospel. (Col. 1:23) It is a great favour to be on God's sure foundation, Christ Jesus; but it is a greater favour to be settled thereon. A structure after it is built settles upon its foundation. Have you ever waited for the settling of the arch of a bridge? I have, and witnessed the testing of the same by heavy weights running over it. Now if we know anything of spiritual settling upon the one foundation which God has laid in Zion, that settling will be experienced in connection with suffering, straining, stablishing, and strengthening. Those of us who, by the God of all grace, are called unto His eternal glory, who are suffering for a little while in fellowship with a despised and rejected Jesus, who are perfect only in Christ, whom He is stablishing, strengthening, and settling in the faith, fear, and truth of God, and who are sometimes raised to a little hope in His mercy, will be refreshed in the ability to sing the precious language of Toplady:

"Sweet in the confidence of faith,

To trust His firm decrees;

Sweet to lie passive in His hands,

And know no will but His."

When this song ascends from a grateful heart,

V. THE GLORIOUS DOXOLOGY will flow forth from an adoring spirit: "TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."

"To Him that sits upon the throne,

The great eternal Three-in-One,

To Him let saints and angels raise

An everlasting song of praise."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-bradbury/the-god-of-all-grace/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net