

When the word "tribulation" is mentioned in our day, the minds of many are immediately turned to think of an imaginary "period of time" which the dispensationalists have dubbed the "great tribulation". The tribulation of which we speak, however, which the sons of GOD are called upon to endure has nothing to do with "prophecy" nor "ages to come". All of the "tribulations" and "troubles" which befall the sons of GOD are ordained by HIM for their benefit because it is impossible that HE should ever cause anything to transpire for their hurt. These troubles are not necessarily visible to others, since they are often the product of their own sinfulness and unbelief. The LORD is pleased to vex HIS children with their own wanderings and disobedient tendencies in order that HE might convince them of their barrenness and their absolute dependence on HIM. By such "troubles" HE is pleased to make them aware of specific faults and failings in their lives, but sometimes HE is pleased to cause them to have great lamentations and forays into darkness without any apparent "reason" for their chastening. All of the chastening of the sons of GOD is not brought on them for specific "sins" that they are made aware of in the particular trials that they are going through. Sometimes HE is just pleased to remove their comforts even as HE did the prophet Jonah. Sometimes HE is pleased to acquaint them with darkness of soul even as HE did with Jeremiah.

It is as a result of these times of vexation of spirit and wanderings of the mind that HE is often pleased to lift up their heads with joy as HE brings to their minds a remembrance of HIS great and precious promises. We cannot appreciate the depth of HIS blessings apart from a genuine acquaintance with the depravity of our own nature. The glibness and shallow character of modern "Christianity" is a manifestation of a lack of such an acquaintance. The average so called "believer" today has no understanding of the furnace through which the genuine sons of GOD are carried through. He cannot imagine what would ever prompt the sons of GOD to lament the day of their birth as Job and Jeremiah did. We speak not here of external trials such as sickness or financial trouble, but of a much deeper vexation of spirit which only those who have had some acquaintance with the vileness of their own hearts can know. It is this acquaintance that would cause even the true sons of GOD to question whether or not the LORD has cast them off. The nominal "believer" finds such a condition abhorrent because he believes that the enjoyment of the LORD's blessings are not only his right but thinks that he can have them whenever he wants just by thinking positively about GOD's promises. There is a "relief of mind" which religious men may possess as they warm themselves by a fire which they have kindled.

The true sons of GOD, however, can never be satisfied with such a fire but are compelled to cry out to the LORD for warmth and light. They are quite convinced that *"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."* The power of positive thinking offers no comfort for those whose hope is in CHRIST alone. That man who is acquainted with his own dark heart knows that the LORD should cast HIM off daily and would not be surprised if HE did except that that same gracious LORD is pleased to apply the sweet healing balm of the gospel to his very soul and allay his fears and give him strength to stand. For this very reason the LORD of great mercy has ordained that the gospel be preached as a *"healing for the nations"*. Well did the LORD describe HIS ministry, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* What a glorious privilege has been given to the SONS of GOD not only to be acquainted with their own utter barrenness and fitness for destruction but to hear the gospel with hearing ears. Do you hear the SHEPHERD's voice today? HE calls HIS own sheep by name.