



the
**Golden
Candlestick**

FEATURES OF ZION

Part 3

T. Austin-Sparks

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THE GLORY OF DIVINE INITIATION

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Ps. 87:3).

“Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God” (Heb. 12:22).

“Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. 3:21).

“ ... to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6).

“ ... to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory, we who had before hoped in Christ” (Eph. 1:12).

Our occupation has been with features of Zion; in other words, features of Christ transmitted to and wrought into His own people. Now we have come to the glories of Zion, or to glory in relation to Zion. We saw in the last chapter that this matter of glory has three main aspects — firstly, glory in the divine initiations; secondly, the glory in hidden operation; thirdly, the glory in final manifestation.

In Christ’s earthly life the glory largely hidden

We pass now to the second aspect: glory in hidden operation. And yet that wants qualifying, for it is only hidden here. Only heaven sees it, but here the glory is largely hidden. Have you ever wondered what the shepherds thought and what the magi thought and what the other people thought who knew of the coming of the Lord Jesus with heaven’s glory a few months afterwards, or a few years afterwards? Of course, we do not know whether the shepherds took pains to keep track of that babe. The babe went from Bethlehem, moved from this point to that, grew up through thirty years mainly in seclusion and as year after year passed it is very probable that those shepherds said: ‘That was a very wonderful night. It seemed to be very portentous of marvellous things, but what has happened to it all?’ Those from the East might well have asked a similar question: ‘Well, we were not mistaken, there was a star right enough, we found the place indicated and the child. We opened our treasure and we made our declaration as to this being the King — but what has happened to Him, we have

heard nothing about Him for thirty years?’ It may be a work of imagination, but even if it is only that, it helps us to see the point that not only through the thirty years but through the thirty-three and a half years all that glory was hidden, or mainly hidden, except for something here and there being indicative of it, like a miracle when He showed forth His glory, or on the one and only occasion when it was literal on the Mount of Transfiguration. But for these occasional intimations, the glory was not seen by men; it was hidden. It had not departed, there was no less glory there than at the beginning, but it was hidden. It was not recognized, it was not discerned, not perceived by the world and by the great majority of those in touch with Him; the glory had gone in.

Heaven was able to see the glory

But heaven was very interested, and hell was very interested. The interest which heaven had shown in the birth was maintained. After the conflict in the wilderness forty days and forty nights, angels came and ministered unto Him. Yes, angels are watching, they know all that is happening, they are tremendously interested. Angels had proclaimed, “*Glory in the highest!*” The thing had not disappeared with them; they are still seeing, watching. Not once nor twice do angels come in, and in the end there are the angels at the tomb. They are always in attendance, they are always concerned with this. Heaven sees what no one else sees. Heaven knows what no one else knows. Heaven is watching, taking account.

What did heaven see? Of what was heaven taking account? The glory! But how? You see, now glory was working in a hidden way; heaven was able to see that glory in numerous ways; heaven was concerned about that glory. Every fresh temptation, every fresh trial, every fresh snare and trap set for Him, every fresh suffering that came upon Him, every new ordeal, every new crisis, every point at which one of two things might happen: a triumph or a failure, at every point heaven was watching to see how the glory won, to see how the glory would come out, how the glory would triumph. The glory became something very much more inward, more real, yes, more crucial than just rays of a halo of light. It was something now that was a power, that was a determining factor. I venture to say that the whole issue of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus was whether the glory would remain or whether the glory could be taken away, could be veiled, whether there could happen with Him what happened with Jerusalem of old when, because of breakdown and failure, the prophets saw the glory go up from Jerusalem and remove far away. You may feel that you have ground for questioning my theology, but if you will look closely, you will see there is some truth in this. It is the question of how the glory is going to be manifested and maintained.

It was working inwardly, it was working secretly, it was being challenged and tested in His inward life. The whole thing is summed up in this, that the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration with the glory full and manifested, was not just mechanically or automatically glorified. It was because of the triumph of His faith right up to that point, He Who, instead of the joy set before Him, came down, endured the cross and despised the shame. That glorifying of the Lord Jesus was because He had reached such a point of triumphant moral perfection and it was that that blazed forth then. It was the condition and state of His inner life with God that came out on the Mount of Transfiguration. That is the basis of all glorifying, as we shall see.

The glory hidden in the church

Let us revert. The glory has become hidden. Passing to the church, what a day the day of Pentecost was! Again the heavens were rent, again the glory came down, again it was declared, it was proclaimed. How long did it last like that? I think it was not very long before the glory became hidden. I do not mean the glory departed, that it was no longer there, but the day of Pentecost was not perpetuated in its outward features for very long. The church passed on, and many might have asked the question: Well, what about that tremendously promising beginning? What about all that on the day of Pentecost? Where is it? Things have changed. It is not like that now, we do not see that kind of thing. The features of what happened are not now so discernible. A change has come over the church, it has gone inward and it has become hidden. Tell me, as the world looks on the church can it see the glory in such terms as I mean on the night of Christ's birth and on the day of Pentecost? Is the world able to see that kind of external manifest glory? No! There is glory to be seen if it had eyes, but it does not see, and to the world it is hidden. Is that not true of every individual Christian?

As we said earlier, the initiations of God in the individual life are with glory. In our conversion, in our new birth, we come to the Lord, and there are all the marks of glory — joy, peace and satisfaction. The only word that expresses those early days of the Christian life is glory. But it just does not go on like that. Thank God if it does go on unbrokenly throughout life. I am not saying that there is never any trace of that, but it does not normally continue just like that. Things change and there arise all the problems and questions and all the ground for enemy assault and accusation. He will tell us it was all an illusion, an emotion, all false; or that we have sinned and grieved the Holy Spirit and so on, because things change. The glory has not departed because the glory is Christ. But something has happened. The glory has become hidden. It is there, it is active, operative, but it is operative in a hidden way.

Glory operating in terms of grace

How is the glory operating now in that in-between phase between the initiation in glory and the consummation which is to be? The glory is here, but how is it operating? Well, our extra passages at the beginning of this chapter just show us how in the hidden operations of glory, it is in terms of grace. “The glory of his grace”. Grace is the basis of the glory. Glory is bound up with grace. You noticed as we read in Ephesians — *“to the praise of the glory of His grace”*. *“He chose us in Him ... having foreordained us unto adoption as sons ... to the praise of the glory of His grace ... to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory”*, glory operating in terms of grace.

Grace as a divine attitude towards us

As I look at this matter of grace in the New Testament, I find again that it is divided into three aspects. Firstly, grace as a divine attitude towards us. That is mainly what we think of when we speak of grace, the grace of God — God’s beneficent attitude towards us. Here we are out of our depth. That grace of God as an attitude towards us carries us altogether beyond our powers of coping with it. *“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”* He *“foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself”* (Eph. 1:5). There is a Scripture which says, *“In thy book all my members were written ... when as yet there was none of them”* (Ps. 139:16 A.V.). Here am I coming to this world, here are men and women coming to this world, and all their members were already in his book, and they are allowed to fall into the most ghastly and awful sin, to do things like David did. Perhaps some of you will rule him out dispensationally, but the principle you cannot rule out. To do things such as Peter did, denying his Lord with oaths and curses three times over, but you cannot rule him out dispensationally. To do things such as Saul of Tarsus did, giving consent to the death by stoning of that young man in whose very face the glory of Christ was manifested, and persecuting *“this way”* unto the death, determined to exterminate the last remnant and residue of Jesus Christ in the earth. Need we follow it up? What about ourselves — the sin, the failure, the breakdown, the reproach that you and I have brought upon our Lord — and He knew all that would happen before He gave us a body, and when He wrote our members in His book and thus gave us a body in intention, before we had one? He knew that would happen, what we would do, the kind of life we would live. He knew it all. He knew all the sum of Israel’s defection, He knew that Israel would one day turn from Him, repudiate Him and burn incense to idols and cause their sons to pass through the fire in the worship of Moloch. He knew it all, and He chose Israel and He wrote Israel down in His book before Israel was.

What is the explanation of all this? We are out of our depths, we cannot explain that, we cannot understand that. Why should God have chosen me in Christ, you in Christ, and then let us, by giving us a body, do what we have done and go the way we have gone and dishonour Him? These are problems beyond our mentality, our mental powers. There is one answer in the Bible; here we feel our knees giving way. We just go down, collapse, "... *that we should be unto the praise of His glory, we who had before hoped in Christ*". Is there not glory there, but it is working inwardly? Who sees that but heaven and hell? What does the world see of it? There may be some kind of traces of the work of divine grace, but the world cannot appreciate the grace of God, it does not see the glory. It takes Christ to know the grace of God, and therefore it takes Christ to glorify God, and therefore it is glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever. Yes, it is glory in terms of grace in the divine attitude towards us. We cannot explain it. Why did He choose you and me? Ask yourself. Are any of you prepared to start on the line of: I know why He chose me, He had a good reason for choosing me, there was that about me which justified His choosing me? If you are, you know nothing of the grace of God, and you can bring no glory to God. The more you are ready to say that it is by this attitude of God towards me in grace, the more you are able to say it from your heart, the more you ought to be glorifying God.

Is it not strange how our miserable, wretched, corrupt, failing selves are so often made by us the means of hiding His glory rather than manifesting it? We are keeping it in view, we are talking about our wretched selves, keeping our miserable selves in view instead of all the time saying, Oh, the grace of God in my case is a marvellous thing — glorifying the grace of God. That is the other side. God help us to do it more! Glory in terms of grace. So far as the divine attitude towards us is concerned, inexplicable, unfathomable, but for that very reason so wonderful.

Grace as divine power

Then I find that grace in the New Testament is spoken of in another category, in another realm, another aspect, and that is grace as divine power. Not only the divine favour or attitude, but divine power. Paul speaks of his weakness, his infirmity, and how he brought that before the Lord and besought the Lord about this infirmity, this weakness, this thing that caused him so much trouble and distress, and the Lord did not say anything about that, but He said, "*My grace is sufficient for thee*" (2 Cor. 12:9). And there is a lot in the New Testament about grace as vital force, as divine power.

God's grace toward us demands self-exposure

Do you see that these aspects all make a certain demand? If it is grace as a divine attitude towards us, then there is demanded a self-exposure. We shall never appreciate that attitude of God until we ourselves are exposed. Why it is, then, that the course of the Christian life, from one standpoint is such a history of uncovering ourselves, laying us bare, bringing up from the depths the corruption that is in us, making us more and more ready to say, "*In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing*" (Rom. 7:18)? Why is God trying all the time to condemn us and bring up from the depths the ground of condemnation? Is He trying to make us miserable with our own sin? No, self-exposure is demanded in order that we shall all the more glory in that attitude of God towards us. He says, You see what is true of you; nevertheless, I love you. You see how much depth of iniquity there is in you; nevertheless, My attitude is one of grace to you. You see what you are capable of; nevertheless, I do not turn My face from you; My face is towards you, My attitude is one of infinite compassion, infinite forbearance. My attitude is still the attitude of grace. Self-exposure is demanded and when it becomes a matter of grace in the form of divine power, another demand is made, and that is the demand of trial, affliction and suffering.

Grace as divine power demands suffering

There are many sufferings which are the lot of believers which they would never have were they not believers. Afflictions and trials are our portion simply because we are the Lord's, that He has bought us and has purchased and possessed us, and so we suffer and are tried and afflicted. We know weakness and we know adversity and we know what it means to come to the end of our wits and our tether, and everything, and that is the demand in order to know the glory of God in terms of grace. I wish I could always believe that. I wish I could keep that before me like crystal in that dark hour, that terrible time of affliction. But I see it in the New Testament, I see it in these men, I see it in the Lord Jesus. I see the glory now is working in a hidden way like this. Oh, these people are going through it, but the grace of God is very wonderful, the grace of God is constantly lifting them up, bringing them back and keeping them going in spite of everything. You think they have gone this time but up they come again. There is the ubiquitous cork ever bobbing up again; grace as a vital force, grace as divine power.

Look at the Lord Jesus and see if it is not true. Look at the church and see if it is not true. Look into your own history and heart and see if it is not true. Glory is like that. It is a very different idea from angels singing a heavenly song

about glory. It is something gone in, gone under. It is a mighty subterranean thing at work, and it is going to see us through.

Grace a matter of divine nature

Then the third aspect of grace is in connection with the divine nature. I find that there are things said about grace being a matter of what we would call graciousness, that is, the coming out of divine nature and likeness under provocation. What a pity the translators were not consistent in translating those words of Peter — *“if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God”* (1 Pet. 2:20). Everywhere else, the word *“acceptable”* is translated *“grace”*, *“This is grace with God.”* If ye suffer when ye do well, if you are buffeted when you do well, and take it patiently, this is grace with God — and you tell me that is not glory?! When you are suffering wrongfully, maligned, misrepresented, persecuted, assailed, and you know quite well that there is no ground for it in truth; it is something against you because perhaps you are a Christian and you are not liked for some reason; not because you are not altogether a likeable person, you know that there is something extra in this, and you are being made to put up with things because you are a Christian, so you are suffering wrongfully, glory to God is in terms of grace if you take it patiently. Grace is a matter of divine nature.

The demand for self-subjugation

And what is the demand here? Well, it can be nothing else but the demand for self-subjugation. What is the opposite to taking it patiently? *“When He was reviled, (He) reviled not again; when He suffered, (He) threatened not”* (1 Pet. 2:23). It is your reaction to suffering, your reaction to what is hurled at you, what you are made to go through by other people, not because you have defaulted, but, so far as you know between yourself and the Lord, there is no reason for it at all. You have not been responsible for this. Is your reaction His? He reviled not again, He threatened not. He showed no resentment, no revenge, no spirit of getting even. *“Father, forgive them”* (Luke 23:34). *“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”* (Acts 7:60). That is grace, but that is glorifying to God, that is the glory of God, that is the glory of Christ.

Ah yes, but this is something very hidden. No one knows the battle that is going on. Oh, how this cruelty, this unrighteousness, this evil, has stirred all that is in you that is bitter, and works upon that nature that makes you want to say some stinging thing, and you have had a real battle inside and you have got to prayer and conquered — and they see nothing of that. A quiet, meek spirit

where the self-interest has been brought into subjection, all that self-life has been subjected in the battle, and you come out, and there is nothing like that discernible about you. This is grace, this is glory, glory in terms of grace. But it is in a hidden way, the secret battle, the history of which no one else knows at all; all that that the Lord Jesus had between Himself and the Father behind all that was going on and all that was coming upon Him. Yes, the glory of the Lord Jesus is in the manifestation of divine grace under trial, under persecution. So with His saints and His servants and with His church; so with you, with me.

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God”, but that is the kind of glorious thing that we do not altogether appreciate sometimes, yet it is the same glory. It is not a different glory of which the angels sang and spoke on the day of His birth from the glory that heaven was seeing in Gethsemane. No, it is the same glory, but God is working inwardly so that in the end that primal glory shall burst forth as something which has been inwrought by trial, by adversity, by affliction, by all these means, wrought in us so that we shall be partakers of His glory, sharers of His glory, and that now for us is grace. *“The Lord will give grace and glory”* (Ps. 84:11). They always go together just now in the in-between whiles, but presently it will be all glory.

GLORY IN FINAL MANIFESTATION

Reading: Ps. 87:3; Heb. 12:23; Eph. 3:21; Rom. 8:18-22; 1 Cor. 15:40-44, 50-55; Col. 3:4; Eph. 5:27.

We have been engaged with glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. In chapter five it was God's initiations in glory. Chapter six was glory in hidden operation. Now it is glory in final manifestation. The passages which we have read all have to do with that. It is a little difficult to know what passages to use and what to leave out. There are many others that will have occurred to you in this connection.

The creation subjected to vanity

Now we have first of all to get down to this statement of the apostle in Romans 8. He makes this statement that God, in a sovereign act, at some point subjected the creation to vanity. "*The creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will*" (v. 20). God was working contrary to and against what the creation wanted and desired, "*not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope ...*". But the statement is that God sovereignly acted to subject the creation to vanity. The word 'vanity' as we in modern English usage employ it, hardly conveys the meaning of the original word, which would be more properly expressed in the word 'disappointment', and there is always an atmosphere around a word like that in the original — not just the disappointment, but it is the misery which accompanies the disappointment. So it is disappointing misery that is really the force of this word. God deliberately subjected the creation to disappointing misery. It had a purpose in its existence. It ceased to answer to that purpose, that appointment, which was to express God's nature, for it is in the expression of His nature that the glory of God, is found. When God has what is just according to the very essence of His being, what His very nature and being must have, when He has that fully satisfied, that is glory. And the creation ceased to move in accordance with its appointment to express the nature of God for His satisfaction and thus exist for His glory. So God imposed this embargo upon it, and put disappointment in the place of appointment as an active operative force right into the very creation, a force of

disappointment, appointment not only missed but impossible of realization in its existing state.

Little argument is needed to prove that disappointment rests upon this whole creation. The further the creation goes, the larger the disappointment, the more acute, the more terrible and the greater the misery. Is that true? I think we have enough evidence of that. But the first thing, then, is this sovereign act of God to bring the creation into that place of disappointment and consequent misery.

A work going on in the groaning creation

Then the second thing that the apostle says here is that there is a work going on even in the groaning creation. First of all, the creation itself “*groans and travails*”. Then there is something to be brought forth, there is something going on, something causing all the trouble, which is accountable for this state of things. I do not think that we have fastened sufficiently upon this, that the state of things in the creation, in the world, which is so full of anguish, disappointment and misery indicates that there is something coming. Those very groanings and travailings are prophecies that something is coming. “*The whole creation groans and travails.*”

“We ourselves groan”

And then the apostle says with that “*ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.*” “*The first-fruits of the Spirit*”; this is another kind of groaning, this is the groaning inside the inside of creation. The creation is not groaning in the same sense as we are groaning. The creation is not groaning unto that for which we are groaning. It has not the first-fruits of the Spirit. We have. What are these first-fruits of the Spirit? Well, the very chapter from which these words are taken indicates what the first-fruits of the Spirit are.

The first-fruits of the Spirit

“... *the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*” (v. 9). Well, we have the first-fruits of the Spirit; firstly, the Spirit dwells with us. Then “*as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God*” (v. 14). First-fruits of the Spirit — those in whom the Spirit dwells are being led by the Spirit. Then “*the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him*” (vv. 16,17). The Spirit bears witness that we are

children of God. First-fruits of the Spirit — indwelling, leading, bearing witness. We, who have those first-fruits find ourselves by those very things, by the very indwelling of the Spirit, the leading of the Spirit, the witness of the Spirit that we are children of God; by those very things we find ourselves groaning. What for? We have the first-fruits of the Spirit. They are not all the fruits of the Spirit. They are only a kind of indication of something more, something fuller, something larger, and, by the operation of the Spirit in us, a divine discontent with our spiritual state is produced; or, to put it the other way, a divine longing and craving for something more is created. First-fruits point to the full harvest and indicate that there is much more to be. What is it? Well, the first-fruits point to the end of the Spirit's work — *“that we may be ... glorified with Him”*.

Now the apostle turns over to the creation itself, and says that the whole creation is in a state of dependence on what is going on by the operation of the Spirit in us. *“The creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God”* (v.19). The creation groans and travails, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, waiting until the Spirit has done His work and brought forth something glorious in terms of sonship to the satisfaction of God.

The creation to be delivered from bondage

And when God has got that out of the creation, the apostle then follows on and says, *“the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God”*, the glory and the liberty, the release, of the sons of God. Bondage in the creation, bondage in us all, pointing towards a glorious manifestation, a manifestation in glory, and then, when the creation's appointment shall be realized, the whole creation shall be delivered, God will have got His end. *“The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God.”* A very strong word is used there: *“Earnest expectation”* — it is a picture of someone poised, outstretched, looking forward, looking on, scanning the horizon as though everything depended upon what will appear there. The eyes, attention, the whole being focused upon that horizon, looking for that appearing, that something that is coming, and the apostle uses that very word picture and says that the creation is like that — earnest expectation, poised, stretched out, focused, looking for the manifestation of the sons of God, because its very release and liberation depends upon that manifestation.

The manifestation of glory

Thus we are led to the manifestation itself, the manifestation of glory ultimately and finally. But pause a moment with the word ‘manifestation’. It is

not the creation of the glory, it is the manifestation. That is, something is already going on, something exists already, something is already at work. That takes us back to the previous chapter — the mighty work of grace, glory in terms of grace. “*Unto the glory of His grace*”. A work is going on by the Spirit inside of us, changing us, transforming us, making us to partake of Christ’s likeness, His divine nature, and to express it under trial, affliction, adversity, suffering — yes, all that grace in terms of glory and glory in terms of grace, that is going on. The glory exists in a hidden way. Every victory of the grace of God in us is to His glory, His glory in essence going on in us. And then what is hidden, has been going on secretly, all that formation of the Spirit, all that transformation of the Spirit, all that deep work of the Spirit, all that constituted after Christ by the Spirit comes to full manifestation, the manifestation in glory.

When the manifestation will be

When will that be? Well, if it is glory in the church, if it is the elect, fore-known, chosen in Christ, foreordained, if it is those sons whom He chose in Christ before the world was, the manifestation of the glory must await and synchronize with the completing of the number of the elect, the bringing in of the last member of that church. It is in relation to that that the coming of Christ is said to stand. There is such a thing as cooperating with the manifestation. There is such a thing as hastening unto that day. While, of course, that is a matter of our own spiritual progress, it is also very definitely a matter of our cooperation with the Holy Spirit to get the number of the elect made up. God only knows who they are, we do not; hence the need for being led of the Spirit, as Philip was led to the desert to find one man, a very strategic man. You might decide to go somewhere and have a whole crowd, and because it is out of time or for some other reason, you might not get one of the elect in your efforts. If the Holy Spirit really leads you, you may always be sure that He is after the elect. He knows where the elect are. But, details for the moment aside, the point is, herein lies the call and the urgency for being about this business of the Spirit, with Him finding the elect, and making up its number, for the glory waits for that, the manifestation of the sons.

I think there is very much more in that phrase, “the manifestation of the sons”, than I have indicated. I am trying to be very simple. The sons were all known and chosen before the world was, but He never told us who they are, He never told anybody who they are. He only knows. It is God’s secret, He knows who comprise His church. Those who comprise His church are not the only ones who are going to be saved eventually, but He alone knows who they are. But when the manifestation comes, it will be a disclosure of what He has known all along. From all eternity He has known His secret, His elect, His

chosen, and they will be manifested. Of course, that involves many difficult matters.

To keep to our simple point that, in the first place, the manifestation of the sons awaits the securing of the sons. There should be a sense of serious responsibility that, so far as we are concerned, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in getting in the last member of the elect. We should be reaching out if perhaps one chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world might be within the compass of the Holy Spirit's operations through us. There should be laid upon our hearts a new impetus for reaching out to the unsaved, to those who are not yet gathered in, not just to have people saved from hell, but for the satisfaction of God and bringing about the release of the creation by the manifestation of those sons.

In the next place, the manifestation of the sons will be when the work of grace is completed in us. I like to think of the church as a whole in this connection. I do not know what you are going to say to my doctrine now. I am going to get myself into trouble, I think. However, I will risk it. I cannot take all the suffering that there is and all the adversity and all the trial, therefore I cannot swallow up all the grace of God. But you may suffer with me, we may share it, and you may add something to me by your suffering, and I may add something to you, and we may all be adding something to one another by our mutual sufferings. Oh brother, you are suffering, but you are not suffering alone. You are suffering for my good, I am suffering for your good, and you are going to share in my sufferings and I in yours to make up the sum of the perfecting, not only of individuals but of individuals as parts of a whole. It is the church that is going to be perfected. I need your sufferings to help mine. I need your grace in suffering to go with mine, and you need mine. It is the church that has to come to perfection, and no one member can have all the glory, therefore no one member can have all the suffering. It is a mutuality, a partnership in suffering, a togetherness, so that it shall be a togetherness in glory. We shall be together glorified. It is the perfecting of grace in the church. Oh, what a lot I would have to go through if all the grace of God was going to be perfect in me as an individual. I could not stand up to it. It is far too big a requirement to say that God's grace is going to be exhausted in me. Oh, how great His grace is! It would cost too much for me to know it all. We are altogether in this, we are dividing this between us, the perfecting of grace in the Body, in a company that satisfies God.

May that not be the explanation of the intensifying tribulations at the end? Why should tribulations intensify and increase at the end? Why should those terrible things be found in the book of the Revelation about the enemy overcoming the saints for a time? But that is not the end. Yes, the end sees much tribulation, increasing tribulation, but increasing grace, increasing triumph, in-

creasing glory. And so the glory will be manifested when there is a sufficient number of the elect, if I may put it that way, knowing the grace of God to the most perfect measure possible.

The glory of his appearing

Then, of course, the event. I do not believe that the Lord's coming is just some isolated and unrelated incident, something just as an event in a divine programme. It is bound up with the very things that we have been saying. The Lord's coming does depend upon the elect being completed. It does depend upon a work of grace having been done which makes it possible for glory to be manifested because it is a ground that can be glorified. Glory is not going to be willy-nilly. It makes its demands. But then the Lord's coming is a coming. It is the coming of the Lord, and we find so much about the glory connected with His appearing.

And you notice the coming of the Lord has two aspects. The first is His appearing. It is an appearing in glory. He Himself raised the question: What if ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the glory of His Father with His angels? Glory in His appearing.

Glory in rapture

But the other side here is glory in rapture. His appearing is one side; our being raptured at His appearing is the other side. "*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*" (1 Cor. 15:51), whether we are here or raised. That is rapture at His appearing, and then within the appearing are all those other blessed consummations. It is a consummation of the consummations. That wonderful passage we read from 1 Corinthians 15 — the glories in resurrection. "*One glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars ... so also is the resurrection of the dead.*" This resurrection is glory, and the apostle there focuses it, upon the body, of course, and I for one do not mind that. But "*glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God*", and one of the glories is a very welcome glory, this corruption putting on incorruption, this mortal putting on immortality; this natural body going, this soulical body going and that spiritual body coming. I like the apostle's phrase about that in another place: "*We have a building from God, a house not made with hands*" (2 Cor. 5:1). You cannot make a spiritual thing with hands, and you cannot therefore tear a spiritual thing to pieces with hands. It is "*eternal, in the heavens*", "*not made with hands*". It is one of the glories of His appearing and of our being changed, that all that we know now in the body of affliction and suffering and weakness and limitation, all that comes to

us by way of this broken-down humanity, will pass out at His appearing, and that body of glory will come, which will have none of this. “*Death is swallowed up in victory*” (1 Cor. 15:54). We have often quoted those words, “*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor. 15:57) as though that applies to our spiritual life here and now. Well, all right, use it as you like, but in the actual usage, it does not apply to our spiritual life. It applies to our bodies. “*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory*” over death in our bodies at His appearing. Victory over death. Oh, death works in these mortal frames. What it brings upon us of suffering and limitation! How we groan to overcome all these workings of death. The apostle says, “*O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?*” We are raised now incorruptible! Thanks be unto God Who gives us the victory! It is bodily victory that is referred to.

We could dwell upon these things much longer but we will not. We simply bring into view that “*glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God*”, and these are some of the glories. The end is glory. God is going to conform everything to His beginnings. He began in glory. The day we came to know the Lord, glory broke out within us. The glory has passed into secret, hidden working in terms of grace through the years of our Christian life. It is going to break out again, not as in its original limitation, but in its final fulness, all the work of grace completed and glory fully manifested at last.

Let us finish with one inclusive thought: we are called unto glory. What is your trouble just now? What is the matter with us? We think it is going to be anything but glory. What miserable things we are, how frequently we show weaknesses and failures and all that! We are called unto glory and we will never come unto glory because we have virtues and values of our own. It will be through His grace, and I believe that — if I may put it this way — the people who will have the greatest measure of glory in the end will be those who needed the greatest measure of grace, and knew it. There is hope for us then, if that is true. Let us hold on to that and believe it. The end is glory. God has fixed it to be so.