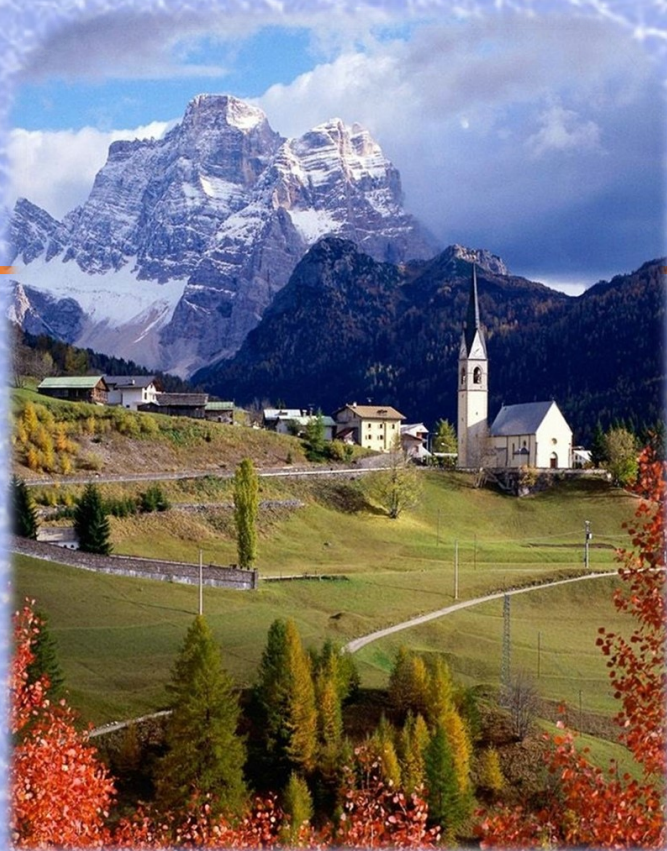


The Prayers of the Apostles

Booklet Four
1 Peter 5:10, 11



A. W. Pink



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“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.

There are seven things which we propose to consider regarding this prayer. First, *the supplicant*, for there is an intimate and striking relation between the experiences of Peter and the terms of his prayer. Second, *its setting*, for it is closely connected with the context, particularly with verses 6-9. Third, *its Object*, namely “the God of all grace”—a title extra dear to His people, and especially appropriate here. Fourth, *its plea*, for so we regard the clause, “who hath called us unto His eternal glory.” Fifth, *its petition*: “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Sixth, *its qualification*: “after that ye have suffered a while,” for though that clause precedes the petition, yet when treating the verse homiletically, it logically follows it. Seventh, *its doxology*: “to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” The prayer as a whole is a very sublime one. Its contents are remarkably full, and richly repay a careful study of and devout meditation upon it. Our present task will be rendered the easier, for we purpose making considerable use of Thomas Goodwin’s (1600-1680) excellent and exhaustive exposition of the passage, since we feel he was favoured with much light from it, and wish to share with our readers what has been of no little help and blessing to us personally.

“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” (verse 10). In those words the apostle appealed unto Him who is the Fountain of grace, and with such a One to look unto the chief of sinners need not despair. Next, he mentioned that which gave proof unto all

believers that He is indeed the God of all grace, having effectually called them from death unto life and brought them out of nature's darkness into His own marvellous light. Nor is that all: nay, it is but an earnest of what He has designed and prepared for them, since He has called them unto His eternal glory. The realization of *that* moved the apostle to request that—following a season of testing and affliction—He would complete His work of grace within them. Therein we have it clearly implied that God will preserve His people from apostasy, move them to persevere unto the end, and, notwithstanding all the opposition of the flesh, the world, and the Devil, bring them safe to heaven.

1. *Its supplicant.* The one who approached God thus was Simon Peter. While Paul had much more to say about the grace of God than any other of the apostles, it was left to poor Peter to denominate Him “the God of all grace.” The reason for this and the appropriateness of the same is not far to seek. While Saul of Tarsus is the outstanding New Testament trophy of *saving* grace (for King Manasseh is an equally remarkable case in the Old Testament), surely it is Simon who is the most conspicuous New Testament example (for David supplies a parallel under the Mosaic era) of the *restoring and preserving* grace of God. What is it that appears the greater marvel to a Christian, which most moves and melts his heart before God: the grace shown to him while he was dead in sin, and which lifted him out of the miry clay and set him upon and within the Rock of ages; or that grace exercised toward him *after* conversion—which bears with his waywardness, ingratitude, departure from his first love, grievings of the Holy Spirit, dishonourings of Christ; and yet, notwithstanding all, loves him unto the end and continues ministering unto his every need? If the reader's experience be anything like that of ours, he will have no difficulty in answering.

Who but one who has been made painfully sensible of the plague within him, who has had so many sad proofs of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his own heart, and who has perceived something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, not only in the light of God's holiness but as it is committed against

the dying love of his Saviour, can gauge the sad fall of that one who was not only accorded a place of honour among the twelve ambassadors of the King of glory, but was privileged to behold Him on the mount of transfiguration and was one of the three who witnessed more than any others His agonies in the Garden? And then to hear him, a very short time afterwards, denying Him with oaths! And who but one who has personally experienced the “longsuffering of God,” and has himself been the recipient of His “abundant mercy,” can really estimate and appreciate the amazing grace which moved the Saviour to look so sorrowfully yet tenderly upon the erring one as to cause him to go forth and “weep bitterly;” and the abounding grace which led Him to have a private interview with him after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34), and, above all, the infinite grace which not only recovered His wandering sheep, but restored him to the apostolate (John 21:15-17)? Well might *he* own Him as “the God of *all* grace!”

2. *Its setting.* If this be closely examined, it will be found there is much to be learned and admired. Before entering into detail, let us observe the context generally. In the foregoing verses, the apostle had been making a series of weighty exhortations, and since those in verses 6 to 9 are preceded by impressing upon the public servants of God their several duties (verses 1-5), a word to them first. Let all Christ’s under-shepherds emulate the example which is here set before them. Having bidden believers to walk circumspectly, the apostle bent his knees and commended them to the gracious care of their God, seeking for them those mercies which he felt they most needed. The minister of Christ has two principal offices to discharge for those souls which are committed to his care (Heb. 13:17): to speak for God *to* them, and to supplicate God *for* them. The Seed which the minister sows is not likely to produce much fruit unless he personally waters it with his prayers and tears. It is but a species of hypocrisy for him to exhort his hearers to spend more time in prayer if *he* be not a frequenter of the throne of grace. The pastor has only fulfilled half his commission when he has faithfully proclaimed all the

counsel of God: the other part is to be performed in private.

The same principle holds good equally of those in the pew. The most searching sermon will profit the hearer little or nothing unless it be turned into fervent prayer. So too with what we *read!* The measure in which God is pleased to bless these articles unto you is to be determined by the influence they have upon you and the effects they produce in you—the extent to which they bring you to your knees in earnest supplication seeking power from the Lord. From exhortation the apostle turned to supplication. Let us do likewise, or we shall be left without the necessary strength to obey the precepts. To the various duties inculcated in the context was added this prayer for Divine enablement for the discharge of them, however arduous, and for the patient endurance of every trial, however painful. Observe too the blessed contrast between the assaults of the enemy in verses 8 and 9 and the character in which God is here viewed. Is not that designed to teach the saint that he has nothing to fear from his vile adversary so long as he has recourse unto Him in whom resides every kind of grace which is needed for his present walk, work, warfare and witness? Surely this is one of the principal practical lessons to be drawn from our prayer as we view it in the light of its context.

Certain it is that we shall never be able to “resist steadfastly in the faith” him who is as a roaring lion, and who walketh about “seeking whom he may devour,” unless we daily look to and cast ourselves upon “the God of all grace.” And equally sure is it that Divine grace is needed by us if we are to “be sober, be vigilant.” We need strengthening grace that we may successfully resist so powerful a foe as the Devil; courage-producing grace if we are to do so steadfast in the faith; and patience-producing grace in order to meekly bear afflictions. Not only is every *kind* of grace available for us in God, but every *measure*, so that when we find one exhausted we may obtain a fresh one. One of the reasons why God permits Satan to assail His people so frequently and so fiercely is that they may prove for themselves the efficacy of His grace. “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” (2 Cor. 9:8). Then let us bring to Him every pitcher of our needs and draw upon His inexhaustible fullness. “The ocean is known by several names, according to the shores it washes, but it is the same ocean. So is it ever the same love of God, though each needy one perceives and admires its special adaptation to *his* needs” (F. B. Meyer., 1847-1929).

But, as Thomas Goodwin showed, there is a yet more definite relation between our present prayer and its context, and between both of them and the experience of Peter. The parallels between them are so close and numerous that they cannot be undesigned. Christ had bidden His servant, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26:41), and in his epistle he exhorts the saints “be sober, be vigilant.” Again, the Saviour had warned him, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired thee, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31)—as the Puritan expressed it, “and shake forth all grace out of him.” So in verse 8, he gives point to his call for sobriety and vigilance by saying, “because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” Then the Saviour informed him, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” And as Thomas Goodwin pointed out, “faith’s not failing is Satan’s foiling.” Answerably thereto, the apostle in his exhortation added, “whom resist steadfast in the faith”—the *gift* of faith, as Calvin expounded it. Though Peter’s self-confidence and courage failed him, so that he fell, yet his faith delivered him from giving way to abject despair, as Luke 22:61, 62 shows.

Once more: our Lord concluded His address to Simon by saying: “and when thou art converted [brought back, restored] strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Answerably thereto, the apostle wrote, “knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (verse 9), and then prayed that, after they had suffered a while, the God of all grace would “perfect [or restore] them, stablish, strengthen, settle them,” which had been the very case with himself. Finally, Thomas Goodwin observed that Christ, when strengthening Peter’s faith against Satan, set His “*But* I have prayed for thee”

over against the worst the enemy could do; and therefore he too, after portraying the adversary of the saints in his fiercest character, as “a roaring lion,” brings in by way of contrast, “*But* the God of all grace, who hath called you unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect,” thereby assuring them that He would be their Guardian, Undertaker, Strengtheners. If, notwithstanding his sad lapse, *he* was recovered and preserved unto eternal glory, that is a sure pledge that *all* the truly regenerate will be so. How wondrously Scripture (Luke 22) interprets Scripture (1 Peter 5)!

Ere passing on to our next section, let us note and admire how the particular instruments whom God employs as His penmen in communicating His Word were personally qualified and experientially fitted for their several tasks. Who but Solomon was so well suited to write the book of Ecclesiastes, the man who was afforded such exceptional opportunities to drink from all the poor cisterns of this world, and then to record the fact that no satisfaction was to be found in them; thereby providing a fitting background for the Canticles, wherein a Satisfying Object *is* displayed? How appropriate was the selection of Matthew to be the writer of the first Gospel, for he was the only one of the Twelve who held an official position before his call to the ministry (a tax-gatherer in the employ of the Romans), and he alone of the four Evangelists presents Christ in His official character as the Messiah and King of Israel. Mark, the one who ministered to another (2 Tim. 4:11), is the one chosen to set forth Christ as the Servant of Jehovah. Who so eminently adapted to write upon the blessed theme of Divine love (as he does throughout his epistles) as the one who was so highly favoured as to lean upon the bosom of God’s Beloved? So here *Peter* is the one who so feelingly styles the Deity “the God of all grace.” And so it is today: when God calls any man to the ministry, He experientially equips him, qualifying him for the particular work He has for him to do.

3. *Its Object.* “The God of all grace.” Nature does not reveal Him as such, for man has to work hard and earn what he obtains

from her. The workings of Providence do not, for there is a stern aspect as well as a benign one to them, and, as a whole, they rather exemplify the truth that we reap according as we sow. Still less does the Law, as such, exhibit God in this character, for its reward is a matter of debt and not of grace. It is only in the Gospel that He is clearly made manifest as “the God of all grace.” Our valuation of Him as such is exactly proportioned by our devaluation of ourselves, for grace is the gratuitous favour of God unto the undeserving and ill-deserving, and therefore we cannot truly appreciate it until we are made sensible of our utter unworthiness and vileness. He might well be “the God of inflexible justice and unsparing wrath” unto rebels against His government. Such indeed He is to all who are out of Christ, and will continue so for all eternity. But the glorious Gospel discovers to hell-deserving sinners the amazing grace of God to pardon, and to cleanse the foulest who repent and believe. Grace devised the plan of redemption: grace executed it: grace applies it and makes it effectual.

Peter first made mention of “the *manifold* grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10), for nothing less would avail those who are guilty of “manifold transgressions” and “mighty sins” (Amos 5:12). The grace of God is “manifold” not only numerically but *in kind*, in the rich variety of its manifestations—every blessing we enjoy is to be ascribed thereto. But “the God of *all* grace” is even more comprehensive; yea, incomprehensible to all finite intelligences. This title, as we have seen, is set over against what is said of the Devil in verse 8, where he is portrayed in all his terribleness: as our “adversary” for malice, likened unto a “lion” for strength, unto a “roaring lion” for dread, “walketh about” for his unwearied diligence, “seeking whom he may devour” unless God prevent. How blessed and consolatory the contrast, “But God”—the Almighty, the Self-sufficient and All-sufficient One; “the God of *all* grace.” How comforting is the singling out of *this* attribute when we have to do with Satan in point of temptation! If the God of all grace be *for* us, who can be against us? When Paul was so severely tried by the messenger (angel) of Satan who was sent to

buffet him, and he thrice prayed for its removal, He assured him of this relief: “My *grace* is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12:10).

Though mention be made frequently in the Scriptures of the grace of God and of His being gracious, yet nowhere but in this verse do we find Him denominated “the God of all grace.” There is a special emphasis here which claims our best attention: not simply “the God of grace” but “the God of *all* grace.” As Thomas Goodwin showed, He is so essentially in Himself, and in His eternal purpose concerning His people, and in His actual dealings with them. They personally receive constant proof that He is indeed so, and those of them whose thoughts are formed from the Word know that the benefits with which He daily loads them are the outworkings of His *everlasting design* of grace toward them. They need to go still farther back, or raise their eyes yet higher, and perceive that all the riches of grace He ordained, and of which they are made the recipients, are from and in His very *nature*. “The grace in His nature is the fountain or spring; the grace of His purposes is the well-head, and the grace in His dispensations the streams.” It was the grace of His nature which caused Him to form “thoughts of peace” toward His people (Jer. 29:11), as it is the grace in His heart which moves Him to fulfil the same. In other words, the grace of His very nature, what He is *in Himself*, is such as guarantees the making good of all His benevolent designs.

As He is the Almighty, self-sufficient and omnipotent, with whom all things are possible, so He is also an all-gracious God in Himself—lacking no perfection to make Him infinitely benign. There is therefore a sea of grace in God to feed all the streams of His purposes and dispensations that are to issue therefrom. Here then is our grand consolation, that all the grace there is in His nature, and which makes Him to be the “God of all grace” unto His children, renders certain not only that He will manifest Himself as such unto them, guarantees the supply of their every need, but ensures the lavishing of the exceeding riches of His grace upon them in the ages to come (Eph. 2:7). Look then beyond those *streams* of grace of which you are now the partaker,

unto Him who is “full of grace” (John 1:14), and ask for continual and larger supplies from Him. The straitness is in ourselves and not in Him, for in God there is a boundless and limitless supply. We beg the reader (as we urge ourselves) to remember that when he comes to the Mercy-seat (to make known his requests) he is about to petition “the God of all grace,” that in Him there is an infinite ocean to draw upon, and that He bids him “open thy mouth *wide*, and I will fill it” (Psa. 81:10), and has declared “according unto your faith be it unto you.”

The Giver is greater than all His gifts, yet there must be a personal and appropriating *faith* in order for any of us to *enjoy Him*: only so can we particularize what is general. God is the God of all grace unto *all* saints, but faith has to be individually acted upon Him if He is to be known and delighted in as such by *me*. An example of this we have in Psalm 59, where David declared “The God of *my* mercy shall prevent [or “anticipate”] me” (verse 10). There we find him appropriating God *unto himself* personally. Take it first of the essential mercy of God, that which is in His very nature, and observe how he says again in verse 17: “Unto Thee, O *my* Strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, the God of my mercy”—“the God of all grace.” “The God of *my* mercy.” I lay claim to Him as such—all the mercy there is in God is *my* mercy. Since He be my *God*, then all there is *in Him* is mine. On the same account, it was the mercy (or grace) which is in Him that moved Him to become my God at the first, that made Himself over to me, saying, “I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (Rev. 21:7). “If any one saint had the needs that all the brotherhood have, and nothing would serve his case but all the grace of God which He hast for the whole, He would lay it all upon *him*” (Thomas Goodwin).

Second, take it of the *purposing* mercy of God, and each individual saint had appointed and allotted him that which he may term “my mercy.” God hath set apart in His decree a portion so abundant that it can never be exhausted either by thy sins or thy wants. “The God of mercy shall prevent me”—from all eternity He has *anticipated* and made full provision for my needs, as a

wise father has a medicine chest prepared with remedies for the ailments of his children. “It shall come to pass, that *before* they call, I will answer” (Isa. 65:24). What an amazing condescension it is that God should make this a characteristic of Himself—that He becomes the God of the mercy of every particular child of His! Third, take it of His *dispensing* mercy, that which is actually bestowed upon us moment by moment. Here too has the believer every occasion to say “The God of my mercy,” for every blessing enjoyed by me proceeds from His hand. This is no empty title of His, but one that ensures He will make it good, directing Him to take care of my interests in every way: that as He is my God personally, so also of my need.

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us” (1 Pet. 5:10). In our last—availing ourself of Thomas Goodwin’s (1600-1680) analysis—we pointed out that this most blessed title respects what God is in Himself, in His eternal purpose, and in His actings unto His people. Here, in the words just quoted, we see the three things joined together—God’s effectual *call*, whereby He brings a soul out of nature’s “darkness into his [own] marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9), is the *first* evident or outward proof that person receives that He is unto him “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10). Yet that was not the first outgoing of God’s heart unto him, but instead, the *proof* that His love had been set upon him from all eternity: “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called” (Rom. 8:30). God has “from the beginning” chosen His people unto salvation, and in due time effects the same by the invincible operations of the Spirit, who capacitates and causes them to believe the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:13, 14). They “believed through grace” (Acts 18:27), for faith is the gift of divine grace (Eph. 2:8), and it was given them because they belonged unto “the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5); and they belonged to that favoured election, because the God of all grace singled them out to be the everlasting monuments of His grace.

That it was the grace which was in the heart of God that moved Him to call us is clear from 2 Timothy 1:9: “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.” Regeneration (or effectual calling) is the consequence, and not the cause, of divine predestination. God resolved to love us with an unchangeable love, and that love designed we should be partakers of His eternal glory. His good will toward us moves Him infallibly to carry out all the resolutions of His free grace unto us, so that nothing can thwart the same, though acting consistently with His other perfections. None magnified the grace of God more than Thomas Goodwin, yet when asked, “Does the divine prerogative of grace mean that God saves men, continue they what they will?” answered, “God forbid.” We deny such a sovereignty so understood, as if it saved any man without rule, much less against rule. The very verse which speaks of God as ‘the God of all grace’ in relation to our salvation adds, ‘who hath called us,’ and our calling is a *holy* one (2 Tim. 1:9).

It helps us to a better understanding of this divine title if we compare it with another found in 2 Corinthians 1:3, “the God of all comfort”—except that it is more restricted to the dispensing aspect, as the words which follow show: “who comforteth us in all our tribulation.” As “the God of *all* comfort,” He is not only the Bestower of all real consolation and the Sustainer under all trials, but also the Giver of all temporal comforts or mercies, for whatever natural refreshment or benefit we derive from the creature is due alone to His blessing the same unto us. In like manner, He is “the God of *all* grace:” seeking grace, quickening grace, pardoning grace, cleansing grace, providing grace, recovering grace, preserving grace, glorifying grace—grace of every kind, and of full measure. Yet though that expression, “the God of all comfort,” serves to illustrate the One we are here considering, nevertheless, it falls short of it, for God’s dispensations of grace are *wider* than those of His comfort. In certain cases, God gives grace where He does not comfort—as His illuminating grace brings with it the pangs of conviction, which sometimes last a lengthy season before any relief is granted; and as under His chastening rod, sustaining grace is

vouchsafed where comfort is withheld.

Not only is there every conceivable kind of grace available for us in God, but He gives it forth as our wants require, for then is the occasion for grace to show itself. We are freely invited to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace that we may “find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16), or, as Solomon expressed it, that the LORD God would maintain the cause of His people Israel “at all times, as the matter shall require” (1 Kings 8:59). Such is our gracious God: ministering to us at all times as well as in all matters. So again, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man [i.e. is human, for the sin against the Holy Spirit is the devil’s sin]: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). As Christ declared, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men” (Matt. 12:31), for the God of all grace works repentance and forgives all sorts of sins, after conversion, as well as before—as the cases of David and Peter show. Saith He, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (Hos. 14:4). Full cause has each of us to feelingly say from experience, “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant” (1 Tim. 1:14).

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us *unto his eternal glory*.” Here is the greatest and grandest proof that He is such unto His people. No more convincing and blessed evidence are needed to make manifest the good will which he bears them. The abundant grace which is in His heart toward them and the beneficent design He has unto them are made clearly evident therein. They are “the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28), namely, that “eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11). That effectual call which brings from death unto life is the first open breaking forth of God’s electing grace, and is the foundation of all the actings of His grace unto them afterwards. It is then He commences His “good work” in them, which He completes “until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). By it, they are called unto a life of holiness here, and a life

of glory hereafter. What the latter consists of, we endeavour to show in our articles under the doctrine of divine revelation: here, we are told that those who were by nature the children of wrath will be sharers of God's own eternal glory. Though God's effectual call does not bring them into the actual possession of it at once, yet it fully qualifies and fits them for the same: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12).

But let us look beyond the most delightful of the streams of grace unto the Fountain. It is the infinite grace which is in the nature of God that engages itself to make good His beneficent purpose, and continually supplies those streams. It is to be well noted that when God uttered that great charter of grace, "I...will be gracious to whom I will be gracious," He prefaced it with: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee" (Exod. 33:19). All of that grace and mercy which is in Jehovah Himself, and which is to be made known unto His people, was to engage the attention of Moses *before* his mind turned to consider the sum of His decrees or purposing grace. That ocean of goodness which is in God is engaged in promoting the good of His people; and that goodness He caused to pass before His servant's eyes, that he might be heartened by beholding such an illimitable wealth of benevolence, that he should be fully assured the God of all grace would indeed "be gracious" unto them He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is the essential grace which is rooted in the very being of God which is to be the first object of faith; and the more faith be acted upon the same, the more will our souls be upheld in the hour of trial, persuaded that such a One cannot fail us.

Fourth, its *plea*: "Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Pet. 5:10). While that clause is undoubtedly brought in to magnify God and to exemplify His wondrous grace, yet considered separately, in relation to the prayer as a whole, we personally regard it as the plea made by the apostle in support of the petition that follows. He was making request that God would perfect, settle, strengthen, stablish His saints, and it was

tantamount to asking: “Since Thou hast already done the greater, grant them the lesser; seeing that they are to be sharers of Thy eternal glory in Christ, give them what they need while left in this time state.” If our hearts were more engaged with *Who* it is that has called us, and to *what* He has appointed us, not only would our mouths be opened wider, but we should be more confident of their being filled. It is none other than Jehovah, who sits resplendent on His Throne, surrounded by the adoring celestial hosts, who will shortly say unto each of us: “Come unto Me and feast thyself on My perfections.” Think you that He will withhold anything that will be for your good? If He has called me to heaven, is there anything needful on earth He will deny me?

A most powerful and prevalent plea is this. First, it is as though the apostle said: “Have Thou respect unto the works of Thy hand. Thou hast indeed called them out of darkness into light, but they are still fearfully ignorant. It is Thy gracious pleasure that they should spend eternity in Thy immediate presence on high, but they are here in the wilderness, and are compassed with infirmities. Then, in view of both the one and the other, carry on all those other workings of grace unto and in them which are needful in order to bring them to glory.” What God has already done for us should not only be a ground of confident expectation of what He will yet do (2 Cor. 1:10), but be used as an argument when making our requests unto God. Since Thou hast regenerated me, make me now to grow in grace. Since Thou hast put into my heart a hatred of sin and a hunger after righteousness, intensify the same. Since Thou hast made me a branch of the Vine, make me a very fruitful one. Since Thou hast united me to Thy dear Son, enable me to show forth His praises, honour Him in my daily life, and thus commend Him to those who know Him not. But we are somewhat anticipating our next division.

In that one work of calling, God has shown Himself to be the God of all grace unto you, and that should greatly strengthen and confirm your faith in Him. “Whom he called, them he also *justified*” (Rom. 8:30), which consists of two things: forgiveness and pronouncing sentence of righteousness. To estimate the

plenitude of His grace in forgiveness, thou must calculate the number and heinousness of thy sins. They were more than the hairs of thy head, for thou wast born as a wild ass's colt and from the first dawns of reason, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). As for their criminality, most of them were committed against the voice of conscience, and consisted of privileges despised and mercies abused. Nevertheless, His Word declares: "Having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. 2:13). How that should melt your heart, and move you to adore "the God of all grace." How it should make you fully persuaded that He will continue dealing with you not according to your deserts, but according to His own goodness and benignity. True, He has not yet rid thee of indwelling corruption, but that affords further occasion for Him to display His longsuffering grace unto thee.

But wonderful as is such a favour, yet the forgiveness of sins is only *half* of even the legal side of salvation, and the negative and inferior part of it at that. Though everything recorded against me on the debit side has been blotted out, still there stands not a single item to my credit on the other side. From the hour of my birth to the moment of my conversion, not one good deed has been registered to my account, for none of my actions proceeded from a pure principle, nor were they performed for God's glory: issuing from a filthy fountain, the streams were polluted. How then could God *justify* me, or pronounce me up to the required standard? That standard is a perfect and perpetual conformity to the divine Law, for nothing less secures its award. Here again the wondrous riches of divine grace appear; God has not only blotted out all my iniquities, but has placed to my account a full and flawless righteousness, having imputed to me the perfect obedience of His incarnate Son: "Much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the *gift of righteousness* shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)...by the obedience of one shall many be made [i.e. legally constituted] righteous" (Rom. 5:17, 19). When God effectually called thee, He clothed thee "with the robe of [Christ's] righteousness" (Isa. 61:10), and that supplied an

inalienable right to the inheritance.

What has just been pointed out is only another way of saying that He “hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus,” or rather, is part exposition of those words. When God regenerates a soul, He gives him faith; and through its exercise on Christ, that which disqualified him for eternal glory (his guilt and pollution) is removed, and a sure title to heaven is bestowed. God’s effectual call is both our qualification for and an earnest of glory. Our glorification was the grand end which God had in view from the beginning; and all that He does for us and works in us here are but means and prerequisites unto the same. Next unto His own glory therein, our glorification is God’s supreme design in electing and calling us: “God hath from the beginning chosen you...to the obtaining of *the glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:13, 14). “Moreover whom he did predestinate...them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30). “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34)—that is, heaven, His eternal glory. Nothing less than that was what the God of all grace set His heart upon as the portion of His dear children. Hence, when our election is first made manifest by the effectual call, God is so intent upon this glory that He then gives us a title thereto.

Thomas Goodwin gave a striking illustration of what we have just said from God’s dealings with David. While he was but a mere shepherd-boy, God sent Samuel to anoint him king in the open view of his father and brethren (1 Sam. 16:13), and by that solemn act, invested him with a visible and irrevocable *right* of the kingdom of Judah and Israel. His actual possession thereof God delayed for years; nevertheless, his divine title thereto was then bestowed, and God engaged Himself to make the same good unto him, and swore not to repent of it; and then suffered Saul (the figure of Satan!) and all the power of his kingdom, and almost the whole of his subjects, to do their worst—to demonstrate that no counsel of His can be thwarted. Though for a

season, David was exposed like a partridge on the mountains, and had to flee from place to place; nevertheless, he was miraculously preserved by God and ultimately brought to the Throne. So at regeneration, God anoints us with His Spirit, sets us apart, and gives a title to everlasting glory; and though afterwards, He lets loose fierce enemies upon us, and leaves us to the hardest of wrestlings and fightings with them, yet His mighty hand is over us, succouring and strengthening, or restoring if we be temporarily overcome and taken captive.

God has not called us unto any evanescent, but unto an *eternal* glory, estating us into the same at the new birth. At that time, a spiritual life is communicated to the soul: a life which is indestructible, incorruptible, and therefore everlasting. More, we then received “the spirit of glory” (1 Pet. 4:14) as “the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:13, 14). Further, the image of Christ is progressively wrought in our hearts during this life, and that is styled “glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). Not only are we thereby “made... meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” but we are then put into an eternal *right* of glory, for by regeneration or effectual calling, God begets us unto the inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3, 4): a title thereto is given us at that moment which holds good for ever. That title is ours both by the covenant-stipulation of God and the testamentary bequest of the Mediator (Heb. 9:15). “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God” (Rom. 8:17). “Put these three things together: first, that that glory we are called unto is in itself eternal; second, that that person who is called hath a degree of that glory begun in him that shall never die or perish; third, that he hath a right unto the eternity of it, and that from the time of his calling, and the argument is complete” (Thomas Goodwin). That “eternal glory” is “the exceeding riches of his grace” which He will lavish upon His people in the endless ages to come (Eph. 2:6, 7); and as those verses tell us, even now we are—legally and federally—“[seated] together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

“Who hath called us unto his eternal glory” (1 Pet. 5:10). God has not only called us into a state of grace—“this grace wherein we stand”—but unto a state of glory, eternal glory, *His* eternal

glory, so that we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2). The two things are inseparably connected: “The LORD will give grace and glory” (Psa. 84:11). Although we are the persons to be glorified by it, it is His glory which is put upon us. Obviously so, for we are wholly poor empty creatures, whom God will fill with the riches of His glory. Truly, it is “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10) who does this for us. Neither creation or providence—nor even His actings unto the elect in this life—fully display the abundance of His grace: only in heaven will its utmost height be seen and enjoyed. It is there the ultimate manifestation of God’s glory will be made, and which we shall behold for ever—the very honour and ineffable splendour with which Deity invests Himself. That glory is to be communicated to His people, so that “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43)—the glory of God will so completely fill and irradiate their souls that it will break forth from their bodies. Then will the eternal purpose of God be fully accomplished. Then will all our fondest hopes be perfectly realized. Then will God be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

“Who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus;” or better, “*in* Christ Jesus”—that is, by virtue of our union with Him. The glory pertains to Him as He is our Head, and is communicated to us only as we are His members. Christ is the first and grand Proprietary of it, and He shares it with those whom the Father gave to Him (John 17:22, 24). Christ Jesus is the Centre of all the divine counsels, for His eternal counsel “he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11). “For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen” (2 Cor. 1:20). God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). We are heirs of God because we are “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). As all the divine purposes of grace were made in Christ, so they are effectually performed and established by Him, as is clear from the words of Zacharias, for when he blessed God for having “raised up an horn of salvation,” he added: “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy

covenant” (Luke 1:68-72). We are “preserved in Jesus Christ” (Jude :1). As God has “called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9)—that is, to be partakers (in our proportion) of all that He is partaker of Himself, so has He entered into possession of the same in our names to keep it for us (Heb. 6:20).

Does it seem too good to be true that “the God of all grace” is *your* God? Are there times when you doubt if he *has* personally called you? Does it surpass your faith, Christian reader, that God has actually called you unto His eternal glory? Then let us leave this closing thought with you: it is by and in *Christ Jesus!* His grace is stored up in Christ (John 1:14, 16), the effectual call comes by Christ (Rom. 1:6), the eternal glory is reached through Him. Was not *His* blood sufficient to purchase everlasting blessings for the hell-deserving? Then look not at your unworthiness, but at the infinite worthiness and merits of Him who is the Friend of publicans and sinners. Whether our faith takes it in or not, infallibly certain it is that His prayer will be answered, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory” (John 17:24). That beholding will not be a transient one such as the apostles enjoyed on the mount of transfiguration, but for *evermore*. As it has often been pointed out, when the queen of Sheba contrasted her brief visit to Solomon’s court with the privilege of those who resided there, she exclaimed: “Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand *continually* before thee” (1 Kings 10:8; 2 Chron. 9:7). Such will be our *blissful* lot throughout the endless ages.

We are now to consider, fifth, the *petition* of this prayer: “Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10), or (compare 1 Thess. 3:11; 5:23), as the Greek in each instance requires, “*himself* make you perfect,” etc. There is far more contained in these words than appears on their surface, and the fullness of their meaning can be discovered only by a patient searching of the Scriptures, thereby ascertaining how the several terms are used in other passages. We regard the “*himself* make

you perfect” as the principal thing requested, the three words that follow being in part an amplification and in part an explanation of the process by which the desired end is reached—though each of the four words requires to be considered separately. Ancient expositors, who went into things much more deeply and thoroughly than do our moderns, raised the question as to whether this prayer receives its fulfilment in the present life or the life to come. After carefully weighing the pros and cons of their arguments, we have come to the conclusion—taking into view the remarkable scope of the Greek word *katartizo*, here rendered “perfect”—that this petition is granted a twofold answer—here and hereafter—and shall therefore take in both in our comments.

Katartizo imports “to make perfect” in the sense of, first, by adjusting or articulating so as to produce a flawless object; and, second, to restore an object which has become imperfect. That the reader may be enabled to form his own judgment, we will set before him the passages in which the Greek word is variously translated elsewhere. In each passage quoted, the word or words placed in italics is the English rendering of the Greek word for “perfect” in our text. When the Saviour said, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou *prepared* [or ‘fitted,’ margin] me” (Heb. 10:5), we are to understand, as Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) said, “That body was formed or articulated by the Holy Spirit, with the human soul, in all its parts, in one instant of its union with the Son of God,” and was immaculately holy, impeccable, and without spot or blemish. The word is used again to express the finishing and perfect consummation of God’s work of the first creation: “The worlds were *framed* by the word of God” (Heb. 11:3): they were so completed that nothing more was needed to their perfection, for, as Genesis 1:31 tells us, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

But this same Greek word has a very different sense in other passages. In Matthew 4:21, “*mending* their nets,” which denotes the repairing of what had been damaged. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, *restore* such an one in

the spirit of meekness” (Gal. 6:1), where it signifies such a restoring as of a limb that is out of joint. No doubt this was one of the significations which the apostle had in mind, for those for whom he prayed had been disjoined or scattered by persecutions. Paul also had this shade of meaning before him when he exhorted the divided Corinthians to “be *perfectly joined together* in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Again, the word is sometimes used to express a supplement or the supply of a deficiency, as in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, that we “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith,” for “lacking” implies a want. Once more, the word occurs in Hebrews 13:21, “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,” where the apostle prayed that the saints might advance to further degrees of faith and holiness in this life.

It will thus appear, from its usage in other passages, that the Greek word rendered “perfect” in our present text may signify “himself make perfect those *degrees* of grace,” which are necessary in order to full growth, and does not necessarily imply any personal fault or failure in those prayed for—as a child is not to be blamed for not having yet reached the full stature of an adult or attained unto his knowledge; as God has promised to bring to perfection the good work He has begun in the souls of His people (Phil. 1:6). A Christian may walk up to the measure of grace received without any wilful divergence in his course, and still be imperfect, as was the case with the most favoured of God’s children—“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect” (Phil. 3:12). There have been, and are, some privileged souls who never left their first love, who followed on to know the Lord, who (as to the general tenor of their lives) carried themselves according to the light received, yet needed further additions of wisdom and holiness to make them yet more fruitful branches of the Vine, and unto a consummation of holiness in heaven.

An example of this appears in the case of the Thessalonian saints. Not only had they experienced a remarkable conversion (1

Thess. 1:9), but they conducted themselves in the most God-honouring and exemplary manner, so that the apostle gave thanks to God always for them on account of their “work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (verses 2 and 3). Not only were their inward graces healthy and vigorous, but in their outward conduct, they were made “ensamples to all that believe” (verse 7). Nevertheless, Paul was most anxious to visit them again, that he “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1 Thess. 3:10): that is, that further blessed accessions of grace might be theirs in order to a yet closer walking with God, and resistance to and overcoming of temptations. To that faith which rests on Christ for pardon and acceptance with God, which He bestows at conversion, there is also a faith of conscious acceptance, the “full assurance of understanding” (Col. 2:2); and to that, God has in store the rich experience of “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8) and the making of our calling and election sure, so that an “abundant entrance” into His Kingdom is begun in this life (2 Pet. 1:10, 11). Yet this “perfecting” also applies to the *recovery* and restoration of lapsed Christians, as is evident from Peter’s own case.

But suppose that God should thus mend and restore those overtaken in a fault, yet might they not fall again? Yes, indeed, and evidently, Peter had such a contingency in view and therefore added “stablish:” that is, that they should be so confirmed that they would not fall away. For the fickle and vacillating, it was a request that they should be no more tossed to and fro, but fixed in their beliefs. For the discouraged, that having put their hands to the plough, they should not look back because of the difficulties of the way. For those who were walking closely with the Lord, that they might be established in holiness before God (1 Thess. 3:13), for the most spiritual are daily in need of supporting grace. The Greek word signifies to make firm or confirm, occurring in “there is a great gulf *fixed*” (Luke 16:26). It is found again in connection with Christ, and is translated, “he *stedfastly set* his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). It is the word used by the Lord to Peter himself: “When thou art converted, *strengthen* [or

‘fix firmly’] thy brethren” (Luke 22:32)—re-establish those who have yielded to temptation. Likewise, Paul desired “to establish... and to comfort... concerning [their] faith” the Thessalonian saints; and that, in relation to temptation or trial (1 Thess. 3:2, 5).

But though we may be so confirmed by the grace of God that we cannot totally and finally fall away, yet we are weak, and may be labouring under great infirmities; and therefore, the apostle added to his petition, “strengthen” you. The Greek word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, but from its position here between “stablish” and “settle,” it appears to have the force of invigorating against weakness and corruptions—“be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). The term occurs in its negative form in Romans 5:6, “For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly:” in our unregenerate state, we were entirely devoid of ability and enablement to do those things which are pleasing to God. Not only is the spiritual impotency of an unregenerate soul styled “without strength,” but the state of the body when dead is expressed by the same Greek word: “It is sown in *weakness*” (1 Cor. 15:43)—that is, lifeless, utterly devoid of any vigour. But contrastively, “it is raised in power:” endued and furnished with all abilities, even such as the angels have (Luke 20:36), who “excel in strength” (Psa. 103:20). Thus, this request for the “strengthening” of the saints is to be understood of supplies of grace which would energize weak hands and feeble knees, and enable them to overcome every opposing force.

Though we be confirmed so that we shall never be lost, and though we be strengthened to bear up against trials, yet we may become shaky and uncertain; therefore, Peter added “settle:” that ye may be unremitting in your faith in Christ and love to God. The Greek word is rendered “founded” in Matthew 7:25, “laid the foundation of” in Hebrews 1:10, and “grounded” in Ephesians 3:17; and in our text, it appears to be used as the opposite of waverings of spirit and doubtings of heart. I pray that you may be able confidently to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed

unto him” (2 Tim. 1:12); and that you may not turn from the path of duty because of the opposition you encounter. No matter how good be the tree, if it be not settled in the earth, but moved from place to place, it will bear little or no fruit. How many might trace the unfruitfulness of their lives to the unsettled state of their hearts and judgments! David could say, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed,” and therefore, he added: “I will sing and give praise” (Psa. 57:7). This too is a blessing which God only can impart: “Now to him that is of power to stablish you” (Rom. 16:25); yet, as Deuteronomy 28:9 and 2 Chronicles 20:20 show, we must use the appointed means.

Himself “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10). The ultimate object seems to be mentioned first, and then the steps by which it is reached; but, whether regarded in conjunction or singly, they all have to do with our practical sanctification. The piling up of these emphatic terms indicates the difficulty of the Christian’s task, and his urgent need of constant supplies of divine grace. The saint’s warfare is one of no common difficulty, and his needs are deep and many; but he has to do with “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10)! Nevertheless, it is both our privilege and duty to draw upon Him by importunate supplication (Heb. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:1). God has provided grace answerable to our every need, yet it flows through the *means* He has appointed. God will “perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle” us in response to fervent prayer, by the instrumentality of His Word, through His blessing unto us the ministry of His servants, and by sanctifying unto us the discipline of His providences. He who has given His people a sure hope will also give everything necessary unto the realization of the thing hoped for (2 Pet. 1:3), but we have to sue out the same by prayer (Ezek. 36:37).

Sixth, its *qualification*: “After that ye have suffered a while.” That clause is connected with both “who hath called us unto his eternal glory” and the petition Himself “make you perfect,” etc. The apostle did not pray that believers should be removed from this world as soon as they be regenerated, nor immediately relieved their sufferings, but “after a while”—or, as the Greek

signifies, “after a *little* while”—because all time is short in comparison with eternity, and for the same reason the severest afflictions are “light” when set over against the “eternal weight of glory” that is awaiting him (2 Cor. 4:17). The sufferings and the glory are inseparably connected, for “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:17)—no cross, no crown (Luke 14:27). All who have suffered for Christ’s sake on earth will be glorified in heaven, but none shall be glorified save those who—in some form or other—were “made conformable unto his death” (Phil. 3:10). Some of the believer’s sufferings are from the hand of God’s providence, some from “false brethren,” some from the profane world, some from Satan, some from indwelling sin. Peter speaks of “manifold temptations” or “trials” (1 Pet. 1:6, 7), but they are counterbalanced by “manifold grace” (1 Pet. 4:10), and both are directed by “the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10)!

The abounding grace of God does not preclude trials and afflictions, but has “appointed” (1 Thess. 3:3) its objects thereto. Then let us not be dismayed or cast down by them, but seek grace to get them sanctified to us. Sufferings are *necessary* to the saints on various accounts. First and foremost, that the members be conformed to their Head. We are informed that “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10). Sufficient then for the disciple to be as his Master: that he should be made “perfect” “*after*...[he has] suffered a while” (1 Pet. 5:10). Peter himself had alluded to this in his first chapter: “The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet. 1:11). It was the divine will that even the incarnate Son should “learn obedience” or submission by the things which He suffered (Heb. 5:8). As He declared, “The Son of man *must* suffer” (Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22)—because God had ordained it (Acts 4:28). Christ’s being tempted by the devil had not its origin in his malice, for “then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness *to be* tempted of the

devil” (Matt. 4:1). Remember that, dear tried one: the Saviour Himself entered the kingdom of God “through much tribulation;” and therefore, “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).

Second, the God of all grace has made this appointment because His grace is best seen in sustaining us and is most manifest by relieving us; hence, we find the Throne of Grace magnified by giving us grace “to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). Much of the glory of grace appears in supporting the weak, in delivering the tempted, and in raising the fallen. The Lord exempts not from conflict, but maintains us in it. Effectual calling ensures our final perseverance, yet it does not render needless continual supplies of grace. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) expressed it, “God will not only give them glory at the end of their journey, but bears their expenses by the way.” Third, because God will thereby confound those who are opposed to us. “Grace *reign[s]*” (Rom. 5:21), and the greatness of a monarchy is demonstrated by subduing rebels and vanquishing enemies. God raised up the mighty Pharaoh in order to show forth His own power. In the context, as we have seen, He suffers the devil, as a roaring lion, to rage up and down, oppose and assault us; but only to foil him, for “shall the prey be taken from the mighty” (Isa. 49:24); and shortly, God will “bruise Satan under [our] feet” (Rom. 16:20).

Fourth, suffering is necessary for the trying and proving of our graces: “The trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam. 1:3). “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7). It is the winds of tribulation which separate the wheat from the chaff, the furnace which reveals the difference between the tinsel and the gold—the stony-ground hearer is offended and falls away “when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word” (Matt. 13:21). So, too, for the purifying and the brightening of our hope, our hearts have to be more completely weaned from this world before they become *set upon*

things above.

Fifth, “Heaven is not simply joy and happiness, but a glory, and a glory *won by conquest*—‘to him that overcometh’ [are the promises made] in each one of the seven epistles of Revelation 2 and 3. It is a crown won by mastery, and so by striving, according to certain laws set to be observed by those that win (2 Tim. 2:5). The glory won by conquest and masteries is the more valuable. The portion Jacob won ‘with my sword and with my bow’ was the one he reserved for his beloved Joseph (Gen. 48:22). We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”—Thomas Goodwin.

It is a mistake (made by some) to restrict either the “afflictions” of 1 Peter 5:9 or the “suffer[ing]” of verse 10 to *outward* persecutions and trials: all inward assaults (whether from our own lusts or Satan), and so all temptations whatsoever, are to be included. The context requires this, for the “be sober, be vigilant” (verse 8) respects our lusts; and the call to “resist the devil” (Jam. 4:7) relates to our inward temptations unto sin. The experience of all saints requires it, for their acutest pangs are occasioned by their corruptions. Moreover, as Thomas Goodwin pointed out, the setting before the eyes of our faith, God as “the God of all grace” argues the same; for His grace stands principally ready to help us against inward sins and temptations to sin. Furthermore, the *all* of His grace extends not only to all sorts of external miseries, but to all internal maladies, which are our greatest grief, and which need His abundant grace above all other, and which His grace chiefly respects. His grace is the grand remedy for every evil to which the believer is subject. Some are guilty of worse sins after conversion than before, and unless the God of *all* grace was their God, where would they be?

“After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10). This may well be regarded as a request for grace to enable us to obey the exhortation, “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58)—i.e. constantly opposing sin and striving to be holy in all manner of conversation. This request receives a part

fulfilment in this life, but a complete and more transcendent one in heaven. Saints are advanced to further degrees of faith and holiness, and after seasons of wavering and suffering, God strengthens and establishes them in a more settled frame of spirit. Yet only in our fixed condition after death will these blessings be fully ours. Not till then shall we be “made perfect” in the sense of fully conformed to the image of God’s Son. Our hearts will be “stablish[ed]...unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1 Thess. 3:13). Only then will all our weakness end and our bodies be “raised in power” (1 Cor. 15:43). Then indeed shall we be eternally “settled,” for the divine promise is, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out” (Rev. 3:12).

Seventh, its *ascription*: “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 5:11). “The apostle, having added prayer to his doctrine, here added praise to his prayer”—Robert Leighton. It expressed the apostle’s confidence that the God of all grace would grant his request. He was assured that what he had asked for on behalf of the saints would be to the divine “glory,” and that the divine “dominion” would infallibly bring it to pass. There is thus a practical hint implied for us in this closing doxology: it intimates *where* relief is to be obtained and strength is to be found in the midst of our suffering, namely by eyeing the glory of God, which is the grand end He has in view in all His dealings with us, and by faith’s occupation with God’s dominion—if *His* be the dominion, and He has called us unto His eternal glory, then what have we to fear? So certain is our glorification (Rom. 8:30) that we should give thanks for it now. The abundant and infinite grace of God is engaged to effect it, and His omnipotent power guarantees the performance of the same.

The fourth of seven booklets.

