

tossed with tempest and not comforted.

We know, for example, that beautiful passage in Psalm 107, that this is a picture we do have, that they rise to the heavens, then they pitch down into the depths.

They cry to the Lord in their distress, and the Lord saves them, and ultimately, he brings them to that promised haven and to that promised rest.

You know that very often, at funeral services of those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, these words are very often sung, and rightly so, in Psalm 107.

Well, that's the picture we have here. A church, God's, believing people in the world, afflicted, feeling very wretched, as people very often are in the raging seas, tossed hither and thither in the tempest, feeling distressed, as this verse puts it, and uncomfortable and exposed.

[7 : 25] Now, as you look at that, and as you consider that this is the pic that the Bible gives very often of the Lord's people, Christian people, in the world individuals, and corporately as a church, you have to ask yourself, why do people experience these things?

If I belonged, for example, to a certain sect, I would tell you here tonight that if you became a Christian, you would never again have any problems or any troubles or any difficulties or any conflicts in this world. All you have to do is to yield yourself to the Lord, and he would bear you up and carry you over all these difficulties and distressful circumstances that other people talk about in other branches of the Christian church.

If I belonged to a sect like that, I would say that to you. But then I would be saying something to you which is totally contrary to the teaching of the Word of God and the pic that the Word of God gives us of his own people in this world.

Why, then, do people experience these things? Why, for example, should an unconverted boy or girl or man or woman in this church here tonight, listen to me encourage them to put their trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour on the one hand, and then hear me saying that it is possible for such and probable that in the experience of such they are going to have difficulties and distresses? Why invite unconverted people who have their own problems to come to the Lord Jesus Christ? It is not the case that the Lord will give you relief from all these things.

[9 : 28] Well, the Bible knows what it says, that he will. You may have heard people say, for example, that they thought that when they were converted, when they came to Christ, that that would be the end of the problems and the difficulties.

And they came to the Lord and what happened? It was then as though the difficulties began as never before. You ask people who are persecuted for their faith.

People who find it extremely difficult to read a Bible in their own home, to bend the knee in prayer, to get ready to come to church, to want to go to Christian fellowship.

If you ask these people, you ask these people and you discover then the problems and the difficulties are often associated with the very fact of being a believer at all.

Well, we all know, for example, that our own awareness of sin and the corruption and the pollution of our own nature is something which often distresses us.

[10 : 31] Listen to Paul, a man who lived gloriously and triumphantly through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death or from the body of this death.

There was a man who felt distressed even in the very midst of his glorious and triumphant Christian commitment to the Lord.

People very often have fears within themselves. People are afraid of themselves, and rightly so.

People are plagued and distressed and oppressed by their own doubts and the misgivings that they have concerning their own commitment and concerning their own progress in the life of faith.

People feel very often. People feel very downcast when they discover that they are not what they thought they would be after years, perhaps, of Christian pilgrimage.

You feel distressed at the force of temptation in your own life. The things from outside which seem to attract us, a magnet attracts iron findings.

[11 : 45] The problems that are associated with temptation, the difficulty of enduring chastisement. Look at the epistle of the Hebrews chapter 12.

These people talk about so-called victorious Christian living, lifted above the stresses and the strains and the pressures of life. What are they going to do with Hebrews chapter 12, which speaks of God's fatherly chastisement of his own people?

And he goes on to say, that's not easy to bear, he said. It can be very grievous, very distressful, very uncomfortable, and very crushing and bruising.

You see, there are times when people go through these things for their own good. Look at the trials that the man of faith like Abraham had. A man who was glorious in the exercise, triumphant in the exercise of his faith.

But his faith was assailed, attacked. And there were times when he succumbed and times when his faith failed. Look at Job. The great saint of Old Testament days.

[12 : 54] Who spent days and days and days wondering why God was afflicting him. Who lost all sense of the presence of God with him and who could say, Oh, that I knew where I might find him.

You're a believer. And you rejoice in the presence of the Lord with you in the world. And you know what it is to have the Lord walking with you and you walking with him.

There are times when God withdraws the sense of his presence. Times when you and I by your sins and our unfaithfulness drive him away, as it were. Times when you and I by your sins and your sins and your sins and your sins and your sins and your sins and your sins and your sins.

And you say, Oh, that I knew where I might find him. Life can be very difficult. Passages can be very rough. And then, of course, there's a lack of compassion and the lack of understanding of an unbelieving world.

Of the problems and the pressures and the difficulties that the Christian is in. The opposition that the church of necessity must have from an unbelieving world.

[14 : 02] The ridicule and the misrepresentation that the world pours upon the Christian church. The assault of the devil.

You don't believe in that devil, do you? Well, if you're a believer, you would. If you're a Christian, you would. You know that he will come and tempt you. The Bible, you know what Martin Luther said? Oh, every day of my life, he said.

I was tempted with the thought that the Bible was not the word of God. That God didn't exist. That there was no God. He will come and others will come and say and whisper in your ear and thunder in your ear.

Where now is your God? Where is he? You look at the history of the world as it unfolds. And you're tempted to think that God doesn't care.

That God has forgotten you. The psalmist said the same thing. Is it true that the Lord has forgotten me? Am I left here alone, exposed, in the face of all these difficulties and all these assaults and all these temptations?

[15 : 06] Christ didn't really rise, did he, from the dead? Was he the son of God? Did he die for me? Is there going to be a second coming and a resurrection? Is there an afterlife?

All these temptations to which believers are subject. And then, of course, the distance that you so often feel between yourself and your God.

Just like the ship in the storm. Tossing and pitching. Wondering if it will ever, ever make port of it. You know, there are times when the distance between the storm and the haven seems so far that you wonder if you will ever, ever make it.

Oh, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted. That's a picture that is drawn for us here of the Christian church.

[16 : 06] And you're a believer here tonight. And if you're passing through circumstances such as these, my friend, don't be dismayed. And don't be discouraged. And don't be tempted to throw in the towel and give up your faith.

Don't listen to the one who says to you, you're the only one who's like that. And if you were a proper Christian, you wouldn't have these things. Don't listen to these things. Because, as someone has put it, these are the very circumstances which induce God to come to our assistance.

And it is in the weakness and the frailty of our own faith. It is to these that, it is to that, it is to people in such circles, and to such people, that he has united himself in his glorious strength.

For he will give power to the wind. And to those who have no might, he will increase strength. You know, there are times they say that when the storm can be so severe, and people feeling so wretched, that they couldn't care less, that they would never see dry land again.

And, seemingly, people have found themselves in situations like that. And maybe, in the weakness and in the sheer pressure under which you are placed as a believer, there are times when you may be tempted to say, as others were tempted to say, why should I wait any longer upon the Lord?

[17 : 39] Well, into that situation the Lord comes and speaks to the church. Look, he says, behold, consider this. I will lay thy stones with fair colours.

Lay thy foundation with sapphires. I will make thy windows of agates. Thy gates of carbuncles and all thy boards for pleasant stones. All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.

And great shall be the peace of thy children. Now, here the figure changes. The Bible very often does this. The metaphor is now not a ship in the storm, but God constructing his own building. God is continually building his church in the world. A church which seems to rise out of the ruins of this world. And rising out of the seeming desolation of his own church.

We're going to conclude this service night singing Psalm 102. God takes pleasure in his own church. Her very dust is dear to him and to those who belong to the church.

[18 : 52] Paul takes up the same strain right into the church at Ephesus. God, he said, is building his own church. He has stones and he's placing you in his building. You're inhabited by the Holy Spirit.

It's the chief cornerstone. And as the Bible closes, it gives a picture of the church in heaven. In the presence of our Lord, a completed building.

Come, said the angel to John. I will show thee the church in glory above. And he showed me the heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

And then we're given the picture that we write here tonight in Revelation chapter 21. Of the city of God. With its gates. And its walls.

Its glory. And its brilliance. Well, that is what you have here. The preciousness and the beauty of the church that God is building. And so he was saying to her.

[19 : 51] I have a purpose for all that you are passing through. I have an end in you. I am moldy and fashion in you. And look, he says.

One day, you will be like this. Not our own desolate church. Not a church which is characterized by death and decay and desolation.

You know, you've seen pictures. And you've seen pictures on your televisions, no doubt. Of cities which were bombed and raised to the ground during the last war. Just nothing but our rubble of stones.

Ruined buildings. But here now is a restored city. With gleaming towers and battlements. And beautiful windows. And our beauty is shown against the backdrop.

Of the dark colored stone out of which the sapphire and the carbuncle.

[21 : 00] And the fair colors glitter and glisten. The idea that he has here, actually, these words. I will lay thy stones with fair colors.

It's like a person. And the imagery, actually, is the eye shadow that women use and still use. So that the brilliance of the color of the eye would be highlighted against the dark background of the shadow that is used.

And he goes, and this is how he pictured it. In the first place, I will lay thy foundations of or with sapphire. Now, as you know, sapphire is a beautiful blue stone.

And those who are fond of using this as a type, fond of spiritualizing these things, suggest that the blue suggests to us the heavenly nature of her glory.

Now, be that as it may, we know for a fact that the blessedness and the beauty and the glory of the church comes to her from her Lord. And that which came from heaven towards her underpins everything else connected with her.

[22 : 28] The love wherewith he has loved her with an eternal lamb. That love which broke into time in the history of this world when God sent his son into the world to redeem them that were under the curse in the world.

The love that led them not only to take our nature and to endure our sufferings, but also to die our death. The love that moved them to rise from the dead for those whom he loved, so that they too would have a resurrection.

Because I live, ye too shall live, he said. This is the foundation of all the church's hope. This is our inspiration. The love of Christ, as Paul constrains me.

The love that will not let her go. The love that triumphs. The love that is indestructible. The love that wins the victory through all her conflicts and all her difficulties and all her distresses.

The loving hand that is behind her and underneath her sustaining her and strengthening her and enabling her to persevere until the end.

[23 : 43] And at that end she will give all the glory to the love that would not let her go. That is the foundation of the church's hope.

The love wherewith the Lord has loved her. I wonder if that's your foundation and mine tonight. Is that what you look to? The love of God from all eternity.

Then he says, I will make thy windows of agates. Now there's a difficulty here. It's not true. We're not very sure whether the word window, translated word window here, should be window or battlements or pinnacles.

You know, the church that has picked it for us, for example, in the psalm we sang there tonight, Psalm 48. I'm going to come back to that in a minute before I finish the service. Psalm 48 gives a picture of Jerusalem as it was seen by the enemies who were approaching Jerusalem at a particular time to overthrow Jerusalem.

And as they came within sight of the city, they saw the glory and the beauty of its battlements, its palaces and the dwelling place of the king.

[25 : 00] And in a most wonderful way, they were seized with terror. And they turned back. And Jerusalem was saved without a blow being struck in its defense.

And this is the idea that you have here. The idea of the beauty of the pinnacles and the battlements and even the windows of the city of agates.

Now, the agates don't seem to be a kind of ruby stone. And the idea here was perhaps twofold. The light that streamed in through these agates, together with the way that they were able to look out through windows which were made in this way.

Now, perhaps the idea that the Lord has here for us is this. That all these circumstances and all these difficulties and all these distresses and all that opposition that you have to encounter as a believer in the world are in themselves ominous through which there can stream into your soul the light of his own presence and of his own provision for you.

[26 : 29] Let me give you an example of it from the Bible. Paul, who perhaps of all men who lived in this world suffered for the sake of Christ, and who suffered painfully, and who suffered for long, long years, ultimately imprisoned and put to death for the faith, wrote of his sufferings before he died in this way.

We are perplexed, he said, but not in despair. We are cast out. We are fighting within and fighting without.

We have problems to contend with from our own hearts and from the opposition and the dealings of other people. Yes. But you know, he said, as I consider these things, they're but light and they're only for our own whine.

And you ask yourself, Paul, you've been suffering like that for 30 years. How can you say that?

Well, he tells us. While we look, he says, not the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen.

You see what he's saying? The Lord, by his grace, enabled them to look through these things to the unseen. To the unseen. In a sense, you're looking at them through this, I get through the ruby glass.

[27 : 55] The dark scarlet kind of color that you're looking through these things and you're seeing. You're seeing in a different light.

And you see, by the grace of God, the purpose that he has for you. The necessity of all these things. It is true that it is written, ought not Jesus to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory.

And Paul and Peter writes to his persecuted believers in his own day and he says almost the same thing. It is necessary for you, he says, to pass through this period of heaviness, this period of persecution, and this period of difficulty and suffering.

It is necessary that you may come to see in a better way the one who is beyond them. And the place beyond them. And the purpose that he has for you through them and with all these things. He makes, as someone put it, he makes our sorrows windows through which we may gaze into the unseen.

[29 : 07] He gives you spiritual vision and spiritual understanding. So that in the varied experience of life, whatever they may be, you may be unable to see the purpose, the reason for all these things.

And together with it, this streams to you through these things, the light of the glory of his presence.

And though we may see in this world, but through a glass darkly, as you would see through a nugget stone, you wouldn't see the perfect picture. Just the image, the outline, as it were, the silhouette.

There will come a day when you will see, not through an nugget window, but see clearly face to face.

And when the light that is his will stream into your soul without anything being needed to color its entrance into your soul.

[30 : 11] I will make thy windows agates and thy gates of carbuncles and thy walls of pleasant stone.

Thy gates. Now remember the picture in Revelation 21? He saw the city. And he saw it at wall and in the walls, 12 gates. You see the gates you have in the old cities like of York and Jerusalem itself. The gates of the city. There were two reasons for a gate. The gate was to allow people in and allow people out. But it was also the place where the elders, the councillors of the city met to discuss the affairs of the city.

It was a place which was associated with all the wisdom and all the intelligence and all the experience of the city. The gates of the city. Remember when Jesus gave the promise to Peter, they were Peter, On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Suggesting to Peter and to us that forces would, forces, as it were, would be discouraged on the gates of hell. With all the ingenuity and all the machination and all the planning of hell to destroy the church.

[31 : 36] But he says, the gate of hell will not prevail against it. Well he says, I will make thy gates carbuncle. The gate of hell, the gate of hell. The gate of the church, that place in which it goes in and out.

Christ is her gate. I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall go in and out and find pasture. Her liberty, her freedom is in Christ Jesus.

Her wisdom, her understanding is the Lord Jesus Christ. And the closer she keeps to him, the more experience she will gain as to how to cope with circumstances as they unfold in her life.

The carbuncle simile, the fire stone, was a stone that was dyed deep red. It was an intense scarlet colour.

And it might suggest to us here that the, again leading us to the idea that we had before of the love put with God as love. The love that led him to suffer and to die.

[32 : 49] Christ's atoning death on the cross. Christ's atoning death on the cross. The cross that came for him before the crown. So for her. There must of necessity be the cross before her crown.

But then, the day will come when she will be seen in all the glory that is associated with that stone. You know it had a very prominent place in the breastplate of the high priest. Very prominent. At the very, one of the foremost stones in the breastplate of the high priest.

And so it is that the church is as close and as dear to that, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And on the way to her crown, all her hope and confidence is in the cross that led him to the crown.

And even when the crown is placed upon her head, she will ascribe all the glory to him who went to the cross for unto him who loved us and who washed us from our sins in his own blood.

[34 : 09] And all thy borders shall be of pleasant stones. The stones suggesting delight to the onlooker.

The divine glory that surrounds the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole idea is one of beauty. Surpassing beauty. Terrible.

Terrible. Terrible. Terrible. Terrible. Terrible. As an army with banner. Though there is beauty associated with her, there is also an object, and I come back now to Psalm 48, an object of terror to her enemies.

The enemy approaching Jerusalem, saw the glory and the beauty of Jerusalem and fled in terror. When you look at the history of the church in the book of Acts, what do you think lay behind much of the opposition of the first century against the Christian church?

Why were Peter and John cast into prison? Why was James beheaded? Why was Stephen stoned to death?

[35 : 18] Why was Paul imprisoned and ultimately led to death? Why were Christians driven from their homes and their place of work?

Why were there allowed places of worship that they could build? Because the world was afraid of the Christian church. The Christian church struck terror into the heart of Rome and into the heart of all enemies.

Why do people ridicule and attack and oppose the church today? What's at the back of all that? They're afraid of the church. They're afraid of the gospel.

They're afraid of Christ. They won't admit it. But it's a fear of the position and the power that the church can have that moves them to oppose it at every turn.

You see, the glory and the beauty of the church was so precious to him and so precious to her. It's precious to no one else.

[36 : 34] And the question, my friend, for you and for me here tonight is, do you belong to it? Are you a member of it? And you may say to me, ah, how will I know?

And I think that this next verse answers it when it brings before us the inner characteristics of the church. Thy children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Who inhabits this city? Who own homes in it? Who are protected behind these walls? Who sees things with this spiritual vision?

They who are taught of the Lord and who know the peace of the Lord. Jesus explains this teaching for us in the chapter we write in John 6. He tells us how this happens.

And he quoted this very text. It is written, thy children shall be taught of the Lord. And he tells us how it happens. God sent his word into the world, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[37 : 36] People preached it and proclaimed it and others heard it. Just as he was teaching that day in the synagogue in Capernaum. And he was teaching and discipling them.

They were being taught about God the Father who sent the manna into the world. They were being taught about the necessity of faith. If any man, if you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no pardon.

They were being taught the truth about Jesus who is the bread of the world, the bread of life and the light of the world. They were being taught about themselves. That they needed the Christ who came into the world.

They were being taught about the world. This is how God teaches his children through the world. In the power of the Spirit. Brings them face to face with the reality of his own being. With their accountability to him.

With their need of faith and the need of salvation. And Christ as the only Savior. That's the teaching. That these people who inhabit this city are.

[38 : 39] They are taught of the Lord. And they are led through the teaching to come to Christ. And if any man comes to me, I will in no wise cast him out. And I will keep him.

And I will raise him up at the last day. Do you belong to the church? Have you heard this teaching? Have you responded to this teaching? Have you submitted yourself in faith to this Christ who is brought to you in the word of the gospel?

Is God your Father through faith in Christ? Do you know yourself as a sinner who needs to be saved? And who must be saved by the power of his grace?

That's the teaching. That people receive. People hear. And people receive. And great shall be the peace of thy children. And the people receive that teaching.

Know what it is to have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing in the world tonight. Not many things I suggest to you.

[39 : 40] More precious than peace. In the heart of individuals. In homes. In families. In communities. In nations. All for peace.

To break out on the earth. We hear so much today. These days. And in these coming days. Till a week today. God willing. About peace on earth. Good will toward men.

But how few people know. The meaning of real peace. Being at rest. In their own souls. With God's provision. Of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God rested in his love. God rested in his love. These people rest. In the same love. They know. Who their savior is. And the peace that God has provided.

He planned it. He purchased it. He provides it. He offers it. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives.

[40 : 38] Give I unto you. The peace of being reconciled to God. Through the death of a son. And knowing. That the God of peace. And Christ who is our peace.

Garrisons our souls and our lions. Like a wall. Behind which we can shelter. Even. In our fears. And our doubts.

And our misgivings. Lord. To the psalmist. I flee to thee. To cover me. To hide me. Behind the wall. Of thy peace. Do you belong to the church? Have you been taught by him? Have you been brought to him? And do you shelter in him. And behind him.

And there is finally this. The promised security of the church. And righteousness shall to be established. There shall be far from oppression. For there shall not fear.

[41 : 38] And from terror. For it shall not come near. Oh what a glorious prospect this is. The ultimate end. When the church will see righteousness.

In all that belongs to her. From him. The righteous God. Who made a righteous provision for her in Christ. Whose dealings with her in the world were right.

He will lead them. In the way that is right. He will do everything. In a proper manner concerned. No mistakes.

Not a moment too long in coming to their help. Not a moment too soon. In delivering. He will do everything well. He doeth all things well. In righteousness.

Shall there be established. From beginning to end. From eternity in the past. If you want to put it like that. To the future eternity to which he brings her. And there. You will be far from oppression.

[42 : 38] There shall not fear. And from terror. It shall not come near to thee. You see. In this world. Oppressed. In this world exposed to fear.

Oppression. Needs to fear. Needs to fear. But in the world to come. Distanced. From it all. No enemy.

Will be nearer then. Plenty in this world. With her. And in her. And around her. To destroy her. But the Lord would deliver her. From all her enemies.

And she will look back. On oppression. And fear. And they shall be. No more. My friend. Do you belong to this glorious company.

Who are moving towards that blessed haven. When the storm. Will come to an end. Are you with them? Are you journeying with them? Shoulder to shoulder.

[43 : 44] In the face of all. That opposes you. In the world. If not. My friend. You may feel tonight. That your passage is. Reasonably easy.

That the storms are few. And far between. But believe you me. The day will come. When the storm will break.

Never to cease. When you'll be tossed in the sea. Of an endless. Endless. Eternity of war. With no prospect of peace.

And confronted. By nothing. But oppression. And terror. You come. You come. And you join this crew. The passage.

At times. May be very rough. But then you see. They're promised. The presence of the captain himself. He's with them. To guide them through. And ultimately.

[44 : 47] To welcome them home. Let us pray. O Lord. Have mercy upon us. Bless thy truth to our souls. Make it precious to us.

And hide thy face from sin. And go before us and forgive us. For Jesus sake. Amen.