

PAUL'S LAST TESTIMONY.

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However rough the Christian's journey may be, it is but short. However heavy his burden, he has not far to carry it. However severe his trials, they will soon be over. The apostle Paul had as rough a journey, as heavy a burden, and as severe trials as most, but the Lord was with him in them all, and at length he bore this testimony, "*out of them all the Lord delivered me*" (2 Tim. iii. 11). Such will be our case soon; let us anticipate it, and now notice,

THE PAINFUL REVIEW.—He had been persecuted; violently persecuted, often persecuted; persecuted both by Jews and Gentiles; persecuted for Christ's sake. To serve Christ was his delight. To make known Christ was his great object. Wherever he went he preached a personal Christ; a Christ who was a Jew; a Jew, hated by his countrymen, and at length crucified. This Christ he preached as the only Saviour, and everywhere affirmed that there could be no salvation for any one but through him. This enraged the rabble, and greatly offended the polite. He was therefore persecuted, and considered unfit to live. He was persecuted for the truth's sake, for he everywhere proclaimed the unity and spirituality of the divine nature, in opposition to idolatry; and salvation by Christ alone, in opposition to the ceremonies, sacrifices, and services of priests and people. He refers also to afflictions. His persecutions were from men, but many of his afflictions came from God. He was afflicted in body, and suffered much; therefore he said, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." He was afflicted in mind—"without were fightings, and within were fears." He was tried by good men, and he was tried by bad ones. Everywhere, and from all quarters, afflictions, troubles, and trials flowed in upon him; and he was at times pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that he despaired even of life. But now mark,

HIS HONOURABLE TESTIMONY.—"*Out of them all the Lord delivered me.*" The Lord supported him in them and his strength

was made perfect in his servant's weakness. He brought him through them. The fires were not extinguished, nor were the rivers drained, but step by step he was led on, until he could say, "We went through fire and through water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." They did him good, for they deepened his sanctification, led him to prayer, and exercised his trust and confidence in God. They made him more useful in his ministry, for they qualified him to speak a word in season to them that were weary. They tended to his honor, exercising his courage and valour as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. They found work for all his graces, and taught him the value of his spiritual armour. The Lord delivered him out of them all. The last trial came, and he endured it. The last cross was laid upon him, and he manfully carried it after Jesus. The last foe came up, and he conquered him in the strength of the Lord. The call of his Master was heard, and he said, "I am ready." He laid down his life for Christ on earth, and then went to reign with Christ in heaven. His deliverance was full, perfect, and eternal. Long since has he rested from his labours, long has he been reaping in glory what he sowed in grace, and gathering in heaven what he scattered on earth.

If we endure we shall also be delivered. The cross always comes before the crown; the wilderness before the promised land; and weariness before rest. We must suffer with Christ, if we would reign with him. The fierce and fiery persecutions endured by the apostles we may not be called upon to pass through; but some measure awaits most of the Lord's people. Our afflictions may not be as numerous or as heavy as his, but they will be heavy enough sometimes. We may not be pressed beyond strength, but, like our Master, we may just have strength enough, but none to spare. *If we suffer now, we shall also testify soon.* The bitter is before the sweet; the storms and frosts of winter before the flowers and fruits of summer. If we suffer for Christ, we suffer with Christ; for he never leaves his people to suffer alone. If we suffer, we shall be sustained and supported, and the time is not far distant when we shall be able to say of all our