

Light Out Of Darkness

#0976

Study given by W.D. Frazee—April 15, 1966

2 Corinthians chapter four, beginning with the fifth verse:

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” 2 Corinthians 4:5-11.

Now passing to the 15th verse:

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” 2 Corinthians 4:15-18.

Paul had a great many troubles. He enumerates them in another chapter in his letter to the Corinthians: the times he was beaten, the times he was shipwrecked, and one time he spent a night and a day in the deep, he said. He was imprisoned many times; he was scourged. One time he was stoned and left for dead. He was often imperiled through those who lay in wait to try to kill him. He had false reports circulated about him. Both in the world and among his own brethren, he met misunderstanding. So when he spoke of trouble and affliction, he was speaking from experience. But this chapter tells his secret of courage and comfort. I would like to point out this evening

that the Christian life is a difficult life and yet one in which it's our privilege to have joy and happiness.

To give us the secret of it all Paul goes back, in these opening words that we read, to the creation of the world, to the time when God, having made this planet, caused light to shine. You will remember the Bible says when God made the world, it was "...without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep" Genesis 1:2. What did God do? There are a number of things He *could* have done, but the thing He *did* was the last thing that human reason would have thought of. He did exactly what Paul says He did: He caused the light "...to shine out of darkness" 2 Corinthians 4:6.

And if we forget many things out of this little study tonight, let's remember this one thing: God loves to do that. He loves to cause the light to shine *out of darkness*. The darkness was not dispelled by light shining *into* the darkness. The light shone "out of darkness." Is that what the text said? That is *exactly* what it says and that's exactly what it means, my friends. Well, how could that be? How could light shine *out of darkness*? If we can learn that secret, perhaps we can learn how to get light in *our* dark days.

Well, you remember what Moses wrote down by Inspiration, "God said Let there be light: and there was light" Genesis 1:3. It was by His *Word* that God caused the light to shine *out of darkness*. I say it thoughtfully, friends, we have no idea of the power of the Word of God. And that power, which was exhibited at creation's beginning, that same power, is in this sacred Word today. This is the Word of the living God "...which liveth and abideth forever" 1 Peter 1:23. And this Word has power for the Christian to bring light *out of darkness*.

So often when we are in darkness, we grope, we long, we wrestle, we hope, or perhaps despair. But God is seeking to teach us as He taught Paul that He delights to have light shine *out of darkness* through His Word. And if we will take hold of the Word, we will find that to the upright, light arises *in* the darkness. Think back to some great trial that you have gone through. If you're a Christian, you can witness to the fact that somewhere in that very dark trial, God caused light to shine by His Word. Am I correct? How many have found it so, may I see your hands? Praise God for every witness, my friends! We need to *cherish* those experiences for there is more hope and encouragement for us in one such experience than all we can read about the experiences of others.

"It is ever God's purpose to bring light out of darkness..."
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, page 216.

Oh, let us learn the Master's way of meeting dark hours! What do you say, friends?

But now watch. Having received this “light out of darkness,” Paul tells us where God has put it, as far as *his* work and witness, the work and witness of Paul, is concerned. May I read verses 6 and 7?

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” 2 Corinthians 4:6.

“But we have this treasure...”—this light which has shone in our dark hearts. “...We have this treasure” of light, where? “In earthen vessels.” Why? “...that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Let me read that as it is put in some of the other translations:

“This priceless treasure we hold, so to speak, in a common earthenware jar to show that the splendid power of it belongs to God and not to us” 2 Corinthians 4:7, J.B. Phillips New Testament.

Think of it! God has taken *His* glory, *His* light, the light shining in the face of Jesus, and He has put it in common earthenware jars. What’s Paul talking about? Well, he’s talking about Paul. He is talking about every other witness for God. Now you may not think that you amount to very much. The truth is, in a sense, you amount to less than that! And you don’t need to be afraid of an inferiority complex either. The whole thing, my dear friends, is not what *we* are, it’s what’s *in* it.

You remember how God taught that lesson to Gideon. The Holy Spirit inspired that man to lay a plan of battle that would teach this lesson. After God had sifted the army of Gideon from 32,000 to 300, then He said, “Now have all the men take a trumpet and an earthen pitcher and a lamp.” What was the trumpet for? To blow at the right time. What was the light for? The light was to shine forth at the right time. And what was the earthen jar for? To hold the light and hide it until the right time.

You can see those 300 men surrounding that vast camp of Midianites. There were hundreds of thousands of them. And 300 men advancing on that camp from various directions—each man must have been some distance from his nearest fellow soldier. And so here he is, creeping along in the dark, creeping up toward that camp. And suddenly all around that camp, all around that vast perimeter, the lights break out! The trumpets blow! The hosts of Midian are awakened by what seems to them to be the tread of an exceeding great army. They are thrown in confusion and they begin to fight anybody they can see. And of course, about all there was to see was their own men, but they were so confused that they just started to kill one another. And many others started running, running, running, any way to get away. God used unusual means to teach them a very simple lesson.

The light is to be put in earthen vessels. The light is God's love, His glory, His faith, His courage. The earthen jar, the earthen vessel, what's that? Oh, that's you and me. And if we have light in our hearts, dear friends, *and* are willing to be broken, the light can shine and the cause of God can triumph. God is waiting for people who will do two things: receive the light in their hearts and then be willing to be broken so that light can shine. Let's do both! What do you say, my friends?

Now this is what Paul is talking about and so he goes on to tell about the breaking of the earthen vessel. Listen:

"We are troubled on every side yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" 2 Corinthians 4:8-10.

Did Jesus come down and take our place? Did *He* become an earthen vessel? Was *He* broken? Oh, yes, and whenever we gather at the sacramental table, we hear again those words repeated, "...This is my body, which is broken for you..." 1 Corinthians 11:24. The body was broken that the light might shine. The earthen jar was broken that the lamp within might be revealed. Paul says, "I, Paul, I'm having that sort of an experience myself. Every day I'm being broken as Jesus was broken in order that that life, that light, may shine out to others."

Oh, friends, I ask again, Are we willing to be broken so that the light can shine? And what does that mean in plain English? It means to have trials, problems, difficulties, temptations, hardships, disappointments, afflictions—that's what it means.

And so often we misinterpret the whole thing. I suspect that some of our problem arises out of selfish motive. It could be that we would be willing to be Christians if we could just feel happy all the time. "Well," somebody says, "*shouldn't* we be happy all the time?" Well that depends on what we mean by 'happy'. Paul said,

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" 2 Corinthians 4:8-9.

I like the way Phillip translates it here:

"...we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!"
2 Corinthians 4:8, J.B. Phillips New Testament.

[Laughter from congregation] Isn't that good? Yes? There is a buoyancy to the Christian life, there is a courage; but the happiness of the Christian life is not the happiness of the circus. It's not the music of the merry-go-round. It's not the thrill of the Ferris-wheel or the roller coaster. No. It is the joy of fellowship with Christ in the

afflictions and sufferings that came to Him when He was here on this earth and which He *still* shares with His church. It is the joy of fellowship in a great cause—the cause of vindicating the name of God before the universe. That’s what Job did out there on the ash heap, covered with boils and surrounded with ‘friends’ who told him what a wicked man he was. Job didn’t understand it all, but he clung fast to God and he said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him...” Job 13:15 and “...when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” Job 23:10. He did. There’s a satisfaction in that, my dear friends, that no amount of running after the pleasures of this world can ever give us.

Yes, there is joy in the Christian life, but it is light that shines through a broken jar. The purest joy springs from the deepest humiliation. And those who decline the conflict never have the joy of victory. Those who side step the humiliation never know the thrill that comes through triumphing with Jesus. Oh, to be willing to be a broken vessel that the light of Jesus may appear!

May I repeat, friends, we need to forget all about ourselves; we need to cease to evaluate the Christian life simply by what it does for us. “Oh,” you say, “shouldn’t the Christian life do something for us?” Indeed. But the greatest thing it can do for us is to teach us that our satisfaction is in being used to help others, not to feather our own nest. The Gospel of God for this hour is more than a ‘mutual improvement society’. The purpose of health reform is more than to just keep us from having cancer and coronary attacks. The *great* mission of the medical missionary is not just to pile up statistics of health improvement for himself and others. It’s to *give* the light, in service, in sacrifice, in *death* if necessary, that others may know Jesus Christ.

That’s the broken vessel. And only when the vessel is broken can the light shine out. We want to be whole. We avoid anything which would break us. We *need* to be broken, friends, “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body” 2 Corinthians 4:10.

Come, shall we put our lives upon the altar? Do you remember that picture in *Ministry of Healing*, the bullock standing between the altar of sacrifice and the plow? “Ready for either”, is the caption. Oh, to be a bullock to plow for God or die for God! What do you say? That’s the way Paul was all through his life after that day that he met Jesus on the Damascus road. That interview with Christ spoiled everything else in the world for him. He couldn’t be satisfied after that just to have a career. That spoiled his career. He couldn’t be satisfied after that to continue in a path that would bring him wealth. He already had it, but keep him in that role or position? He already had that, but he couldn’t stay with that program. He left wealth, he left position, he left everything the world had to offer to follow that Light which shone in the darkness of his heart that day. And at the end of his life he said, “I wasn’t disobedient to that heavenly vision.”

But that sacrifice was not made merely there at Damascus; it was made every day. That’s what he’s telling us about here. Everyday something happened that was hard for Paul. “Well,” you say, “why didn’t the Lord treat him better”? Oh, Paul had asked Jesus that he might know the fellowship of His suffering. God was answering his

prayer. And did somebody say, “Paul should have known better than to pray a prayer like that.” Thank God, he knew *enough* to pray a prayer like that!

Ah, friends, don’t misunderstand me. It isn’t that we are to manufacture crosses for ourselves. All we need to do is just take the cross of Christ. It isn’t that we are to hunt up difficulties. All we need to do is *face* the difficulties in our pathway. It isn’t that we are to go out and hunt temptations. All we need to do is meet the temptations that God allows to come to us. That’s all. There’ll be plenty if we would just walk the road with Jesus. That’s what Paul did; that’s what he is inviting us to do.

The 16th verse:

“For which cause we faint not...” 2 Corinthians 4:16.

You don’t faint, Paul? “No.” With all these troubles and discouraging things, you still have courage? “That’s right.”

“For which cause we faint not...” 2 Corinthians 4:16.

“We wish you could all see how this is working out for your benefit.... This is the reason why we never collapse. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength” 2 Corinthians 4:16, J.B. Philips New Testament.

Now the 17th verse:

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen...” 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

Study some of these words with me. “Our light affliction.” What does “light” mean here? Not heavy. Why, Paul, do you mean that being thrown in prison and beaten, shipwrecked, stoned, lied about, hungry, cold, that that’s light affliction? “Yes,” Paul says, “that’s light affliction.”

Do you know what you have to have to weigh anything? You have to have something to compare it with, don’t you? That’s right. You’ve seen these balances that people use to measure with, and any scale is based on the same principle. If I put a pound weight in here and I put a half pound here, then this is light, is that right? Suppose I put a hundred pounds here and I put eighty pounds over here, this is still what? Light. Suppose I put a thousand pounds over here and I put nine hundred and ninety pounds over here, it’s still what? Light. Do you see what I mean, friends? Do you know the reason our troubles look so big? We measure them against something so little: our feelings. Oh, yes, the feelings are very, very important things. They are until

we've seen something bigger. They are till we've felt something more important. There are two things that far outweigh *all* the afflictions, friends. One is the suffering of Jesus, the great privilege of being fellow laborers with Him. The other is the "...far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" 2 Corinthians 4:17.

Do you remember that first vision given the messenger of the Lord back in December of 1844? As she and the Advent band were in the vision, enjoying the beauties of heaven, there under the Tree of Life, conversing with Brother Fitch and Brother Stockman and others, they were asked about what had happened since those other men had gone to sleep. She said, "We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small" in comparison "with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" that we could only say, "Alleluia, heaven is cheap enough!" They touched their harps, and made heaven's arches ring. [See *Early Writings*, page 17.]

Ah, friends, I hardly think that we are going to talk very much about the little sacrifices we've made or the little trials we've gone through. What do you say? But I repeat, all we need to have something look big is to compare it with something very small. That's why a child feels so terrible when it loses a toy or when it stubs its toe. Oh, I know what it means to stub a toe. My, my, how I used to cry! Well, I wouldn't feel very good if I had stubbed my toe now, but I don't think I'd cry. What about you? Why? "Well," you say "you have grown up." Well, what is 'growing up'? I am afraid some folks haven't 'grown up' yet. And sometimes I wonder whether I've grown up when I see what I *do* cry over. I want to learn Paul's lesson of weighing every trial in the balances of eternity:

"...Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" 2 Corinthians 4:17.

Did you notice that expression 'worketh for us'? Suppose I should meet you next Monday and I say, "Who do you have working for you now?" "Well," you say, "I don't have anybody working for me. I'm working for the other fellow." "Oh, you don't have anybody working for you?" "No." Paul had something working for him. What was it? Affliction. Do you have any afflictions? Are they working for you? Well, why not get into Paul's experience and have them all on the payroll? What do you say? God will be the paymaster. But remember, the afflictions are doing what? They are *working*. Who for? For you, for us, afflictions working for us. Did they work for Job? Oh, yes. They'll work for us.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" 2 Corinthians 4:17.

I want you to look at that expression 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory'. There's something very interesting about that expression. Paul was so

overcome with the immensity of the reward that he had a hard time finding enough words to tell about it. This is the way Weymouth translates it:

“...Our light and transitory burden of suffering is achieving for us a preponderating, yes, a vastly preponderating, and eternal weight of glory” 2 Corinthians 4:17, Weymouth New Testament.

And another translation puts it:

“...a transcendently transcendent eonian [eternal] burden of glory” 2 Corinthians 4:17, Concordant Literal Version.

‘A transcendently transcendent.’ In other words, it is bigger and greater and more wonderful than human language can express. What is it? This glory that is being worked out for you and me in and through our afflictions. Now we’re not going to take time to study all the afflictions tonight. We’re pretty well acquainted with the ones we’re having. What kind of affliction are you having? Anybody sick? Well, that’s an affliction. Anybody having troubles with finances? That’s an affliction. Anybody having troubles with human beings, in the home, in the church, in the neighborhood, or a thousand miles away? That’s an affliction. That’s a hard one, isn’t it? Anybody having discouragement? That’s an affliction. Anybody having heavy temptations? That’s an affliction. But all these afflictions are working for us *if* we will let them, *if* we will learn the lessons of this chapter—that God commands the light to shine, where? Out of darkness. And the power that produces light and darkness is the Word. If we would turn away from our feelings, away from the afflictions, away from the troubles, and look to Jesus and His Word, we too can have light.

But remember, remember, we have this treasure where? In earthen vessels. Not in golden vessels. That’ll be up there. The purpose of the religion of Christ is not to make us all powerful and popular and pompous. It isn’t to make us wealthy with the riches of this world and proud with the success of this world. The purpose of Jesus is to break us that His light may shine through.

I ask again, are we willing to be broken? Hark! The call goes forth abroad, “Pitchers for the lamps of God!” Not the beauty of the make, but oh, the willingness to break, marks the vessels of the Lord, meet to bear His lighted work. Oh, that from each heart here tonight may ascend the prayer, “Lord, take me, break me, make me, use me in Thy service.” Oh, that our prayers may be less, “Lord, give me a higher paycheck so I can do more for you, and incidentally, feather my own nest softer.” “Lord, give me a greater position so I can have more influence for you, and incidentally have a lot more for myself.” “Lord, do this and that, that will make things better and easier for me, so that I can do more for you.” Let’s quit praying quite so many of that kind of prayers. What do you say, friends? Let’s pray this prayer, “Lord, I know I’m only an earthen vessel. I don’t ask for You to put a golden glaze on me so people will think how wonderful I am, but I put myself in Your hands, dear Lord, to be broken, that the light of Thy love may

appear. Whatever suffering or sacrifice is necessary, let it be, dear Lord, just so that the light of Your love may appear.”

Is there anybody here tonight, that as we read this wonderful chapter, your heart is impressed that here is something that God wants to do for you. Is there somebody here that says, “I need to be broken; I’ve been thinking too much about myself. I’ve been thinking too much of religion as a way to escape trouble.” And true religion *does* lead us to escape a lot of troubles, my friends. But oh, tonight, is there a heart that says, “I see that the great goal of life is not to keep out of trouble; it’s to get involved with Jesus in a broken heart that lets the light of His love shine.” And if there’s somebody here that says, “Yes, God has talked to my heart about this tonight, and my heart says, ‘Lord, whatever it costs, this is what I choose,’” I want you to stand right where you are, just as if you were the only one in the room. I long that Jesus shall have His way in human hearts tonight. [Congregation stands.]

[Elder Frazee begins singing and congregation joins him]:

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee so much for the privilege of entering in with Thee into the light of love, love that forgets all about ourselves and thinks of others, love that lives for others. Take these poor lives of ours, earthen vessels. Put Thy light within and then let our hearts be broken through whatever trials may be necessary, that the light of Thy love may shine. We thank Thee. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Copyright 2012. All rights reserved.

W.D. Frazee Sermons
PO Box 129, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org