

Affliction Worketh For Us

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Study Given by W. D. Frazee—February 26,

“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 4:17.

The thought that I would like to study with you is that little expression of four words lifted from the seventeenth verse, “affliction worketh for us.”

We go down the road here and we see some wealthy farmer. We say to him, How many men do you have working for you? Oh he says, I have a half dozen.

We go on to another one, How many do you have working for you? Oh I have eight or ten most of the time. Special times we have as many as fifteen or twenty working. Quite a crew that man has working for him, doesn't he?

Is anything working for you? Anybody working for you? Yes. Affliction is working for you. Maybe you didn't hire affliction. Maybe you would rather not have him on your payroll. He is on God's payroll. God has hired him to work for you.

“Affliction worketh for us” *Ibid.*

Of course, doubtless Paul's text, Paul's thought is not that affliction is on our payroll. He is talking about affliction working for us in the sense of doing something for our advantage isn't it? But that helps us to visualize it.

Yes, affliction is working for us.

To state it in another way, affliction is not working against us.

Usually we think it is that is why we brace ourselves to resist it, or go along way around to avoid meeting it in the road. But affliction is working for us. You remember that when the sons of Jacob came back to him after there trip down to Egypt to get corn

in time of famine, that he was put down in the depths of despondency as he heard their story. And especially as he heard relayed to him the demand of that ruler down in Egypt, that Benjamin be brought down.

He said to his sons, Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and now you are going to take Benjamin away from me, all these things are against me. Were they? No. Every one was working for him. And I think some of the greatest moments of ecstasy, of glad exaltation in the eternity that awaits us in the kingdom of God, will be when God turns the pages of the book of life, and opens to us the meaning of the afflictions that in His love He put on His payroll to work for us down here in this world.

I'm glad that is so. Aren't you?

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” *Ibid.*

Do I hear someone say, Paul it is alright for you to talk that way, but listen if you have had the trouble that I have had Paul, you might not say that.

And Paul may answer, But what trouble have you had? And you and I begin to recite some of our troubles. And Paul then begins to tell us some of his. You know, Paul really had some troubles didn't he? Yes he did. He was shipwrecked. He was put in prison many times. He was beaten with rods. He was stoned and left for dead.

Those are a few of the experiences that he had. He was lied about. He had a great many of the experiences that make people feel bad. Along with that, his health wasn't always the best. He had a thorn in the flesh. The messenger of Satan to buffet me, he called it. Paul loved to read. He was a student, a scholar. But his eyes were so affected as a result of that experience that came to him on the way to Damascus, that he had to have somebody else write his letters as he dictated.

Yes, Paul had many troubles and afflictions. But he learned this wonderful lesson, and he could say from his heart, affliction is working for us. Affliction is working for us.

“...a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” *Ibid.*

You know friends, many people are looking for a religion which gives them, to use the common expression, a lift. They want a lift from religion just like the lift they get from a cigarette or a bottle of Coca-cola. That is what they want.

That is why some people go to meeting, they want that kind of a lift. And the music in some places, is designed to help them get that lift. And the talking, and the gestures, and the exercises that go on, all designed to give people that lift. So they go out of the meeting, affected emotionally, and they are thrilled and perhaps excited for

the moment. But as in the case with the lift that comes with the cigarette of the Coca-cola, there is a corresponding depression.

Now friends, I want to be lifted, but I don't want that kind of a lift. I want to be lifted by the sweet presence of Jesus. And I want to learn what the meaning of these experiences of life is, don't you? I thank God for the word which is a source of true comfort.

“Our work must be accomplished with deep humiliation, fasting, and prayer. We must not expect all peace and joy”
Testimonies to the Church, Vol 5, page 134.

What?

“We must not expect all peace and joy. There will be sadness; but if we sow in tears we shall reap in joy. Darkness and despondency may at times enter the heart of the self-sacrificing ones; but this is not against them” *Ibid*.

What did Paul say? It is for us. And here the servant of the Lord says, it is not against us. There it is. Now what is it here that isn't against us? Darkness and despondency.

“Darkness and despondency may at times enter the heart of the self-sacrificing ones; but this is not against them. It may be God’s design to cause them to seek Him more earnestly”
Ibid.

Ah! There is one of the sweet and precious results that come from affliction. When in affliction, if we know the Lord at all, we are going to do what? Seek Him. We are going to cry out. And that is His purpose. And when God sees that we might be in danger of being weaned away from Him, drawn away, diverted by this or that, in His love and mercy He allows some affliction to come. What for? Oh to lead us to seek Him! To cry to Him!

You know a little child out at play may get so interested in that play, that mother is all forgotten for the moment. But let some bee sting the child, or let the little one stub its toe, and what is the first thought? Momma! Momma! Momma!

Is that all right? Why sure, that is the way to have it. And thank God friends, when you and I get stung by the bees, or stub our toes, when and can run and cry to our Father in heaven. Can’t we? And thus the affliction can be a great blessing in drawing us close to our Lord. Truly, our affliction worketh for us.

Now there is another great blessing that affliction brings us. It is preparing us for the scenes ahead.

“Self-denial and the cross are our portion. Will we accept it? None of us need to expect that when the last great trials come upon us a self-sacrificing, patriotic spirit will be developed in a moment because needed. No, indeed, this spirit must be blended with our daily experience, and infused into the minds and hearts of our children, both by precept and example” *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 5, page 135.

That is it! Dear children God wants you to bear you little trials, you afflictions, bravely. He wants you to learn that He has help for you in every trial, every sorrow, every disappointment. And as you learn that now with the trials and disappointments that come to you, God is preparing you for the larger trials, the greater disappointments that are ahead.

You remember that when Joseph was only seventeen years old, he was snatched away violently, all of a sudden, from his father's home and love, and sold as a slave. And for years he heard nothing of anybody who loved him. For years he was in bondage down there in Egypt. What sustained him? Ah my friends, he had learned when just a boy that God answers prayer, and that even trials and afflictions are used in God's providence to develop character.

We think of Daniel, eighteen years old when he was captured by Nebuchadnezzar's army, and carried down there to Babylon with others of the Jewish boys. There he was a slave in a foreign land, a captive. He couldn't come and go as he pleased. He couldn't go back to Jerusalem. There he was. Ah was he true? Yes. Did he meet trials and difficulties? Yes. Yes. Why? Because when a boy, he had learned to trust God.

And so dear children, God is calling you now to learn these precious lessons, that every affliction, every trial, every disappointment, every time when you want something and don't get it, and get something you don't want, every one of those is a lesson in God's lesson book. And as you learn to turn every one of those trials into prayer, as you learn to make every one of them a time when you ask God to show you what he wants you to learn from that, you are becoming more and more a student in His school.

And we older ones, shall we learn that same lesson?

"Our affliction worketh for us" *Ibid.*

And oh if it teaches us these sweet lessons is it not indeed working for us my friends? Yes. Yes. It is like a pedagogue, the ancient Greek slave that took the children from home and led them to school, so every trial can be a pedagogue to guide our feet from where we are closer to our blessed Lord.

"Our affliction worketh for us" *Ibid.*

You know that text that we like to quote so much in Romans 8:28 says the same thing.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" Romans 8:28.

All things do what? They work. They work together. A great team, a cooperative group working together for what? For good.

Who for? For you and me if we love our Father in heaven. And we do love Him don't we friends? In spite of our weakness and infirmities our very weakness leads us to

rely more and more upon Him. And so how much is working for us? All things are working for us.

“All our sufferings and sorrows, all our temptations and trials, all our sadness and griefs, all our persecutions and privations, in short, all things work together for our good. All experiences and circumstances are God’s workmen whereby good is brought to us”
Ministry of Healing, page 489.

Suppose that some day a car drives up here and five men step out with carpenters overhauls on, and tools in their hands. One man has a saw, another has a hammer, and another has other tools, and we say, well what does this mean? And the leader of the group says, why Mr. So and So down in Chattanooga, he sent us out to work for you folks all this week. He is going to pay our wages.

Could we use them friends? Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have somebody pay a group of workmen to come out and help us with our construction work in that way. Well listen, God has put some things on His payroll to work for us. They are His workmen, they are working for us. What are they?

“All experiences and circumstances are God’s workmen whereby good is brought to us” *Ibid*.

Say, aren’t you glad for that? And friends, I’m so glad we can believe it by faith. In fact, sometimes that is the only way we can believe it is by faith. And God purposely arranges it that way so that the faith part of our brain can function, instead of the part that has to do with the optic nerve.

He wants us to develop every part of our brain. And if every time we were happy it was just because of something we saw or heard, they are brain cells in our head that never would get used. Isn’t that right? But oh, when things look against us, when it seems that trials and afflictions have no meaning except to break out hearts, then for us to say affliction is working for us, ah that is faith. In fact, back to our text, we shall see how, Paul says, we know this, and when it is true.

“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.

Oh. Where is it that we are to look in order for this experience to be so? Look at the things we can't see.

Well, why in the world would a man look at something he couldn't see? And why would he quit looking at the things he can see? Simply because God says so my friend.

But let me tell you, Satan will endeavor to so fill our minds with the things we see, that we will not have time nor brain energy to look at the things we can't see. I thank God that we can deliberately turn our eyes from some things around us, and close our ears to some things that would seek to press in on our attention, and open the soul windows heavenward, and look by faith at Jesus before the mercy seat.

When these things, the afflictions and trials of earth that drive people to despair and break their hearts, begin to pass, Jesus says, do what? Then look up for your redemption draweth nigh.

I'm glad that we can all look up tonight. Aren't you friends? I am so glad for that.

Now here is another precious lesson from affliction.

“Many ask the Lord to humble them, but are unwilling to submit to the needful discipline. When the test comes, when trials or even annoyances occur, the heart rebels, and the tongue utters words that are like poisoned arrows or blasting hail” *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 5, page 176.

Did you ever see it happen? Did you ever hear the hail on the rood? Coming from a tongue, the tongue of a man or a woman that had prayed for God to get them ready for heaven, and God sent some trials and afflictions to help accomplish the work, and they turn loose with that hail.

That wasn't God's intention, was it? So if we pray for God to humble us, and convert us, and get us ready for the latter rain, and the loud cry, and the time of trouble, and translation, we must expect that God in His mercy and love will send some what? Trials and afflictions.

He will do it. Now He won't do it capriciously. He won't do it willingly in the sense that He delights to do it. No. He is like a good surgeon, He operates only when it is absolutely necessary. But He loves us enough that He will send the affliction that we need.

And when we pray for God to do things for us, and then the trials and afflictions come, let's remember they are all carpenters on the payroll of heaven, and they are working for us. For us. Even though the people that bring the trials may not understand it all. They may not understand it at all.

Those that came out there to get Jesus at midnight, that smote Him, and bound Him, and took Him in, and beat Him, and spit upon Him, they certainly friends, had no good motives. And what they were doing brought no good to them, but oh, it was permitted by a loving Father in heaven for the good of God's children. And that is why Jesus said to those that sought to defend Him, and keep Him from those things, "The cup that My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

He was ready to accept trial and affliction, because He knew that His Father would allow only that which was good for Him. And certainly we can accept that same source of comfort. Can't we friends? Oh yes. I know we can.

There is another reason that God sends trial and affliction, that is friends, to help us to quit looking to ourselves in any way. You know one of the hardest lessons man has to learn is how weak he is. How utterly undependable, inefficient, unrighteous, and unworthy, and affliction draws us down to our knees, down on our faces in the dust sometimes in humiliation. It is hard, bitter medicine, but it may be the very thing friends, the only thing, that can help us to turn loose of self.

"Those who look within for comfort will become weary and disappointed. A sense of our weakness and unworthiness should lead us with humility of heart to plead the atoning sacrifice of Christ. As we rely upon His merits we shall find rest and peace and joy" *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol 5, page 200.

How do we get rest and peace and joy? Relying on His merits. Turning the eye away from the troubles around us, and the burdens and depression within us, and looking where? Oh, look where the light is, look where Jesus is. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Oh I am so glad friends we can recognize the goodness of God in all these things. Aren't you.

I want to share a little poem with you that was written three-hundred years ago.

Cometh sunshine after rain, after morning joy again, after

heavy bitter grief, dawn as surely sweet relief, and my soul
from her height sank to realms of woe and night, wingeth
now to heaven her flight, none was ever left a prey, none
was ever turned away, who had given himself to God, and
on Him had cast his load. Who in God his hope hath placed,
shall not life and pain out waste, fullest joy he yet shall taste,
though today may not fulfill all thy hopes, have patience still,
for per chance tomorrow's sun sees thy happier days begun,
as God willeth march the hours, bringing joy at last in
showers, when what ere we ask is ours, every sorrow, every
smark, that the eternal Father's heart hath appointed me of
your, or hath yet for me in store, as my life flows on I'll take,
calmly, gladly, for His sake, nor more faithless murmurs
make.

Thank the Lord friends! Thank the Lord we can have that precious experience of
confidence and courage.

"For our light affliction, which is but 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" *Ibid*.

Years ago, during the middle ages, when the hand of persecution was resting
heavily upon the church, in a certain prison over there in France a Christian woman was
confined. And for long years she spent her life there behind bars. A witness to Christ.
She couldn't get out. There she was in that jail cell.

And she wrote a little poem. I want to share that with you. I want you to see what
affliction taught her.

You know and I are headed for prison cells or something worse, aren't we? If we
keep going on the road with Jesus, we get into these studies that we are going to have
on closing events, we will see the future lighted up vividly with the prophetic search
light. Oh friends it is going to be wonderful to have learned with our light afflictions, the
lessons that will carry us through the larger and harder afflictions.

Now listen to this lines written by one who spent many weary years in the prison
just because she was true to Jesus and the Bible.

A little bird I am shut from the fields of air,
And in my ledge I sit and sing,
to Him who placed me there.
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
because my God it pleases Thee.

Not have I else to do,
I sing the whole day long,
and He whom most I love to please,
doth listen to my song.
He caught bound my wandering wings,
but still He bends to here me sing.
My cage confines me round,
abroad I cannot fly.
But though my wing is closely bound,
my heart is at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control,
the flight, the freedom of the soul.
Oh it is good to soar these bolts and bars above,
to Him whose purpose I adore, whose providence I love.
And in that mighty will to find,
the joy and freedom of the mind.

I thank God for that testimony. Don't you? Ringing down from the church in the wilderness.

Oh tonight friends, let our hearts go out in glad thanksgiving that every trial and affliction is doing what? Working for us -

“... a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that 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” *Ibid.*

Do you remember in that dream that Sister White had of traveling the narrow way, that as they left the wagons, and then went on horses, and then had to leave the horses and go on foot. Finally they had to take off shoes and stockings and go barefoot in order to cling to the narrow pathway, that they noticed what? They noticed blood.

And at first, she said, it made her feel bad to see that blood upon the trail, but then at second thought, she saw that it was all for good, because she said, she recognized that that would encourage others who were now walking the trail with bleeding feet to see that some had gone on before them.

And so dear friends, every trial we go through, every affliction we survive, every distress in which we call upon the Lord and He hears us, should give us increased courage for others. And we should let them know that we have no other thought than pressing right on ahead in the blooded stained path.

Now our Father dismiss us with Thy blessing. And keep warm upon the altar of our hearts the celestial fire. May love,

and faith, and courage glow in our souls, be reflected in our faces, and echo in our words of courage, in our songs of praise. May we cheer our fellow pilgrims, and as afflictions come may we remember that they are working for us, and accept each discipline as permitted by the loving Father's heart. Bless us now in a special way during these holy hours, for Christ sake, Amen.

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