

9 January 2023

For our light affliction, is but for a moment

Philippians 1:29: For those of you who are in Christ this morning, God has GIVEN or GRANTED (2) things to you...Salvation and Suffering!

God graciously saved you from your sins + (4), but that's not all, you've also been "graciously granted" THE PRIVILEGE of suffering for His sake!

None of us like suffering, and our text this morning is not teaching us to like or desire sufferings or afflictions, but rather, to know and believe that they are appointed for you by your Father and God...designed for your good and sanctification, and not for your hurt or ruin.

"It is GIVEN UNTO YOU (by Christ) to suffer for His sake"

THIS TRUTH should change the way you view your sufferings and trials, SO THAT when they do come...and WHEN YOU ARE hit with unexpected sidewinds, WHEN afflictions and the tempests run upon you and overwhelm you, YOU will WRONGLY THINK that something must be terribly wrong!

Beloved, God designed your afflictions and sufferings for you, to discover HIS FAITH IN YOU, TO YOU, but also to activate that FAITH in you toward Him...to conform you to His image! Philippians 3:10

We cannot think ourselves to be lovers and followers of Christ and children of His Kingdom... BUT then strangers to His sufferings!

Matthew 5:10-12, 10:24-25, Luke 9:23, 14:27

Paul knew what it was like to be shipwrecked in a tempest on the sea, but he also knew what it was like to be overwhelmed in trials, tempests, and persecutions in His life because he was a disciple of Christ...

His faith was tested in every facet of life, and so will yours be...

What helped him rise above all that he suffered... was his focus, WHERE he was looking! O he had his moments of weakness (like we do), when he was overwhelmed and his faith was weak; but God helped him look above his afflictions and sufferings; "he set his affections on things above, not on things on this earth": That is HOW he could write: 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

It all comes down to this, WHERE are you looking and HOW you are thinking... instead of "all these things are against me", (do you remember who said that?) ...we ought to be thinking that "it is God who is working in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure"

"For our light affliction":

Understand that Paul is NOT dismissing the fact that our afflictions and trials will OFTEN be very difficult, overwhelming, and hard to bear... Paul knew what it was like to be in dire straits.

1 Corinthians 4:9-13, 2 Corinthians 2:12-13, 4:8-12, 11:23-29

Paul was not writing that we ought to just ignore our trials and behave as if they are not happening, treat them like they're easy... NO! None of us would call Paul's afflictions "light", but he could write that his sufferings and afflictions were light because he believed what he wrote in Philippians 1:29... he knew that they would soon end, "they are momentary", and that they would give way to eternal life
.....James 4:14

Therefore...Paul did not allow his temporary earthly sufferings to take his heart, his mind, and his eyes off Christ, and the eternal prize that awaited him in heaven!

Beloved if we would see/experience our sufferings like Paul, we must set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth... But you won't be able to do that is your head is nailed to the earth, like Sisera's!

As bad as your afflictions and sufferings may be... remember that that they are GIVEN to you, DESIGNED for you... they are NOT eternal, but momentary, and therefore not worthy to be compared with what awaits you in heaven! Romans 8:18-23, 2 Corinthians 5:1-4

Thomas Watson wrote: "Our afflictions and sufferings may be lasting, but they're not everlasting"

When we can EMBRACE and LIVE this truth by faith, when we believe that God doesn't intend our ruin but our good... ONLY THEN will we be able to look upon our afflictions and all that we suffer, AS LIGHT AFFLICTIONS, which are temporary and but for a moment.

And then: Your sufferings and afflictions are designed by God to WORK FOR YOU...they have a sanctifying influence in your life!

Your afflictions give you aid, they help you look up and away from this world to UNSEEN and ETERNAL things! Psalms 119:67, 71, Hebrews 12:11

When you BELIEVE your sufferings to be sent from God for your good, and that God is using them to nurture and wean you from this earthly life... ONLY THEN you will be able to say with Paul, my afflictions are WORKING FOR ME "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"!

We can't even process how indescribably glorious and permanent heaven will be, but if we believe it to be so, as we are promised in the Word...every earthly suffering and affliction will be looked upon as light!

Remember beloved of God, our afflictions are working for us, God is using them to conform us to the image of Christ, and to wean us from the world.

Through our sufferings we will more clearly SEE the "exceeding eternal weight of glory" which awaits us. 1 Peter 4:12-16, 5:10-12

When affliction comes, know that it was sent by God for your good and for your sanctification!

We are taught here that our Christian lives are only "a moment" to encourage us to a far greater perspective, and to the glorious eternity that awaits us...THIS should be the focus of our faith while we are our moment of time. 2

Corinthians 4:18:

Don't LOOK/FOCUS on your sufferings, your afflictions, and trials as if THIS IS THE WORST that things could be, but know that your troubles are WORKING FOR YOU, WEANING YOU from this world and fashioning you for heaven! Acts 14:21-Romans 5:1-5

What awaits you in heaven FAR outweighs the afflictions of this life!

1 Peter 1:3-9