

OUR LIGHT AFFLICTIONS

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-17 • TV-230B

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2 Corinthians 4:16-17

“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.”

We have a very significant and I believe an important message for you today. I am saying that this message is important and significant, especially, in the light of what we are hearing from most pulpits and especially, TV programs.

I make it my business to listen to other preachers, and I hear things like this all the time: “God wants you to be prosperous. It is God’s will for you if you are a believer to be prosperous.”

I hear another one come along and say, “God wants you to be healthy. God wants you to have a lot of money. He wants you to pay all your bills; drive two or three cars, live in a mansion, have a swimming pool and He wants you to be in perfect health; that is what God wants. That is the will of God for every one of His children.” This is what I hear men say.

I hear them saying, “All sickness, all sorrow, and all afflictions are of the devil.” This is what they are saying.

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Some poor, afflicted, sick child of God is out there listening to that preacher. The preacher also says, “If you are not healthy and if you are not wealthy like I am it is because you don’t have faith. If you had faith like I have and charisma like I have and you could hood-wink people and con people like I can, then you would be wealthy.”

He got wealthy by you sending him what you have. That is the reason that you are not wealthy, you sent it to him. That is the reason he is wealthy.

Then, I hear them say this on the subject of healings and the atonement; “All Christians ought to be well.” Let me tell you something (and you hear me well); this is contrary to experience and it is contrary to the Word of God.

This thing of God wanting you to be prosperous and God wanting you to be wealthy, healthy, and God wanting you to have the best of everything; there is not a word of truth in that at all. They will also say that all sicknesses are of the devil, and all afflictions and sorrows are of the devil.

It is contrary to experience and it is contrary to the Word of God. Some of the Lord’s choicest people have been very poor. You can go back through the years, and go back through many, past years of religious history and you will find some of God’s choice people have been poor people.

I have friends right now in Spain and Mexico, and India in Canada; they are not prosperous people or wealthy people; they are very poor people. They are people who are rich in grace and rich in faith. They know Christ and love Christ. Many of His people have been poor. Many of them have been persecuted.

John Bunyan spent 12 years in prison. Many of God’s people have been martyred. Read the **11th and 12th chapter of Hebrews**. Read how they lived in caves and how that they were persecuted, martyred, and slain. Some were sent to prison for their faith.

Through tribulation, many of God’s people have been greatly afflicted. Beginning with Job and through the New Testament, there were people who were greatly afflicted. Some of the greatest preachers of the past have been greatly afflicted as far as bodily health is concerned.

Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers that England ever heard, spent about 30 of his 58 years very sick. He was out of his pulpit sometimes for months at a time.

This thing, in which God wants you to be prosperous, wealthy and healthy, along with healings of the atonement, is not true. They say that if you don’t have perfect health and you don’t have prosperity, it is because you don’t have any faith, and that is not true.

It is not according to experience and not according to the Word of God. Listen to the Scripture, Christ said, *“In this world you shall have tribulation. They that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*

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David said in **Psalm 119:71**; *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes.”*

The Apostle Paul said, *“I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. I have learned that in whatsoever state I am to be content.”*

Listen to **James**; *“My brethren, count it joy when you go through trials. The trying of your faith worketh patience.”*

Listen to the Apostle Paul in **2nd Corinthians 4:7** as he talks about the ministry that God had given him. He talks about the faith that God had given him and this relationship with Christ that God had given him. He says, *“We have this treasure, (this treasure of grace, this knowledge of God, this relationship with God) we have it in an earthen vessel.”*

This is an earthen vessel, not a glorified body. This is a temporary tabernacle, a temporary tent that someday is going to fall down. My body is subject to disease just like anyone else’s body. My body is subject to infirmities and afflictions just like anyone else.

I don’t have a magic hedge about me to prevent disease. I have the mercy of God, the blessings and the will of God. It may be God’s will for me to suffer so that I can sympathize with someone else who is suffering. You can weep with those that weep only if you have wept.

Paul said, *“We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.”* Paul said, *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We’re perplexed but we are not in despair. We are persecuted but we are not forsaken. We are cast down but we are not destroyed. For this cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”*

I will tell you this; as you get a little older, the afflictions begin to mount. The infirmities begin to mount. You might notice that I wear a hearing aid because most of my hearing is gone. I wear glasses because my eyes are very dim. I’m getting close to 60 years of age. I’m getting close to the time when this tabernacle is going to fall. This tent is going to fall down and I am going to have these infirmities.

I don’t expect in the flesh to have perfect health and yet, *“though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day.”*

Watch this line here, *“for our light affliction which is but for a moment, (whatever those afflictions are), worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”*

My friends, *“our light afflictions,”* which I’m sure you bristled at a little bit when I read that; (I wouldn’t blame you). Some of you are going through heavy trials; I know that you are. When I read that, *“our light afflictions is but for a moment;”* I imagine that some of you bristled a little bit and said, “What do you mean light?”

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This trial is heavy and this burden is heavy. It does seem heavy. Some of you have physical distress. Some of you have been sick a long time. Some of you have heart problems, some of you have cancer. I'm not saying that if you don't have faith, therefore, you are not healed.

I'm not saying that if you had faith you would be well; I am saying this, "*God's grace is sufficient.*" The Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh and God gave him the grace. He did not remove the thorn, but He gave him the grace which was efficient for his need.

God does heal. Sometimes it is the will of God to make men well and sometimes it is not the will of God. Some of you have physical distress and some of you have been to the cemetery a time or two and buried loved ones.

I know that some of you are very lonely. You know what it is to live alone, eat alone, sleep alone, or to sit alone. The loneliness sometimes is so heavy that you can cut it with a knife.

Some of you have children who have broken your hearts, just broken your heart. Some of you are crippled and lame. Some of you are growing old and you are getting feeble. The hymn writer put it this way:

**"Swift to its close
Ebbs out life's little day
Its joys grow dim
Its glories fade away (and they will).**

**Change and decay
In all around I see
O Thou that changest not
Abide with me."**

That is what I need; I don't need perfect health; I need the perfect presence of Christ. I don't need prosperity; I need the person and presence of Christ. That is what I need above all things.

Paul comes along with this light afflictions; "*our light affliction is but for the moment.*" What does he mean by that? Does Paul call our afflictions "*light afflictions*" because he was without feeling? Oh no, Paul wept with those that wept and rejoiced with those that rejoiced.

Paul was a man of deep feeling. He said on one occasion; "*I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren according to the flesh. My hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.*"

Was he frivolous or careless? Oh no! Maybe it was because Paul didn't really have any afflictions. I will tell you this; Paul graduated from the school of affliction. If you want to read about Paul's afflictions, you jot this down. You need to read **2nd Corinthians 11: 24 through 28.**

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You will read about the afflictions of Paul. He was a man who could write the word AFFLICTION in capital letters.

Listen to what he said; *“I am troubled on every side but I am not distressed.”* He said, *“I am perplexed but I am not in despair. I’m persecuted but I am not forsaken. I am cast down but I am not destroyed.”*

Then he says, *“Though this outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”* For our light afflictions *“which are but for a moment”* are nothing.

How can he say that? Paul learned to look upon afflictions in the right frame of mind. That is what I want to try to help you with and help myself with today. Paul looked on afflictions with the right frame of mind and with the proper attitude, knowing that God our Father is the first cause of all things.

When Satan came to persecute and try Job, he had to get permission from God. God is the first cause of all things. He has to be first cause or He is not God (if there is any power greater than God’s power).

If there is any force that can turn God or influence God then that is the force that we need to worship. God is the first cause of all things. *“In Him we live and move and have our being. God created all things and all things exist in Him.”* He is the first cause of all things.

All of these things good and bad work together for His glory and for our good. That is what He said in **Romans 8:28**; *“We know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”*

Let me tell you something, (I want you to listen to me); it is not true by experience or the Word of God, that it is the will of God for everyone of His children to be prosperous; this is just not so.

It is not true according to experience and the Word of God that He has willed all of His people to be in perfect health without any affliction, infirmity, trial, or sorrow. These afflictions are God-ordained. Infirmities are God-ordained if you are a child of God. They work for God’s glory and for your good.

I am going to give you five or six things that may help you in regard to these infirmities and these afflictions and to adopt the right spirit, attitude, and the right frame of mind toward them.

Paul had them. He had the right frame of mind toward them. He said, *“These light afflictions are but for a moment and they work in us and for us a far more exceeding weight of eternal glory.”* They are not worthy to be compared with the love, grace, and mercy of God.

So, let’s take our afflictions, whatever they are, heartache, bodily infirmity, poverty, disappointment, loneliness, sorrow, or the death of a loved one. Let’s take these afflictions and let’s look at them a little bit. Let’s look at them straight and truthfully from the Word of God:

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First of all: My afflictions, whatever they are, are light compared to what I deserve. Do you see what I am saying? Whatever God brings to past in my life, however severe it is or how difficult it is, it is light compared to what I deserve.

We need to get straightened out in our thinking here. Some of us think that we deserve something from God's hand. We don't deserve anything except the wages of sin and that is death.

It says here, in **Psalm 103:8**; *"The Lord is merciful and gracious. The Lord is slow to anger. He is plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever. God hath not dealt with us after our sins. God hath not rewarded us according to our iniquities."*

No he hasn't! God hasn't dealt with me according to my sin. God has not awarded me according to my iniquities. He has dealt with me in grace and He has rewarded me in mercy from the bountiful hand of a merciful God in Christ Jesus.

Whatever I am called upon to suffer in this life, it is the mercy of God compared to what I deserve. I could be in hell. That is exactly right; I could be crying now with the rich man in hell; *"Father Abraham, send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and touch my tongue; I am tormented in this flame."*

Go back to the Garden of Eden. I was in Adam when he fell, and so were you. Go back to Judea; we were with that multitude when they cried, *"crucify Him; we will not have this man to rule over us."*

We were with that crowd that danced around the cross and spit upon the Son of God and laughed while He died. I will tell you this; we could be in reprobation like Judas, Pharaoh, and a few others. We could be in heathen darkness; that is exactly right!

So, anything this side of hell is mercy. *"God has not dealt with us according to our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."* God has dealt with us in mercy, so whatever I have is more than I deserve, a whole lot more, whatever I have.

Secondly: Get a hold of this thing. I will get a hold of the right attitude toward affliction or infirmity if I consider it in the light of God's Word. My affliction is light compared to many others who live right now on this earth or have lived on this earth.

Read **Hebrews 11** and see how those people suffered and how they were persecuted for preaching and believing the Gospel. We have never resisted unto blood; we are not in prison for our faith. We haven't shed blood for our faith.

I read the story of John Bunyan who wrote Pilgrims Progress. He was put in jail for preaching the Gospel. You might say, "Didn't God know that he was down there in jail?" I'm sure that He knew. Do you mean that God permitted him to remain in jail for 12 years?

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He had a little blind daughter. He had several children. He had this little blind daughter and she loved her daddy so much. They would bring her up to jail to visit her father. She would beg him to come home. She would say, "Father; come home."

All he had to do to go home was to tell them that he wouldn't preach this Gospel anymore. You see; they had a state church. It was a church of the establishment and you had to preach what the state church agreed upon. You had to preach their theology of the state church or you couldn't preach.

John Bunyan was preaching the Gospel of God's grace and they had him thrown in jail. He could go home anytime he quit preaching but he wouldn't quit. He was called to preach the Gospel. His little girl begged him to go home. I've never spent 12 years in prison.

Most of us can see, we can hear, and we can speak. I read a poem one time when a fellow said, "I complained that I had no gloves until I met a man who had no hands. I complained that I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet."

I will tell you this; when so many have so much less than we do, we ought to give thanks to God for everything that we have, even our afflictions and our infirmities. Even they work for our good and for God's glory.

You see; infirmities and afflictions work patience; they cause me to grow in patience, grow in grace, and grow in the knowledge of our Saviour.

So, my afflictions are light compared with many others. I have never suffered like some men have suffered. You have never suffered like some women have suffered. There are people all around you that have so many more afflictions than you do and here we are complaining about our light afflictions.

Thirdly: My afflictions are light compared to what my Lord suffered for me in bearing my sins. Listen to **Hebrews 12: 3 and 4**; "*Consider the Lord Jesus Christ who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, consider Him lest you be weary and faint in your minds. You have not resisted to blood.*"

I want you to read **Isaiah 53**; our Lord was despised and rejected, "*a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him and with his stripes we are healed.*"

You can see Him in hand-to-hand combat with Satan. You can see our Lord Jesus Christ "*tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.*" You can see Him in the Garden agonizing under the weight of our transgressions.

You can see Him in Pilate's Hall, beaten and mocked by soldiers. You can see Him hanging on that cross and hear Him cry in **Lamentations 1:12**; "*Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by, and*

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behold my sorrow; is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith, the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger?" I've never suffered like that.

When my son was killed in Vietnam, I read something that helped me a great deal. Another man had lost a son and some mocker came up to him and said, "Well; where was your God when your boy died? Where was your God when your son died?"

He replied, "Right where He was when his Son died, on the throne." That is what I am telling you. Your afflictions and my afflictions are light according to the afflictions that our Lord bore in our place and in our stead on that cross of Calvary.

Yes, He suffered. Why shouldn't I suffer?

**"Must I be carried to the skies?
On flowery beds of ease
While others fought to win that prize
And literally sail through bloody seas?"**

Shall I shy away from bearing my share of affliction for Christ's sake; refuse to bear in my body the marks and the dying of Jesus Christ?

God have mercy on this generation that wants everything on a silver platter. They are not willing to give, not willing to suffer, not willing to bear any reproach or shame for the glory of Jesus Christ when He bore so much for us. Oh, my afflictions are so light compared to what He suffered for my sins.

Fourthly: My afflictions are light compared to the blessings I now enjoy, yes sir, which I right now enjoy. In **1st John 3:2**, the Scripture says; "*Beloved, now are we sons of God.*"

I will tell you this; being a son of God is the greatest blessing that God can give a man. I don't care if he has tuberculosis, whether he has cancer, heart trouble, whether he has a wayward boy or whether he is an old man with two years to live.

If he is a child of the King, God has crowned him. God Almighty has blessed him. God Almighty has given him benefits and mercies, which are not even given to the fallen angels. He has given him the gift of His love.

What more do we want? "*Now are we sons of God. Therefore, being justified by faith; (right now), we have peace with God. Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? If you received it, why do you boast as if you didn't? Rejoice that your names are in the Book of Life.*"

Rejoice that even your trials works together for your good. Even my trials are being worked out by God for my good.

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Did you ever sing that old hymn, “Count Your Many Blessings?”

**“Count Your Many Blessings
Name them one by one
It will surprise you
What the Lord hath done.”**

No, I will tell you what we do; we look at what’s wrong. There are 40 things right and one thing wrong and we stay on the one thing that is wrong. There are 40 things good and one thing bad and we stay on the thing that is bad. That is such a bad trait; that is such a bad characteristic. Give God the glory for what you have.

These infirmities just go with the flesh. You wake up in the morning with a headache. People all over the world have headaches, why shouldn’t you? You wake up in the morning with a backache; people all over the world have backaches, why shouldn’t you have one?

You have all the blessings of God. In Christ you have “*wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*” We have so much to rejoice in.

Why do we complain and find fault with God’s good providence? I will tell you this; let us rejoice in the Lord.

God hates murmuring. God’s judgment fell on the children of Israel in the land of the wilderness, more for murmuring than for anything else. They complained about the manna and they complained about how long the journey was.

They complained about all of these things. They even complained about Moses. God let their carcasses die and dry up in the wilderness. They never entered the Promised Land.

I will tell you this; God’s good providence by His grace has brought me safe thus far and His grace will lead me home. Let us give thanks. Paul said, “*rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice.*”

Fifthly, now watch this; my afflictions are light compared to what I shall enjoy when God calls me home.

Do you know what I have? “*I have an inheritance that is reserved in heaven, undefiled, that fadeth not away,*” that is awaiting my coming. That’s right! Paul says in **Romans 8:16**; “*The spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God. If we are children of God then we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.*”

Watch this; “*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.*” Brethren; “*I am looking for a city whose builder and maker is God.*”

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I am looking for a new body. This body is going to decay, rot, and fall apart; I expect it too. I may have 12 or 13 more years. I am nearly 60 years old. Some of you are older than that. I don't expect to live here always; this body is going back to the dust from where it came.

I am going to have a new body. *"This mortal is going to put on immortality. This corruption is going to put on incorruption."* This weakness is going to put on strength.

This shame is going to put on glory at the coming of the Lord. I am looking for a city. I am looking for a new body. I am looking for eternal glory. John wrote in Revelation; *"God is going to wipe away all tears from their eyes and there shall be no more death, no more sorrow and no more crying."* Neither shall there be anymore pain. There is going to be pain as long as we are here. There is going to be sorrow as long as we are here. There is going to be sickness as long as we are here. That's right; you are not immune.

One of these days all of these things are going to be taken away. He said, *"Write; behold; I make all things new. Write, these sayings are true and faithful."*

Yes sir; my afflictions, my light afflictions, are light compared to what I deserve; yes they are. They are light compared to what I have. God has blessed me. His blessings are indescribable and innumerable.

David said, *"When I think about your blessings and benefits, they are innumerable; they are more than I can number."*

My afflictions are nothing when they are compared to what our Lord suffered in my place.

When I look at folks around me who suffer much more than I do; I am ashamed when I complain; aren't you? I am just ashamed. I have so much. One of these days, in Christ, we are going to have everything.

When our Lord returns and we are raised from the grave, we are going to be made into His likeness and it will be a new day!