

Our Light and Momentary Troubles

by Anne Dutton

God's special love ordained our affliction to display His boundless love to us and to prepare us for glory.

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Isaiah 43:2, Romans 5:3, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 12:9, 1 Peter 1:6

Topics: "Suffering And Glory", "Faith And Trials"

Description

Anne Dutton preaches about the purpose and significance of enduring afflictions as a believer, emphasizing that God's special love ordains trials for His children to conform them to Christ in sufferings and prepare them for glory. She encourages believers to view afflictions as light compared to what Christ endured, to remember the shortness of trials in light of eternity, and to recognize the ultimate advantage of afflictions in working towards eternal glory. Dutton reminds believers to live by faith, rejoice in tribulation, and trust in God's sustaining presence and delivering kindness through every trial.

Transcript

Dear Sister,

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

It is the pleasure of our dear Father to exercise you in a very particular manner, and to continue it long upon you. But be not cast down thereat, as if some strange thing had happened, for as many as the Lord loves He rebukes and chastens. But it may be you will say, "My affliction is very uncommon, has lasted a great while, and it is likely to endure so long as I am in this world."

Well, be it so. Yet remember that God's special love to you ordained this particular trial, and His everlasting kindness keeps it still upon you. This was the means Infinite Wisdom pitched on for the display of boundless love to you. By this you are to be made conformable to Christ in sufferings and fitted for a conformity to Him in glory. Since free grace has saved you--give it leave to carry on your salvation in its own way. What though you pass through much tribulation, the Kingdom is at the end. I doubt not but the Lord at times has opened much of His love to your soul in the present afflictions, but the brightest discoveries are ahead. The great opening of God's heart, in the gift of every trial, is reserved for us until we get over Jordan, on the other side of death, into the land of promise. Then we shall remember all the way the Lord led us through the wilderness, and see it was the right way to the city of God.

Then the mysteries of Divine Providence shall be unfolded, the cloud taken off every dark dispensation, and the veil from our understandings. There the secret springs of boundless love, infinite wisdom, and Almighty power which ordained, managed, and overruled every scene of providence, for the glory of God and our advantage, shall be laid open, for we shall see as we are seen. We shall bless God when we come to heaven for every trial, even the bitterest, sharpest, longest affliction that attended our mortal life; because we shall see how the Lord uninterruptedly carried on the designs of His own glory and our salvation by every change that passed over us.

Meanwhile, we must live by faith, and labor after an increasing submission to the Divine Will under the sorest rebukes; and bless God for every stroke, until grace is swallowed up in glory, when our wills, with the highest complacency, shall everlastingly flow into the will of God. And even now we have reason not only to be patient, but also to rejoice and glory in tribulation. And were the eye of our faith, strong enough to pierce the cloud of afflictive providences, and discern the love of our Father's heart, which, as an infinite deep, couches beneath, and is the spring of every dispensation, we would sing in sorrow, take pleasure in distresses, and glorify God in the fires!

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." (2 Cor. 4:17) There are three things comprised in these words, which I desire you may be enabled frequently to meditate upon.

First, the lightness of the saints' affliction.

Secondly, the shortness of it.

Thirdly, the advantage of all their present trials.

First, the lightness of the saints' affliction. "Our light affliction." It is not said the afflictions of the world are light; but OUR affliction is light. And it is so, if compared with what we have deserved, and the damned in hell endure. Light, if compared with what Christ once bore, when for us he was the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Light, because by virtue of Christ's suffering for us in our room and stead, the curse is taken out of all our afflictions. Again, they are light, because Omnipotent strength is engaged to support us under them; underneath are the everlasting arms.

We have not, are not, shall not be left to go through any trial alone. The God of Jacob is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The Lord Jesus is our sweet companion in tribulation. He is with us, to sympathize with us in our sorrows, to sustain us under our burdens, to pardon all our unbelief and impatience when in the furnace, and at last completely and gloriously to deliver us and bring us forth as gold seven times refined.

No affliction, indeed, for the present is joyous, but grievous to our frail flesh. It is so in itself, but much more so to us; because we live so much by sense, and so little by faith. Every trial that passes over us has a light as well as a dark side. And we should look upon every affliction with a double view; as it is oppressing and grieving to weak nature, it is, in itself, evil; and calls for submission to the Divine will. But then, as the same affliction is viewed as flowing from God's love, and effectually managed for His glory and our advantage, so it is good, and ought to be a matter of our joy and thanksgiving.

Let us leave it then to those who have no interest in the God of all Grace to think afflictions heavy; for woe to them that are alone. But as for us, that are savingly interested in God (in all His Persons and in all His

perfections as engaged in covenant for our good), let us go on rejoicing in tribulation, esteeming all our afflictions, as indeed they are, light.

Secondly, the shortness of the saints' affliction is matter of great consolation; it is but for a moment. A moment is but a short space--the smallest division of time; and unto this of a moment are our longest afflictions compared. Suppose they should last as long as we are in this world; yet, even our whole life if compared with a vast eternity is but like a moment; and as Mr. Dod well says, "What can be great to him that counts the world nothing? or long, to him that counts his life but a span?"

Oh! were we more frequent in our converse with eternity, it would make the afflictions of this present time appear short. Did we live more in the views of approaching glory, we would remember our afflictions as waters that pass away; that are here one moment and gone the next. But alas! such is our folly, that we are taking thought for a great while to come, and so make our 'imagined future trials' present distresses; whereas, were we under the most pressing weights, and did take thought for no more than the day (and sufficient to it is the evil thereof), living by faith on the borders of glory, as just entering into the mansions of rest, it would alleviate our sorrows, and make the longest trial appear short.

Could we thus reason with ourselves every day, "Well, I have got one day nearer home; the afflictions of the past day I shall never go through any more, and perhaps before I see another day in this world I may see glory's day--a morning that will have no clouds nor evening to succeed it, no sorrows, sin, nor death to darken its luster!" Oh, what a means would this be to increase our patience, and make us of an enduring spirit! And what matter of comfort is it that while our short-lived afflictions last, Christ will be with us in them! He is with us when we pass through the waters, that the rivers do not overflow us, that the swelling waves of affliction do not overwhelm us; and when we walk through the fires, that the flames kindle not upon us, that fiery trials do not consume us. The priest's feet were to stand in Jordan until all Israel were fully passed over. So our dear Lord Jesus will stand among the distresses, dividing the waters before us, until all His children are fully passed through them. His presence with us in affliction will make it light; and His delivering-kindness out of it will make it short.

Thirdly, the advantage of the saints' affliction is also an encouragement to faith and patience--it works for us. But what does it work? Why, no less than glory! And it works glory for us as it prepares us for it. Glory was prepared for us, and settled upon us, in God's everlasting covenant with His Son, before the world was. And affliction is a means Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Grace makes use of to prepare us for glory; that glory which was prepared for us before time, and will last to an eternal space beyond it. And who would think it much to endure affliction, who sees it is but for the trial and perfecting of his graces, and that the exercise of each might be found unto praise, honor, and glory at Christ's appearing.

Now then, let us bring things to the balance of the Sanctuary, and learn to judge of them aright. Let us amass together all the afflictions of a believer's life, and put them in one scale, and glory in the other, and see if that does not infinitely outweigh them, especially, if we cast in the additional weights that are on glory's side! Here is affliction on the one side, but glory on the other; light affliction, for a moment, but a weight of glory, yes, an exceeding, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Well might the Apostle say, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

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