

Faithful Affliction

by Dick Brogden

God's faithfulness is revealed through affliction, which teaches us His Word and ways, and leads us to soul life and perfect physical life in eternity.

Scripture: Psalm 119:50-77, John 12:24

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

Dick Brogden preaches on how God's tenderness is shown through afflictions that come in various forms such as betrayal, loss, and even death. Affliction is a means through which God's faithfulness is expressed, teaching us His Word and ways, and making us more like Jesus. Despite the pain and challenges, afflictions ultimately lead us to a deeper life in Christ, whether in this world or in eternity.

Transcript

It is in tenderness that God afflicts us-or allows us to be afflicted. The severe mercies of the Lord come to us in many forms, and one of them is affliction. Psalm 119:75 states: "In faithfulness You have afflicted me." God's faithfulness is not only expressed by blessings considered good; His faithfulness is also revealed through what causes us pain. Soul surgeries and spiritual spankings lovingly give life. Psalm 119:67, 71 say: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word...It was good for me to be afflicted that I may learn your statutes." Affliction should be welcomed as one of God's professors-affliction teaches us God's Word and ways. Affliction makes us like Jesus. He, too, knew the pain and promise of being afflicted by God. Working for Jesus in pioneer contexts seems to place us in the path of these common afflictions.

Betrayal. Numerous times the ones who you have helped, who shared a meal with you, a friend with whom you have prayed, cried, laughed, and served will turn against you. Sometimes this betrayal is as drastic as reporting you to the security police, and sometimes it is as stinging as gossip behind your back. Serving Jesus means inevitably disappointing others in your radical obedience to Him-and sometimes the disappointed are those closest to you.

Out of their disappointment they lash out, and little is as painful as the unloving wounds of a friend. Affliction at the hands of friends and colleagues can be the most cutting, and therefore has the greatest potential to teach us. It is deep surgery.

Loss. Possessions, freedoms, health, strength, dignity, even ministry can all be stripped from you. Friends have lost all their worldly belongings, their innocence, their opportunities for service, their ministries, their health, their homes, their keepsakes, and each loss is keenly felt. When all is stripped away from us, we are confronted with a basic question: "Is Jesus enough? Is Jesus truly all that satisfies, all that thrills our soul?" For all else can be taken from us, but Jesus has to be surrendered. If we hold on to Jesus (secure in the knowledge that He is holding on to us), then the affliction of loss teaches us by showing us just how sweet Jesus is.

Death. Oh for the vision to see death as a faithful affliction of God. In a world increasingly rebellious, violent assault, rape, murder, and martyrdom are increasingly common. These travesties have never ceased, but for a season the West has been shielded from them in terms of suffering them for Jesus. That season is ending. We now must join our brothers and sisters from around the world who have not been sheltered. Our comfort in these afflictions is, "Your word has given me life" (Psalm 119:50)! In the midst of great suffering and even physical death, God's tender mercies, carried to us by His Word, give us life.

We cry with the psalmist: "Let your tender mercies come to me that I might LIVE" (v. 77)! And we understand that we don't ultimately live until we die. We die to self that we might live for Jesus. And we die physically that we might LIVE forever in the presence of Jesus.

If affliction leads either to soul life here or perfect physical life in eternity, it has done its faithful work. Let affliction lead us to life!

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