

OUR LIGHT AFFLICTION

BIBLE TEXT : II Corinthians 4:17, 18; 5:1-10.

LESSON 396 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

¹⁸ 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 5:1-10

¹ For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

³ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

⁴ For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

⁵ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

⁶ Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

⁷ (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

⁸ We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

⁹ Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Afflictions of the Righteous

1. Suffering for Christ works toward a more glorious inheritance, II Corinthians 4:17;

2 Timothy 2:12

¹² If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

Hebrews 12:11

¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

2. Spiritual vision shows the value of eternal things, II Corinthians 4:18;

Psalms 102:25-26

²⁵ Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.

²⁶ They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

Revelation 21:1

¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

II Heavenly Hope

1. God has a prepared place for His redeemed ones, II Corinthians 5:1;

John 14:2

² In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

2. There is a deep desire for Heaven in the hearts of true Christians, II Corinthians 5:2-4, 6-8;

Philippians 1:23

²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

3. The Spirit gives promise of eternal life to the faithful, II Corinthians 5:5;

1 Peter 1:4-5

⁴ To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

⁵ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

4. All must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, II Corinthians 5:9, 10;

Romans 14:10

¹⁰ But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

NOTES:

Many years ago, several men were working in a large garage trying to remove the rear axle from an automobile. In spite of all efforts and different methods tried, the axle remained firmly in position. Finally the head mechanic said, "Heat the torch and we

may be accepted of him.

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

will try a little fire." In just a minute or two after the fire of the torch was applied the axle loosened and was easily removed.

Does this not speak of the manner in which God often deals with men? He tries in many different ways to persuade men to conform to His will, but they often fail to respond. Finally the Lord allows the fire to be used (in many cases the fire of affliction); then hearts respond more readily.

Weight of Glory

The Scripture says that affliction "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The Spirit is here speaking of afflictions that draw a man closer to God. Wicked men are afflicted too; but if in the affliction they will not turn to God, their suffering is of no benefit to them. Persecutions, oppositions, humiliations, mental distresses, discouragements, disappointments, sorrow, grief: all these are among the afflictions that one is sometimes called upon to go through.

When a person allows an affliction to bring him into conformity with the will of God, genuine value of an eternal nature develops. And it is a light affliction when compared with the eternal weight of glory. Affliction is light, and glory is a "far more exceeding and eternal weight," because the years of time in this life are fleeting, but life in eternity is forever.

Chrysostom, a noted minister of the fourth century, observed of these words: "The Apostle opposes things present to things future; a moment to eternity; lightness to weight, affliction to glory. Nor is he satisfied with this, but he adds another word, and doubles it, saying, in effect, 'excessively exceeding.'"

Spiritual Vision

The Bible points out time and again the folly of elevating the things that are seen (temporal things) to the place of supreme importance in one's life. The things that cannot be seen with the natural eye (eternal things) are the things of intrinsic value. It is when one sees this life as just a prelude to Heaven, this earth as the dressing room for Glory, that the right perspective is enjoyed. The overcoming Christians of the Bible used lightly the things of this world, but they laid great emphasis upon anything they could say or do toward a more glorious resurrection. Overcoming Christians of today are expected to do no less.

How, then, can one see the "not seen"? By looking in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. Before Columbus made the historic trip that discovered the New World, men argued about what lay beyond the horizon of the ocean. The same holds true, in a measure at least, with eternal life. Jesus Christ is the Path-maker. Before He came to live on earth and die and triumph in His resurrection, eternity was a question in the minds of many. Truly, even before Christ, some of God's men gave eloquent testimony of their faith and hope of eternal life; but when Jesus came he became living proof of that certitude. By looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, we can look into eternity with confidence, knowing that God has made ample provision for the eternal welfare of the redeemed. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:3, 4).

Sure Knowledge

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This verse plainly speaks of death to the body, but there is no trace of grief or sorrow. Rather,

there is the tone and note of keen anticipation; and why should it not be so?

When a house of this world becomes old and tottering, it needs rebuilding. The owner clears the house of its occupants, then tears the old house down, and builds a new and more splendid structure. This does not cause the occupants to grieve, but it rather causes them to rejoice. They do not think of the demolition of the old, for they foresee the new house to be.

This picture is used by the Spirit in this lesson. God does a similar work when a child of God departs this life. The spirit of man, or the soul, goes to God who gave it. The earthly house, or body, is torn down, returning to the elements from which it was made. In God's time the body will be resurrected from the dust and made into an incorruptible body. The soul and the glorified body will be reunited in that day, to be forever with the Lord (**1 Corinthians 15:51-54** ⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory).

The thought of the removal from the earthly tabernacle will cause no anxiety to the true Christian, for he knows that a better abode awaits him.

On the other hand, as in this portion of Scripture, there is a certain looking forward to that event. The Apostle said: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23, 24). One of the pioneer ministers of the Apostolic Faith, when asked by a nurse if there was anything she could do for him to relieve the suffering, answered: "Roll back the roof and let me go." His faith was steadfast and sure. A few minutes later his life expired and he went to be with the Lord.

"Selfsame Thing"

"He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God" -- a reference, no doubt, to the statement immediately preceding: "That mortality might be swallowed up of life." The Spirit teaches that God has a directing hand in the lives of His people. A real Christian's life is not just a whirlpool, nor is it an accumulation of accidental circumstances. There is a moving Force behind the life of every child of God -- the Force that moves toward a heavenly goal.

The Spirit of God works on the hearts of all men who respond to get them ready for Heaven. Truly, every saved man has the earnest of eternal life in his heart, but there is room and need for spiritual growth and perfection. One writer beautifully expresses this thought: "The patient training of our sorrows and our gladnesses, the warmth that expands and the cold that contracts the heart, the light that gladdens and the darkness that saddens the eye and the spirit, are equally meant for training us for the perfect life of a perfect soul moving a perfect body in a perfect universe." Heaven will be worth our every effort.

Judgment Seat

The Christian's duty in this life, then, is to please Christ and to get ready for Heaven. This duty is accomplished by bringing the heart and life into complete conformity with the Word of God, and labouring towards spreading the Gospel to all people of the earth by every possible means. Those who thus fulfil Christ's purpose

will be accepted of Him.

Those who refuse to do the will of God must stand in judgment for their refusal and for their evil deeds. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). However, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after" (I Timothy 5:24). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life need not fear the judgment, for they have judged themselves by the Word of God. (**1 Corinthians 11:31** ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.) In other words, they have taken heed to the Word of God, they have repented of their sins, they have believed on the Son of God as their Saviour. Their sins have been washed away by the Blood of the Crucified One. Continuing in this state of grace, they can answer "yes" to the words of the song:

**"Are you ready? Are you ready?
Are you ready for the Judgment Day?"**

QUESTIONS

1. How can a Christian say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment"?
2. What do afflictions accomplish in the life of a child of God, if taken in the right spirit?
3. In what way can we see the things which are "not seen"?
4. In what way has God made provision for His children when they depart this life?
5. Quote one of several passages of Scripture showing that Christians sometimes become homesick for Heaven.
6. What should be the goal of a Christian's labour?
7. Why does the child of God not have to fear about the judgment seat of Christ?
8. What will the sinner have to answer for in the Judgment Day?