

# The hidden and revealed will of God (Quality: Average)

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Date: 16 January 1977

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- [ 0 : 00 ] For the Lord's help we will speak from the last two verses in the chapter that we read. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians chapter 4 verses 17 and 18.
- For our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a power or exceeding and eternal weight of glory 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 and the things which are not seen are eternal. We touched upon this subject at the prayer meeting on Wednesday.
- Speaking of those things which were not seen in connection with the Lord's dealings with his people in coming out of the land of Egypt.
- In the book of Exodus, 14th chapter where he caused them first of all to hitch by the sea.
- [ 1 : 25 ] They not knowing of course what was to follow but there the Lord directing them to hitch their mighty host by the sea, the red sea.
- It was not seen. It is now. But at that time it was quite unknown to anyone, Moses or anyone else, why they had to picture where they did.
- It is well known that had they gone in another route, the journey into Canyon would have occupied a very short time.
- God directed that they should be brought to the very borders of that red sea which he was purposeful to open in due course.
- We see there also something else that was not seen at the time and that was that they were bitten to stand still.
- [ 2 : 45 ] The Egyptians had begun to realize their loss and pursued the children of Israel.
- Pharaoh's heart was heart. You have the same thing in this chapter. In whom the God, for if their gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.
- In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. This is hidden and yet it is revealed.
- The folly of Pharaoh managed now as he sought to fight against God and it was at that particular time hidden.
- No one could look at it. No one could see what was about to be done. And we use this as an illustration of those things as which we had this scripture here that we read for a text at the back of our mind then.
- [ 4 : 04 ] Things which are seen are temples. Things which are not seen return. So we may well ask ourselves what is the answer to this riddle of the scripture.
- How can we look at things which we are not seen? The children can very well say well how can we look at something that isn't seen? You may ask the very same question yourself.

you are thinking of your eyesight and you know that its range is very very extensive.

You know the marvelous capability of the human eye as well as its marvelous structure adjusting itself to light and darkness as it does.

But it is with the human eye that we can see and do see. Here we are exhorted to to look at the things which are not seen.

[ 5 : 18 ] Where shall we find these things and with what eye shall we look at? The answer to the first question is this. We shall find the things that are not seen only in the word of God.

Another thing. And that little illustration that I have just given you from the shores of the Red Sea read it as your legend.

See how the Lord so nailed that remarkable circumstance that he gained unto himself limitless praise to have all ages.

It became a matter of their praise as a people and still is. But in the Old Testament time there's scarce a song or psalm of praise without some reference to it.

God's work and God's work can be traced in nature but not seen.

[ 6 : 41 ] And the mighty elements that we have seen in force this week are doing their work. rivers are in full space.

Man has said that it would take until months to replenish the loss through the past ground. But you've only got to travel within a radius of 50 miles to see water and river.

And God's wonderful work. you've only got to see the effects of the biting frost upon the ground and understand yoga that there's something in it as a frost and snow.

Children, adults and everyone with eyes can see this that they can't see how it is done. It's this great work of God that his creatures have to do with.

But when we come to what Paul is talking about here, this treasure that is in earth and vessel and this gospel which is here and this gospel which is shining out of darkness God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness and shine in our hearts, we come to an altogether different matter.

[ 8 : 21 ] And we come to the ministry of the gospel, we come to an altogether different matter. that if can't see, if we ministers could see, what a different life we should live.

How different our days would be spent, how different our Mondays would be if we could see, how different your days would be if you could see, realize the effect of the Sabbath, the word of God upon you.

I mean, see with your natural eyes. But, if there is a blessing, that blessing is bound up in the word of God.

So that the mystery is no longer a mystery, though it must ever remain one to those whose eyes are left closed in nature's darkness.

The apostle is speaking of affliction. He calls it by a very strange name, night affliction.

[ 9 : 41 ] and he gives it a most remarkable grace of time, a moment.

This in itself, you can't see. Not with your natural mind and understanding, you, who are in affliction, you cannot see with your carnal mind and eyes and reason that this present affliction is a light.

We mustn't think of sickness and illness only when we think of affliction. We must think of circumstances as well.

Particular trials, affliction, they are all afflictive, they are all for some particular purpose and affect some particular place and part in our lives.

The apostle cause of life, why should he give them such a description of that? Why should he use such words? You may very well feel affliction is the heaviest affliction there is.

[ 11 : 08 ] And there's none so afflicted as you. And I doubt not that there are many today who are loaded with this feeling.

I don't say here, they're names. We don't know, we have to be very careful. But undoubtedly there are those who are weighted down with some afflictive dispensation.

And so far as it being for a moment, it looks interminable. Those afflictions which we have passed through seem to bear upon them the stamp of endlessness.

As if they were never come to an end. I've looked at some of mine in the years past when I've been in the midst of them and I've felt well they can never come to an end.

And yet they have. They've gone forever. But as to their being light, what does this mean?

[ 12 : 25 ] Because it must either be true or untrue. Now there is a beauty in this weight, if we could use that word, because we have to think that the older we get the heavier the affliction.

But we must ever remember that every one of the Lord's people, young and old, even children, have these things which are heavy.

There is a balancing of the cloud. And they may not say anything about it, but to them it is the heaviest trial they've ever had.

To those of us that are older, if they spoke to us, we would be able to say to them, yes, it's heavy for you, we understand, but it's not too heavy.

It's not more than you can carry, not more than the Lord tends to lie upon you. But the beauty of this is God's balancing to old and young.

[ 13 : 46 ] In that beautiful description later on, or earlier on, the apostle speaks of there's no temptation taking you, but such as is common to me.

God is faithful, who will with the temptation make a way to escape that she may be able to bear. But when we come to consider the apostle and the most bitter experiences that he had of all kinds, we marvel still more that he should ever use the word light.

For if ever there was a man, a minister of the gospel, a servant of God, who was weighed down with the utmost afflictions, he was.

You won't find a man with afflictions heavier than the apostle Paul. He was personally afflicted.

We are not sure what it was, and it doesn't really matter. he confides that he had a thorn in the flesh.

[ 15 : 17 ] And he gives it this description of messenger from Satan to buffet him. that we must accept what he says and know full well that it was true.

It was not something that he could get rid of. Luke couldn't help him. The Milad physician who accompanied him in most of his journeys and was a most gracious, wise and able man and counselor, Luke could take the thorn out.

And God never did. He had a personal affliction. And that was an affliction indeed.

It is a great comfort that he is led to tell us about it. How he besought the Lord Christ that he would remove it.

It is just a very honest remark that you would expect him to make. He asked the Lord to take it away.

[ 16 : 34 ] Well if you've ever been in that place you will know what that is. Where you had nothing else in front of you but this one thought Lord take it away.

Take it away. I've known what it has been in many years ago to haste the room, bedroom, and say nothing else for this.

Lord take it away. Take it away. Take it away. How wrong we are you see. We're looking at the things which you see.

Health known only too well to be in existence. But he comes to tell us the Lord put a different aspect upon this when he said unto him my grace is sufficient for me.

You and I have got to come the same way if we're in the same path and among the same sheep of Christ. You may be saying this morning Lord take it away.

[ 17 : 52 ] But I say he had personal affection. Now how then could he really write such a word as this? And it's our doesn't say your light affection our light affection.

Why does he call it light? Because he was able to say with a different eye that which was not seen.

The eye of faith when the Lord pointed out to him that it was for his good. And what good was it?

It is said here to work. And in thinking of this I like to think of the yeast working.

That powerful influence which works. Not an evil influence but an influence of good. Nothing stops it.

[ 19 : 09 ] Once that's put in that dough that yeast will work. you can't arrest the act. Now what was it that the apostle Paul was therefore thinking of?

A very solemn matter. He speaks of the revelation God gave him and he says lest I should be exhorted above measures.

There was given unto me a thorn in the flesh. he knew why he got it. Now this is looking at something that isn't seen isn't it?

Not the visible eye. The natural eye. The instruction in this is great.

and affliction is brought home to us in this way that it's got a purpose in it and a point in it. And it isn't something that's just fallen out of the skies.

[ 20 : 20 ] It isn't what men call luck, good or bad. It is chance. far from it.

The words don't scarcely dare enter into it. And it's God's gracious purpose to keep his servant humble.

Now if you see this working in your experience, then what would you say of the word luck?

Would you disagree with it? Would you say that it's incorrect? And don't you younger ones pass this by, would you, if you've got ears to hear as if this is senior work.

I can use that word. It isn't for seniors only, you know. It is for juniors as well. It is training, discipline in the past.

[ 21 : 40 ] And God's ways and dealings follow a predetermined pattern. And it is this pattern which is really the sum and substance of the text.

We know what God will do. We know why he will do it. And we know the ultimate issue that he intends.

Look at the ancient words that Moses spake to Israel. thou thou thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath blessed in these forty years in the wilderness to humble.

Now supposing Moses had not said that and supposing it just read like this, thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath lived.

it would not be nearly so instructive or provoking of thought that it goes on to say to humble.

[ 22 : 52 ] Now this makes the whole difference to prove this. And furthermore that thou mightest know what was in thy heart.

This is the poem. So let me say again, should it be your trial this morning, that you say about this word light.

Well, I don't think it's light, you may say. I think it's exceedingly heavy. Yes. Well, there is a way of deliverance, experience, gracious explanation.

That is in this text, it works. So that it isn't something instantaneous, it isn't an immediate sanctification.

If I may go back to Paul's experience, three times he says, I besought the Lord, and we don't regard it as three times immediately in succession.

[ 24 : 07 ] that's right, I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. This is slow, real work, gradual work.

Mark it then in your pathway, rather than seek to escape the trial, the affliction, whatever it may be, mark it.

what is it doing for you? Are you proving something? That you say what?

Yourself. To prove things. Not proving your mother, your father, your brother, your sister?

No. Your wife, your husband? No. No, nothing to do with him. Proving yourself. Proving yourself.

[ 25 : 14 ] And thus did this lonely apostle, for as far as we know, he was an unmarried man. He had no children. He had no commitments. And yet, with all that, he was, as I've just said, one of the most heavenly burdened ministers that ever trod this earth.

In this, therefore, he uses the word light, we believe, correctly. Light affliction.

And then time, for a moment. time. We are again instructed upon this point in the scripture with regard to the thing which is not seen, and that is time.

I look at the clock, so do you. There it is. I can see it, and so can you. But you can't see the 90th Psalm clock, which says that a thousand years with the Lord has one day, can you?

There's a clock you children can't see in the 90th Psalm. A thousand years is with the Lord as but one thing.

[ 26 : 48 ] And if our calculations and beliefs are right, how many years has this earth been in existence? Four?

How many thousand years? Four? You can't see that. How old are you?

how many years have you dropped on this earth? Can you say like it is said of Moses at 120 years of age?

Of course you can't that his natural strength would not affect it. Of course you can't. But there is a man who like his forefathers knew something of long life.

Others of course the two of earth and the ninth nearly reached a thousand. Nine hundred and sixty nine. A moment.

[ 28 : 00 ] The solemn word Job said his life was faster than a weaver's shuttle.

We suppose that that was about the fastest thing that was known then. At least he uses it as a description.

we talk about speed today in a different way doesn't it? Look at the nature of speed today time.

The well known saying time flies. Does fly doesn't it? Light affliction which is but more for a moment.

But Paul you ask for three times. There lies afflicted which is but for a moment Paul you've been afflicted a good many years now in your ministry we might say.

[ 29 : 17 ] But for a moment. Now what looks at time like this if it is the eye of faith? What is it that God gives to his people to view time like this?

Why did you break her stop to watch right as the ever flowing river? Why did he speak of that which moves along goes undisturbed thing?

Like an ever rolling stream there's all it's done to it. You've only got to stand on the river bridge haven't you? If it's a river of any strength to see it.

Whatever you might think you couldn't stop it slowly would you? so is a bone. Is this true?

Oh you say I wish I could be relieved of my trial in a moment. I wish I could lose it before half past twelve. Wow.

[ 30 : 35 ] You're looking at the things that you see, aren't you? Oh you say if I could only go home and find this well. how happy I should be with you.

Would you? Is there not something more important for you to think about than this? Is there not something from the word of God that is speaking to you with regard to this working and doing something for you which nothing else could do do nothing else could do nothing else could do now when you look at it you consider what it is doing for you look what a different aspect it puts upon the scene perhaps of a year ago two years ago ten years look how vastly different it all has seen now look at the changing scene what is it like John

Baptist a decrease in yourself a lowering of your own estimation a greater dependence a constant need is it stirring up rebellion bringing to light some of the dross within your house is it making you angry with God are you ready to tell your Bible what is it doing for you is it working well if it is it's working something of a very very particular nature and that is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory but before we look at this join with it the last purpose because the eternal weight of glory is only the ultimate if not yet come the design is to that end and if we look at it in the apostles case it was martyrdom it was

Nero it was the savagery of God's enemy is that a weight of glory far more than the light of fiction and as far as duration is concerned far longer than a moment of course it is but there's got to be the active part the fruitful part as must of necessity be the outcome of the work of faith it is the fruit of faith and if there is not this faith in the dark pathway not after it now hindsight is no part of the spiritual pathway it is the natural but it's at the time or how increasingly do I feel as I get older the absolute necessity of faith for the very day you're in the trouble and I will go further and say the very hour as you're in the trouble from something beforehand before after but at the moment of time whilst or while we look not at the things which are seen so that this means that there's got to be some miracle performed or something of a most remarkable nature to divert our eyes because what are we more likely to do in these times than to dwell upon ourselves look down and compare our lot with others and a score of other things whereby we may well say how hard might not which of course never yet moved amounted and never will while we look not

I say who's going to devote our eyes to now when you come to instruction on this point you can only turn to the word of God to say these who had their eyes devoted like Pesekiah or Jonah or any of these whose history we have in any length past we look not of the things which are seen now Hezekiah was spitting with sore boy but he went and he turned his face to the wall well as a sullen sulkiness about that you know anger almost a despair and he prayed and in that prayer he begged for healing although

[ 37 : 12 ] Isaiah had told him that his days were numbered and of course Isaiah's word was the word of God yes he turned his face to the wall but he prayed and his prayer to him after he was delivered and he reviewed it critically reviewed it was a prayer of a remarkable nature and a standard that we all do well to remember I won't say copy because we can't unless grace teaches us but if grace teaches us to view pleadings with the Lord for health and recovery like like it did hezekiah we shall say something like this like a crane or a swallow so did

I chatter you children are not very familiar with cranes they don't expect but you are followed now you know that their note although their presence is very valuable to us in spring in summer their note is not melodious at all and certainly of grace and we could name if it were necessary a good many of our own words for Stalin for example whose note is raucous ah ah this is the opinion that hezekiah had of his own friends and let me say this his own successful that's what did it can prayer says the hymn writer reverse the stern decree and save a wretch condemned like me it may at least

I'll try says Joseph Hart in his most able manner and this you see was looking at the thing which had not it was working but no Isaiah had to teach him had pride he was there alone in his low sister and thus did the Lord show him thank Jonah I'm cast out of thy sight the second of Jonah yes Jonah well isn't that just where you wanted to get why complain Jonah from the fish's belly that you're cast out of God's sight as strange a vessel as it may be why complain when you tried to get out his sights but it was the very thing you wanted to do

Jonah what are you complaining about he took ship to go to the Lord the Lord did what he wanted to do and then you come to him looking at the things which were not seen from that dark cavern when the weeds were wrapped about his head and they were through what did he do he cried what did he say well what could he say I am cast out of thy side yet will I look again towards thy holy temple there was not this looking at something that wasn't safe wasn't this the working of it was it doing a good work in it here is the rebellious rebel running away from duty and

God and quite willing to be cast over the side of the ship to a watery grave oh it's all these extremities in the life of these good men are very solemn you know and he would have cut his life off and authorised them to throw him over the side which they were loath to do but eventually they did and yet God was still teaching him bringing him to see that he could do what he asked him to do oh don't you ever ask the Lord to do that don't you ever seek to escape from God will you he may let you he may give you a taste of your own heart's native rebellion but be that as it may the point of issue in the text is this that he was having a work brought in yet when I look again toward thy holiness and the

[ 43 : 24 ] Lord we know delivered him up and we read that the fish vomited up Jonah on dry land a safe deliverance if he vomited Jonah up in the sea what would have happened only one thing could have happened death which he really not long before had chosen but not after prayer there was dry land and for this great fish to approach so near to dry land is in itself a remarkable thing why are usually washed up this one approach dry land men deny the miracle and despise the book of Jonah but to a believer there are many more miracles in the book of

Jonah than the fish swallowing Jonah a good many more and you look for them this is one of them that the fish he vomited up Jonah on dry land dry land the beauty of this therefore is that he was looking at the things which were not seen so with God's dear servant Paul therefore this dry land my greatest official Paul he therefore goes to this great work of working in you as an example of what he was passing through himself working in you can you can I can I surely this must be some reality to some of us we must know something that is working within us for it is

God that worketh in you says Paul elsewhere both to will and to do of his good pleasure this is what we have to look at examine lest we should go into a trial and come out of it as we went into it I think this is one of the worst experiences the Lord's people could ever have go into a trial and come out of it as they went into it because it proves they learnt nothing in it and it is fair sometimes and it will be a grief to them if it is so undoubtedly that it worketh while we look not at the things which are seen now this is another of those great miracles and divine grace teaching us not to look at the things which are seen why this is what we are always doing isn't it and you see we are not masters of our own lives there are changes come so comfortable we look at them we do them all around of course we do some some of those very things that we are looking at among some of the things which are not seen at the moment now do you think that when

Ruth lost her husband that she could see do you think when Naomi lost her husband she could see do you think that when Malone and Tillion died they could see of course they did you see things in the past at the time they happened now can you see them now can you see why Ruth and Naomi were so destitute as to be brought at last to come together as two lonely souls out of the land of north we can't we read the sweet people book of Ruth can't we draw a straight line right through it so yes this and this and this and this all fitted together now yes but what are now the questions are these things working enough at the point now before I sit down it comes to mind this what did

Ruth say whilst these things were being wrought in her when Naomi remonstrated with her and would have her go back again to her God for Naomi wisdom was the best was it go back again after she said thy secrets and to thy God Naomi you've made a big mistake you should direct Ruth back to those for God that didn't matter that didn't matter a bit God's people make some very sad mistakes and Naomi did but did Ruth and that was working in her heart did Ruth no she said entreat me not to leave or you'll follow and follow it after for where thou go

[ 49 : 59 ] I will go where thou dwellest I will dwell where thou liveest I will live thy God shall be my God is this working in of course it is of course it is thy people shall be my people oh in the dark scene therefore there was the evidence that I believe it may the Lord make some use of this no solemn word no solemn word and yet such a wealth of truth in interest higher any way you