

Sanctified afflictions of the cloud of witnesses

(Quality: Good, incomplete)

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[0 : 00] Depending upon the help of God, I would direct your mind this morning to the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, chapter 12, and the first two verses.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, and let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews, chapter 12, and the first two verses. The Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to write these chapters and the very text that we have now announced.

And no doubt the Apostle Paul could speak from experience. He had known that there was a time, yea, in his day, when there was a great cloud of witnesses.

How little can we speak today, if we cannot at all, of being a cloud of witnesses.

[2 : 40] These solemn days wherein we live, so few that manifest the grace of God, so few there are that are ungluing and thirsting for those blessed rivers and streams and those things that you have been singing of, respecting their guest ceremony.

But the Apostle hears, I might just have a few thoughts. He commands here, wherefore, seems so amazing that there should be, our people, a great cloud of witnesses.

And we can look back over the portion we have read at this time in the 11th chapter, and how we have read of those dear men, women, saints, patriarchs, prophets, who walked that path of tribulation, and how they were, many of them, persecuted.

Some put to death. Others had to pass through, shall I say, agony of body, imprisonment, in various ways.

But, dear friends, in their heart was life, and that life in their souls brought forth faith to believe, faith to stand, faith to endure what was laid upon them.

[4 : 36] And no doubt in those days it could be said, as our text speaks, of a great cloud of witnesses.

Many who feared God. in the New Testament, we read of thousands coming where Jesus was.

I'm not saying that all called by divine grace are from it. But many came to see this wonderful man that they heard of Jesus and his wonderful miracles that he had performed.

But amongst them, there's no doubt, there was a great cloud of witnesses. Many, many that came to Jesus witnessing, believing.

Faith caused them to believe. Therefore, they were witnesses of, shall I say, the electing love of God, the Father, and witnesses of his dear beloved Son, the Lord Jesus.

- [6 : 04] True witnesses of those things that you have been singing. Some were believed by faith. True witnesses of Christ and salvation through him.
- True witnesses of his, by faith, as it were, of death. And yet, we can go back to those days of the persecution and also of the death of the Lord Jesus.
- And there were witnesses then, in those days, that it was the Christ. My mind goes for a moment to the poor woman by the well.
- She came, as you know, to the well destitute, but she went back into the city among these witnesses to witness unto those in the city that it was a prophet.
- Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did is not this the Christ encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.
- [7 : 23] And coming even a later date, even in those of their forefathers who lived, we'll say, a hundred years ago, and so, oh they, some of those prophets, some of those ministers, entered in to large churches and places of worship, and there were thousands came to hear them.
- So we can come back to a closer date, as it were, and say, somewhat with the apostle, and according to our text, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.
- I thought at times, at least as I thought upon this word, this cloud of witnesses, in the book of Psalms, have we not witnesses there?
- Of the serenest David, and the writers of those Psalms, such as Moses and Asaph, all led by the Holy Spirit to pen what is written in the Psalms, and isn't there a great cloud of witnesses?
- What I mean is this, in the language, in the very language of those Psalms, doesn't it fit in sometimes into your heart?
- [9 : 00] Hasn't there been times, perhaps you've opened the scriptures, opened upon the psalm, and there's been something there that is witnessed into your heart of the life of God?
- Why, the old book, my friends, speaks of witnesses. Yea, what one or two or three men witnessed and was enabled by the help of the Spirit to pen and leave it on record for us and for all the Lord's children following on to now.
- And they been a witness to us. Such a word as this it may be, what David prayed for, show me some token for good.
- and has been your language. Therefore, cannot we say that the psalmist has been a witness of these things that we have been enabled to gather up, as it were, by the help of God, and prove they were witnesses to the truth, David and others, many of them.
- Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, we know not how many stood around that cross of the Lord Jesus.
- [10 : 29] We do not know how many passed that way on the road on the outskirts of Jerusalem, where he hung and was crucified and died.
- we do read of a few in the gospel of John. There was Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene, and also Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and a disciple, a disciple, John.
- And I've often looked at it in reading the scriptures, the New Testament, how John must have been a very, very humble man.
- He wouldn't bring forth his name, if it's possible. We read at one place, I believe, or two, where it says, and the other disciple, the other, didn't wish to bring his name into it.
- Well, there was these by the cross of Jesus, when he entered into those deep sufferings, even of death.

[11 : 59] No doubt there were many, as I've hinted upon, passed that way, and saw him, some, no doubt, blasphemed his name.

Speaking only just recently from those words in the Psalm 37, where it says, Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.

behold him, where no doubt is he hung there, and on many other occasions, where his name was blasphemed, where they mocked him, not in love, as those few around the cross, whom he loved, but they mocked him as a beggar, they mocked him as a blasphemer, they mocked him in a way that was headed to persecution upon his spirit.

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about, with so great a cloud of witnesses. Now, the apostle here gives good advice.

He says, let us lay aside, in other words, to afford us to go forth and manifest, shall I say, the grace the Lord has given.

[13 : 48] What does he say in the Ephesians? That ye put off concerning the former conversation of the old man, our old nature, our carnal nature.

Dear friends, have we got as far as this? Some of us here has out made an open profession of his name. I've often thought, I believe, the last line in one of their hymns that we sing on a baptizing service, after his example, rise.

And how often I thought of it, and how far short I come. So the apostle here says, that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, that comes out of the old nature, the carnal man.

And he tells us, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts within our spirit by nature.

And be renewed, he says, in the spirit of your mind. So we have it in the text from the apostle Paul, if we might just look upon it from that view point, though, we should look upon it as being the word of God, which it is, and the voice of God.

[15 : 33] Wherefore, seeing then, we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside. Let us lay aside.

And then we have another word in this epistle of the Corinthians. Having therefore these promises, dearly the beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

So the apostle advising, if I might so speak, and speaking to the Hebrews, saying, lay these things aside, which we were known, which we have known in days that are past, which we have entered into, into those things that are carnal and disgraceful unto God.

Wherefore, seeing, we also are compassed about, knowing somewhat of these things we have read in the 11th chapter, not to the depth of it, far, far from it.

we have read, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain, with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented.

[17 : 23] This is not known in our day, but it was in the days of the past. So the apostle could say here, let us lay aside these things.

lay aside, dear friends, cannot we say that these dear men and women spoken of and we have read of laid them aside.

Grace was given to them, laid them aside. They stood for things that are first, and these secondary things, as it were, they laid aside, earnestly seeking their standing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

and his death, and his sufferings. Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, where we would rejoice to see.

I am not saying that these things spoken of and read of that we should have to endure them. I don't know if we could, only unless the Lord would be pleased to give us grace to stand in those sufferings.

[18 : 44] wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about, oh, we would rejoice to see those days of true spiritual prosperity known in our land, as well as in the whole world, seeing we also are compassed about, with so great a cloud of witnesses.

Well, do we, in our small measure, witness to the world, that we know something of grace, that there's a standing out, as it were, in other words, to be separated from those who are still walking in those paths of sin and wickedness, a witness that the Lord has called us by his grace, implanted the fear of God in our hearts, a witness even to the world that we know something of a true religion, a witness that we believe in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be a witness, as it were, before the world, believing that Jesus came to call, yea, came to save a great multitude of poor sinners, do we stand before the world in our profession of the name of the Lord

Jesus, wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, oh, to be able to walk out what we profess, I'm sure I have some here this morning, you are often tried and troubled, and you have to take it to the throne of God, rightly so, in our text it speaks of looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, looking unto him to have some evidence, some sure token that your profession, profession of the name of Jesus, manifested even before the world.

I was going to say, it's quite easy, if I might use that word, to show our profession when we come to the house of God, yes, and before those who, the brethren and so on, but friends, when we come before the world, oh, for that grace, wherefore, seeing we also are comfortable with so great a cloud of weaknesses within and manifested in our lives, that we know something of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

God. God. God. God. Now, the apostle says, let us, let's this little word, us, he included himself, and that can be, dear friends, when rightly looked upon a comfort to us, he included himself, he did not put himself above any others, Hebrews, he never put himself above any others, he says, me also, let us, let us, let me, says the apostle, lay aside, lay it aside, every weight, and the sin.

[23 : 00] well, how is this to be done? Have we the strength, the ability, in and of ourselves, to lay these things aside?

Would you or I have ever laid these things aside if the Lord had not visited us, called us with that heavenly calling?

What does this dear apostle say? Wherefore, holy brethren, partake us of the heavenly calling, and that's the secret of it.

He had been called, let us, let us who have been called, let us whom thou hast looked upon in mercy, us whom have been called by grace, us, lay aside.

It's wonderful to me how these dear men and women in some places testify of the mercy of God, how they included themselves, let us.

[24 : 24] And do you know what the apostle was? in his early days, he lived in the spirit of a pharisee.

He knew what it was to speak against these people that he now loved, against these Hebrews, against the brethren.

He could go back to those days when he persecuted many, gave his voice that many who feared God should be put to death, in prison, put to death.

Let us ■ism said. Well, what had happened in his case had been a change wrought in his heart. Has that been changed in ours?

Difference? Let us. Let us. There are sides. Well, the apostle on the way to Damascus I believe when he heard the heavenly calling a voice from heaven so so why persecute is thou me it is hard for thee to kick against the flocks and there was a change roar and from that moment he could come as it were in this word us yet us says the apostle knowing what he had been and the many difficulties of in his experience now he says let these everything every weight let it lay it aside shake the first things first let not the secondary things the things of the world and things that are even of grace let's stand in the secondary place let them not be first well you might say what's the first

[26 : 33] Jesus Jesus is the one thing for I without him perish must let us lie or not let everything that is of an endurance of running in the race set before us or how we need grace difference at least I do I do some of us have had many years of a profession of the name of Jesus I do not say this boastfully I say it humbly I believe I believe it's there to the coming sabbath when I first sat down at the ordinance of the lord's house something like 54 years ago and still I know something of this text and desire to be more separated from the world let us lay aside lay on the side seek first the things that matters for eternity and our soul let us lay aside lay on the side bring forth those things to our remembrance pray for those things what things why the things of grace the fear of God let us lay aside he says everyone oh many things that why us there is there not many grief many sorrows much misgiving many things let us come closer even to those things perhaps are lawful for us to do but the apostle says lay on my side there's something more important though they're lawful things though they may be for our help and our comfort maybe even for the blessings of God to rest upon us in a temporal way providential way lay them aside seek first those things that are for eternity let us lay aside dear dear friends we have these things at times that are a great weight even sometimes of affliction you say how can we lay that aside when the

Lord lays his hand upon us well no but where eyes are up unto the Lord that we might be given grace not a murmur with his hand of affliction let it be the secondary things first first the things of God of grace this weight often laid upon his dear people and he's given the word to encourage those who are often passing through affliction and what is it many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord will deliver them out of them all and how often the Lord is being pleased to sanctify our afflictions being sanctified to us when do we lay this way let us lay aside every weight when can we lay these things aside why when the

Lord as I've mentioned sanctifies it I believe there's times in the experience of the Lord's dear people you you know something of it when you've been in that sore affliction and that you could endure it by the grace of God and you've laid it aside Jesus is the one thing needful I without him perish must let us lay then aside every weight and all the difficulties sometimes in the church of God or in the family saying nothing about the nation and our little denomination all these things that are often laid with weight upon our spirit yes my mind goes to those dear people who were praying for

Peter praying for him we can understand the poet taking it up when he wrote wrestling prayer can wondrous do bring relief in deepest trace prayer can force the passage through iron bars braise and gates let us lay aside every weight every weight they were praying and praying and wrestling with God that one whom they loved how braise is it one of their own household if I might say the household of faith yes they were praying for him the

Lord appeared the Lord worked wonders oh how true as we often quoted God knows the mysterious way his wonders to perform he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm as a slay aside every weight whatever it may be dear friends and seek first the kingdom of God now I do not speak lightly in these things as I know the difficulty and I am sure of this we need the help of God to do it we have the power in our own spirit to lay these things aside and to be more earnest diligent while the word tells us to seek first the kingdom of God to be diligent in search of eternal life and to be diligent in prayer earnestly seeking for grace and more faith to walk out what we profess and to be numbered manifest to be numbered among this great cloud of witnesses that the

[34 : 09] Lord has he's got a few witnesses I believe on earth I believe I quote it in prayer that these last days wherein we live is but a remnant a remnant but oh to be among that remnant and taking notice of the word in the text and to lay aside every which and the sin which doth so easily visit us will oh can we truly the word is true in the text so easily visit us how easily these sins appear appear into our own hearts oh how true it is hard by nature deceitful above all things and desperately wicked these sins the devil with his temptations and at times we give way to them sad sad does

I what do we want we want more grace to stand against those temptations sometimes the temptations inwardly sometimes within even within our thoughts we give way to the temptation sometimes in our conversation we give way instead of standing firm and to be a true witness of the truth that is in Jesus Christ the Lord the sin which doth so easily visit us do they not easily come oh how often one has perhaps spoken a word and afterwards thought well should I have worded it thus should I have acted such should I have spoken such oh these sins dear friend and that sin of unbelief oh how quickly it rises well the apostle was subject to that he knew all about him he's not given advice he heard without having such a knowledge of himself and desire to be freed from himself let us lay aside his every weight and the sin the sin which doth so easily visit us oh we can easily fall into a wrong spirit we can easily fall into the spirit of unbelief and the temptation as I mentioned oh so many sins that are around us in us why our carnal nation can do nothing but sin oh what a mercy it is if we have that principle of grace within our souls let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us dear friends you know there's sin sometimes manifested in us when we're in the house of God it's sad to say it but it is so and I'm sure the apostle would here again say let us

I'm included yes we're included even sins in the house of God sins when we are serving him sins as it were in in in the preaching I'm not exempt from it you say well what's the sin that pride can't be friends sin a prize is an abomination unto the Lord and how easily it comes along even in the pulpit times when we've been helped to say well yes and has been a little pride rising within one's heart let us lay aside everything and the sin which does so easily easily present oh how we need to pray unto the Lord that we may be kept and saved from these many things that are of the creature that is of the flesh well I'll leave it for this morning wherefore wherefore says the apostle may we at this time think upon it in this wise he's speaking to us oh the

Lord is speaking to us in his word wherefore seeing we also are compassed out with so great a cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and a sin which doth so easily visit us and our text says and let us run with patience the race that is set before us Amen and bring■ the name and and see you Thank you.

Thank you.

[41 : 04] Thank you.