

Anticipation of those things that are not seen

(Quality: Good)

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- [0 : 00] The second epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 4, and especially verses 17 and 18.
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- For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more 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, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- This seemed to follow on in my thoughts from those things we considered this morning.
- [1 : 19] For those not here, it was the last verse of the previous chapter. But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glance, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.
- And I mentioned that last evening I turned over so many pages of the Scriptures, but was unable to settle upon anything for this morning's service.
- But at three o'clock in the morning, the fifth verse of 379 came powerfully to my mind, as the image in the glass answers the beholder's face.
- Thus unto my heart appear, print thine own resemblance there. I found Charles had already chosen that hymn for this morning's service.
- Now, in that verse as we just touched upon this morning, there was that changing from glory to glory.
- [2 : 45] That full glory which awaits the Lord's people in heaven above, to which they will have foretaste here below.
- But now, here in the immediate context, the Apostle speaks of the troubles.
- We, those he was writing to and himself, troubled on every side, yet not distressed. Persecuted, but not forsaken.
- Cast down, but not destroyed. Perplexed, but not in despair. Why? Because by faith, he and those to whom he was writing, knew that nothing comes by chance.
- And that indeed, for the Lord's people, all things will work together for good. As we read in Romans, all things work together for good, not for all mankind, not for all mankind, but they do for them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.
- [4 : 09] In your great concern and mine should be, am I amongst that favoured group of men, chosen in eternity past, called by his grace in time, prepared in this life for that glory to come in heaven above.
- And so he says, all things are for your sins. Yes, trials and tribulations, bereavements, persecutions, temptations, all things come.

And especially do those trials deepen the work in the hearts of the Lord's being. I quite think some of you, especially older friends, as you look back over the years of your pilgrimage, have to say that spiritually, your best days were when you were in the depths of trouble.

We sometimes sing trials, give new life to prayer. Lay us low and keep us there. We could say a prayer that we really only ever pray when we feel our need of that we're asking for.

And so, by faith, he knew that all these things were redounding to the glory of God.

[5 : 49] And for which cause, he says, we find not. We read elsewhere of the Lord's people feeling faint, yet pursuing.

There is a difference between feeling faint and finding. When we feel faint, we feel our weakness.

We desire support. We want comfort of one that is strong and loving, and so on. Consider it spiritual. When we find, we lose consciousness, are unaware of our own condition, unaware of what has taken place about us.

So the Lord's people, though they often feel faint and weary, yet, we read elsewhere, the young men shall faint and be weary, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. read down to the glory of God, for which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

[7 : 22] How beautifully the last chapter of Ecclesiastes sets forth the weaknesses and failings of old age. Some years ago, I went through it at our young people's meeting, may do so perhaps again at some time in the future, just to touch upon one or two things.

The grinders, the teeth, cease because they be filled. Fears of that which is high, fear of falling, unable as we might say to climb ladders as they once did.

Sound of music is low as hearing fails. The almond tree, the white hair flourishes. The grasshopper, the noise, little noises irritate and be a part.

Desire faileth and so on. All these things set forth the failing of our old in old age. But what a mercy if the inward man is renewed day by day.

We read of the blessing of Asher that as thy days so shall thy strength be.

[8 : 50] glory. Well coming to these two verses 17 and 18 notice the comparative terms. A light affliction and exceeding eternal weight of glory.

And the light affliction is but for a moment the glory is eternal. eternal. And there is a looking not at the things which are seen but looking by faith at the things which are not seen.

The things which are seen with the natural eye are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal.

for our light affliction. But you may say my affliction is far from light whether it be a providential one or the burden of your sins, the burden of the exercises regarding the ordinances of God's house.

You may say this is a heavy and exceeding great burden. But a stone is heavy compared with a feather.

[10 : 15] But that same stone is light compared with a mountain. Light I say is a comparative term. And that light affliction providentially or spiritually is the path that all the Lord's people will have to know in their psalms.

some of course are afflicted more in bodies than others. But the world has their affliction. As we read in Job, man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.

One man said he was going to go to Australia to escape his troubles, but his friend said you'll find in Australia, down under, as we say, the sparks still fly up.

But it is especially of course the affliction of the son, grief over sin, fears in the way, fears lest we make shipwreck of faith, fears lest we bring a reproach upon our Saviour and upon his people.

All these are heavy in their way, but they are light compared with the weight of them. And they are but for a moment.

[11 : 47] They may last twenty, thirty, forty years or more, but how grief such a period is compared with eternity.

When a thousand years have passed, eternity will still have as many years, if that is the right expression, still to come.

Oh, how vitally important to pray for the Lord to prepare us for that great change which must come, must come, except we are spared to his second coming.

And then we shall be changed. We shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye of the last one, which is but for a moment.

Now these things in the experience of the Lord's people work for them. Work for them.

[12 : 56] Viewed as we may see in a moment through the spectacles of human reasoning, they often think they are working against them.

We may draw instances from the scriptures, but they are in fact working for us.

And especially in this way, are you far more, far more than our light afflictions, an exceeding and eternal weight of God, leaving providential things, but considering spiritual, I mentioned the affliction of the burden of our sins.

Does that not work for our glory, that we may be glorified with his glory, as the Lord said in words recorded in John, how that they may be partakers of his glory, the glory which he had with the Father before the world began.

We have just sung of it in our two hymns, not only as in the first verse, the glories of nature, but that strange design.

[14 : 41] Here the whole deity is known, nor does a creature guess which of the glories brightest shall the justice or the grace.

Now the full glories of the land adorn the heavenly plains, sweet cherubs learn Emmanuel's name, and try their choicest strains.

And then the poet prayed this prayer, was it yours as you sung the hymn? Oh, do think carefully, dear friends, at what you are singing, for we mock God with a solemn sound on a thoughtless time.

Were you indeed praying, oh, may I bear some glorious love in that immortal son.

Wonder and joy shall tune my heart, and love command my tongue. God we do not know a great deal concerning heaven.

[15 : 56] We have many things set forth, as it were, in parables of the streets of gold, and the glorious foundations and the gates, that pure river of the water of life, the trees on the, which yielded their fruits every month.

But, there will be no night there, and as I said this morning, that glorious thing to which the Lord's people should be looking forward to seeing him face to face, without a veil between.

As the apostle writes elsewhere in this epistle here, we see through a glass, darkly, in the song of Solomon, the bride saw the bridegroom through the lattice, but there to see him without a veil but to do.

But notice there is no full stop at the end of verse 17. I understand in the original there was no punctuation, but I believe the apostles were often, the translators were inspired with the punctuation they did put in.

These things, this affliction worketh for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while, while, we look not at the things which are saying, but at the things which are not saying.

[17 : 50] I read from that sixth chapter in the second book of Kings concerning that young man, the servant of the prophet.

When he rose early that morning and he looked outside the city, what did he see? A host, an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots.

He was looking at the things which are seen. And the prophet Elisha had faith to look at things which were not seen with the natural eye.

And so he could with confidence say, fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And then he prayed, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see.

[19 : 02] And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw. And behold, the mountain mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elijah.

Was it not so with Jacob? When the nine brethren returned from Egypt, Joseph was of course the ruler, Simeon had been left bound and Benjamin had not gone down.

And when the nine returned and said they would not go down again, except they took Benjamin with. Jacob, his name had been changed years before to Israel, but I believe the Holy Spirit deliberately referred to him as Jacob then, setting forth the old nature, the old nature of unbelief, going in the upper hand for the moment, and Jacob said, Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and he will take Benjamin from me.

All these things are against me. But they weren't, were they? He was looking at the things that were saying. But when Joseph in Egypt later brought his two sons from a manasseh to their grandfather, Israel was speaking then, the new man of grace, I had not thought to see thy face, and no, God hath shown me also thy seeing.

He is able to do far more abundantly than we are even able to ask for a thing. I was mentioning our ships to one of our grandchildren, and I remember we were taken as children, my brother and I to see the airship R101 at Cardington.

[21 : 13] The hangars are still there, I think of it nearly every time I see them. We were told how it was taken from the hangars to the mooring masts by 150 men holding on to ropes let down from the airship.

and when I was told it I imagined it we didn't actually see it but I came to the conclusion looking at the things that were seen that the ropes were holding the airship up.

No one explained it was lighter than air and needed to be held down. I came to the yard where I still live tied something on the end of a rope and threw it up in the air and it fell down and it puzzled me for years.

You see I was looking at the things that were seen the ropes I was not looking at the things that were not seen and so I came to completely the wrong conclusion and so would you if you look at the things that are seen with the natural and not by faith at the things which are not seen but they work for us while we look.

You see so often we get cast there we look too much upon our troubles and trials and don't look upward don't look upward.

[22 : 53] There is a little rhyme I think that goes like this two men looked out through prison bars one saw earth the other saw stars one saw earth the other saw stars one was looking upward one was looking down while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen that is by faith which was why I read as far as verse seven in the next chapter for we does that apply to you and does it apply to me we walk by faith not by sight

I commented on that aspect yesterday though I was speaking from a very different text at Barrow yesterday in Mr.

Wood's place how the children of Israel though they sinned in so many ways making the golden car wanting meat when the Lord gave them manna and so on but they always followed the leading of the whether it was by day when they could see what lay in front of them in the journey because there are things in our life that we see lie in front of us especially of course the end of life but also when the cloud moved by night they followed it whether it was by day or by night at the commandment of the Lord they journey at the commandment of the Lord they tarried in their tents walking by faith and not by sight the things which are seen are temper temper how many changes in this village we have seen in our 78 years so many changes not all before the battle but they in that sense are temper if time continues another generation will see more changes and so it will continue the things which are seen are temper but does that also not apply to our burdens our friend

Mr. Chapman on Wednesday evening spoke from that word in the psalm cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain you see it doesn't say necessarily the burden will be removed while you are in this life but you will be sustained by strength being given to bounty but those things which are seen are temper but the things which are not seen are eternal to remind you of how even godly Samuel was deceived by appearances when Eliab the oldest son of Jesse stood before

Samuel Samuel said surely the anointed of the Lord is before him but God said look not on his light look not on his countenance but I have not chosen him you might Jesse might but the Lord seeth not as man seeth for for the Lord looketh on the heart as he looks on your heart and my heart at this present time things which are not seen are it I read once of a surgeon who had dissected many bodies and he said he'd never found a soul so he didn't believe there was such a thing in a person's body well you see he was looking for the things that are seen not for the things which are not seen in the eighth chapter of

[28 : 15] Romans after the apostle had indeed written those words we have quoted that all things work together for good to them that love God who are the called according to his purpose he concludes the chapter who is he that condemn it seeing as it were it is Christ that died yea rather that he's risen again who is even at the right hand of God who also maketh intercession for us who shall separate us from the love of us tribulation distress persecution and so on now in all these things all these afflictions all these trials which are seen we are more than conquerors more than conquerors through our own strength no through him that loved us for

I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor hide nor death nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord God now in the original I understand there were no chapters in the Bible and so often and we feel we should just touch upon that which follows the apostle goes on to say we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of

God and house not made with hands eternal in the heavens are you and am I a tabernacle a tabernacle was indeed a temporary building but it was not just an ordinary tent not an ordinary tent it was a temporary building yes but one dedicated to the worship of God wherein were the sacrifices offered and the shedding of blood are they in the tabernacle of your heart then one day there will be for you a building of God not a tabernacle but as it were the temple of which we read in revelations not made with hands and eternal in the heavens in this tabernacle we grow in that light affliction but the apostle was able to look forward saying he earnestly desired to be clothed upon with that house which is from him if so be that being clothed we shall not be found clothed in that righteousness of

God in this tabernacle in this light affliction we groan being burdened but by faith looking forward to that being clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life well we have the ordinance so we leave these things what encouragement there is in the scriptures for the people of God who have a grain of living faith to believe that all those things are working for them an exceeding and eternal weight of God may that be your portion and mine Amen