

“The greatest affliction of life is never to be afflicted.”

The Dog of Affliction

Cawdray, 1598-1644

If a sheep strays from the flock, the shepherd sets his dog after it. He does that not to have the sheep devoured but to bring the animal back to safety.



Many times, if we disobey our heavenly Shepherd, He too may set His dog of affliction on us. It may be a “dog” of sickness, financial problems, or social situations. Those difficulties are often meant to draw us back to safety in His arms and never to harm us.

Gaining Compassion

Downname, 1644

Our afflictions make us more compassionate toward others who endure similar troubles. Those who have been sick are

apt to pity those whom they see pained with like diseases.

Those who have been imprisoned are more readily compassionate and accordingly help and relieve those who are restrained. They who have been pinched with debt and hunger pity those who are poor and want food to feed and clothe them.

This was one reason God laid upon our Saviour so many afflictions, that Jesus might be able to have compassion on them that are compassed about with infirmity.

“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” II Cor. 1:4

“The tears of sorrow are like spiritual lenses, showing us the world in its true character as a poor, empty, unsatisfying inheritance.”

— Macmillan

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There May Be A Time ...

Bill Brinkworth

Joseph, in Genesis, had many undeserved ordeals in his young life. His brothers hated him. They sold him into slavery, where he was later jailed.



However, the hardships he experienced one day turned into triumphs. He was made the second ruler under the mighty Pharaoh and was eventually able to help save Egypt and his family from a devastating famine.

At the end of his tribulations, we see how God used all those terrible acts done to Joseph. The times of testing were times he learned more about himself and life. He learned:

☞ There may be a time not to hold on to hurt emotions but to let them out and have joy. *“Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause eve-*

ry man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.” Gen. 45:1-2
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Afflictions Have Their Purposes

Brooks, 1608-1680

God sometimes afflicts us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. The flowers smell the sweetest after a summer shower. Vines bear the better after their pruning. The walnut tree is most fruitful when it is beaten and shaken. Christians spring and thrive most when they are most externally afflicted. Afflictions are the mothers of virtue.

Manasseh’s chain was more profitable to him than his crown. Luther could not understand some Scriptures till he was in affliction.

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There May Be A ...

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☞ There may be a time to forget what was done in the past. All the terrible things that happened to Joseph were to help preserve his and his family's lives.

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Gen. 45:5

☞ There may be a time when our preferences may have to change. We may have to move out of our comfort zone to be used by God, as did Israel and Joseph's family.

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:" Gen. 45:9-10

☞ There is a time to forget past events and live for a different future. Joseph forgave his brothers' cruelty towards him and even helped them.

"Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him." Gen. 45:15

This certainly coincides with the same principle taught in the New Testament:

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" Mat 5:44
"Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." Luke 6:28

☞ There may be a time that a lifestyle changes, and one loses what they had in the past. Possessions may be lost, but God may have something else He allows you to have.

"Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." Gen. 45:20

☞ There may be a time when one has to let God provide for us differently. Often, His new way for us is better.

"And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. 22 To all of them he gave each man

changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment." Gen. 45:21-21

☞ There may be a time to be surprised. Things may turn out differently than expected when God changes one's life.
"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die." Gen. 45:27-28

Like Joseph, most of our lives did not turn out as we first envisioned them. Our journey was not always on smooth, paved roads. Most of us traveled over many of life's "bumps." Life can often be rough.

If one played the victim, blamed others, and held a grudge, one may still be stuck in the ditch he initially fell into or was pushed into. However, those with Joseph's accepting and unbegrudging attitude may be able to see and experience the plan God has for their lives. What is your attitude towards the roadblocks in your life?

Afflictions Have Their Purposes

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The Christ-cross is no school book, yet it has taught us more

than all the words in many thick books.

All the stones that came about Stephen's ears knocked him closer to Christ. The flood waves lifted Noah's ark nearer to Heaven.

When was it that Stephen saw the heavens open and Christ standing at the right hand of God, but when the stones were about his ears, and there was but a short step betwixt him and eternity? And when did God appear in glory to Jacob, but in the day of his troubles, when the stones were his pillows, the ground his bed, the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his canopy? Then, he saw the angels of God ascending and descending in their glittering robes.

Afflictions lift the soul for a more prosperous, clearer, and fuller enjoyment of God. God makes afflictions to be but inlets to the soul's more sweet and full enjoyment of His blessed self.

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Hosea 2:14

"Christian, the God inside you is bigger than the giant before you." — Author Unknown

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Romans 5:2-5