

**“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 any of us 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*

By our afflictions we are often made more compassionate unto others who endure similar troubles. Those that have been

sick are apt to pity those whom they see pained with the 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 pined with hunger do above others pity them who, being poor, want food to feed them and clothes to cover them. This was one reason why God laid upon our Saviour Himself so many afflictions, that Jesus might be able sufficiently to have compassion on them that are ignorant, because He was compassed with infirmity.



**“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. He was hated by his brothers. They sold him into slavery. where he was later jailed.



Finally, however, the hardships he experienced were 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.

It was at the end of his tribulations that we see how God used all those terrible acts that were done to that innocent man. The time of his growth and testing were turned to times he learned more about himself and life. Joseph 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 every 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 sweetest after a summer shower. Vines bear the better after their pruning. The walnut tree is most fruitful when it is beaten and shook. Christians spring and thrive most when they are most externally afflicted. Afflictions are the mothers of virtue.

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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 in his life were to help preserve his own and his family's life.

*"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 our preferences may have to change. We may have to move out of our comfort zone so we can be used by God, as did Israel and his 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 what happened in the past 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*

☞ 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 others 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 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 was expected, when God makes changes in your 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 usually can be rough.

If one played the victim, blamed others, and held a grudge, one may still be stuck in the ditch he originally 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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Manasseh's chain was more profitable to him than his crown. Luther could not understand some Scriptures till he was in affliction. 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 did but knock him closer to Christ. The flood waves lifted Noah's ark nearer to Heaven; and the higher the waters grew, the more the ark was lifted up 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, and the ground his bed, and 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 up the soul to more rich, clear, and full enjoyments of God. God makes afflictions to be but inlets to the soul's more sweet and full enjoyment of His blessed self.

*"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*