

Sometimes We Need a Laban in Our Lives

Genesis 29:15-30

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Introduction:

Let's all face the fact...

- We just don't see the extreme goodness of the Lord—the love, the kindness, the very gracious disposition that He has towards us as His people.
 - He is full of mercy and kindness.
 - He constantly lavishes grace upon us, but we think He is begrudging and tight-fisted.

We have seen that this was certainly true with Jacob.

- We saw how the Lord made it abundantly clear to Jacob (and to us) in a night vision at Bethel, in which the Lord showed him a ladder connecting Jacob to God in heaven,
 - with angels going up and down to minister to him.
- Jacob had no idea that of all the care and protection and fuss that was going on about him—and neither do we!
 - Like Jacob, we are oblivious to God's grace.
- And to make it even more clear, the Lord gave Jacob promises with the vision, in which He assured him that He would be with him to keep him,
 - and would bring him back to the land of promise safely,
 - and that He would bring the salvation that He had promised through his offspring—the Son who would come through him to bless not only his family, but all the families of the earth.

Yet, even with this promise, we found that Jacob came to Haran about a month or so later with very little acknowledgement of the LORD.

- At Haran, everything was falling beautifully into place for Jacob—he found his relatives right away, he found that they had a beautiful daughter for him to marry, he was welcomed into their house...
 - But instead of giving thanks to the LORD for prospering his journey, and pleading with Him in prayer to direct him in wisdom and righteousness as Abraham's servant had done some years before when he had come to Haran to find a wife for Isaac,
 - Jacob seems to feel that he can get along fine without God's help.
 - Everything is going his way—everything is falling in place for him—and he sees no reason for prayer or expressing gratitude for all that God has done.
 - So today we are going to see how he lurches forward, propelled by the rashness of infatuation and the blindness of self-confidence rather than by godly wisdom,
 - And how he ends up with 20 years of hard and miserable service.
 - It was not quite what he expected, but it was exactly what he needed that he might learn, of all things, to trust in the grace of God.

Today in our text, which begins in Genesis 29, verse 15, we see how Jacob enters into this time of bondage and servitude.

- Please listen as I read to you, beginning in Genesis 29:15 and reading through verse 30.

This is the Word of God.

Genesis 29:15-30: Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you *are* my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages *be*?”¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.¹⁷ Leah’s eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.”¹⁹ And Laban said, “*It is* better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.”²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.”²² And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast.²³ Now it came to

pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.²⁴ And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah *as* a maid.²⁵ So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?”²⁶ And Laban said, “It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.²⁷ Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.”²⁸ Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.²⁹ And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.³⁰ Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

May the Lord bless the reading of His holy Word.

This is hardly what you would expect for a prince of the Most High God, is it?

- Here is the one who had contended for the birthright and had obtained the blessing of the firstborn in the house that was uniquely blessed by God...
 - Here he is, for twenty years that he will later describe in this way (Gen 31:40):
“There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes.⁴¹ Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.”
 - Thus Hosea says of him, **Hosea 12:12: Jacob fled to the country of Syria; Israel served for a spouse, and for a wife he tended sheep.**

This is hardly what one would expect for a prince in the house of God, but it was exactly what he needed!

- In fact, this is what we all need if we are God’s people.
 - If you are elect in Christ, then you are destined to reign with him as kings and priests in His house!
 - You are a son of highest, an heir of the kingdom of glory.
 - Yet, no one would mistake you for a prince, would they?
 - No one would have thought that of Jacob as he toiled in Syria as a slave, nor of his sons when they toiled in Egypt, nor of their sons who toiled in Babylon, nor of the promised Son who was obedient to the death of the cross, nor of His disciples who were the off scouring of the world.

Today I want to show you that this is the rule of the cross—that we must serve before we reign...

- Then we will consider why this must be so...
- And then I will urge you to embrace the cross—to bear it gladly for Christ.

So let's get underway...

I. The rule of Christ's kingdom is that we must serve (and suffer) before we reign.

A. This pattern is clearly set forth for us with Jacob in our text.

1. We might have expected the heir of Isaac and of the promises of the kingdom of God to have obtained his wife in a much more princely fashion...
 - to have come as Abraham's servant had come with an entourage of servants and camels and precious gifts that would leave the family of Laban breathless as their daughter was taken away as a princess.
 - a. But as circumstances had played out by the hand of God, we see instead that Jacob comes almost as a beggar.
 - We don't know all the reasons that he brought nothing with him and can only speculate that it may have been for fear of Esau or for fear on his father's part that he might not return,
 - but whatever the case, he appeared before Laban with nothing but himself, and the only thing that caught the eye of greedy Laban during the month that Jacob had been with them was that his service as a shepherd would be quite valuable to him.
 - So Laban says (v. 15): **"Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?"**
 - b. While Laban's offer at first seems kind and generous, it is not really appropriate to offer him wages for his service...
 - If Laban was generous, he might rather have spoken to Jacob directly about his interest in his daughter and given her freely, recognising the circumstances that Jacob lay under.
 - But instead, after seeing for a month his skills as a shepherd, he asks him to accept wages,
 - And Jacob, in his infatuation, plays right into Laban's hands and offers him seven years of servitude!
 - This was an excessive offer!
 - It was customary to pay a bride price in those days, but later on under Moses, the maximum was set at 50 shekels, and that was almost never claimed by anyone...
 - but seven years of service at the going rate as far as we can tell for an experienced shepherd would have been aa shekel a month, so 84 shekels or a quarter million dollars in our day at \$35,000 per year—even at minimum wage, it would be \$150,000.

- Jacob did not want to risk a refusal because he is quite taken with Rachel...
 - To him, it is a very small price to pay.
 - And you see that the supposedly generous Laban has no objection to accepting the offer!
 - As a loving uncle, he might have objected that this was far too much, or might have set Jacob up with lots of provisions for his return at the end of the seven years as well as giving him Rachel.
2. While we must be careful about excessive typology, we must not miss the typology that God has given us in His word.
- a. When Hosea says that Jacob had to serve for his wife in Hosea 12:12, it seems clear that he is showing us Jacob as a pattern.
 - It is a striking thing that Hosea draws attention to—that as the heir of the kingdom, **Jacob fled to the country of Syria; Israel served for a spouse, and for a wife he tended sheep.**
 - b. This is a picture of Christ, who also had to serve for His spouse, the church.
 - Philippians 2 speaks about this when it described Him as:
 - **Phil 2:5-8: Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”**
 - He had to serve for his bride as Jacob did; He had to serve before He could be the Lord of the church.
 - c. Robert Candlish warns that we must not press this typology to excess the way some have done where every little detail is made a type of this or that,
 - but we cannot miss the pattern that is laid so clearly in scripture that the cross comes before the crown!

B. Consider how this pattern is the rule.

1. In our series in Genesis, we have already seen how even Abraham had to wander about without a settled place, and how Isaac also was driven about in tents...
 - and now here is Jacob forced to serve—as it turns out—for 20 years...to obtain his wife.
 - More about this later, but understand that after the seven years became 14, he was left with nothing to support his family because Laban,
 - rather than rewarding Jacob for his fourteen years of faithful service so he could return with his family to Canaan,
 - That is what masters were supposed to do for their servants when they had completed their service and how much more for relative...
 - But instead of doing that, Laban took advantage of Jacob’s situation and got six more years of service out of him.
- All of this with Jacob and his fathers establishes the pattern for what happens in the future with Israel...

2. First, there is Joseph, who is forced to serve in Egypt before he reigns...
 - and then there are Jacob's other sons who are forced to tend sheep in Egypt and then to make bricks under oppressive masters...before reigning in Canaan...
 - and then later, because of unfaithfulness, the nation of Israel is again forced to serve in Babylon...
 - and then, they return to their homeland again, but are under the dominion of other nations that are more powerful than they are
 - which is where we find them when Christ comes, paying tribute to Rome and under Roman rule as an occupied nation.
 - And though they assumed that all of this would immediately change when the Messiah came...
 3. Instead we find that even He, the LORD of glory, comes not in the high estate of a prince, but as a lowly servant...
 - being born in a cattle stall, having to flee to Egypt (much as Jacob fled to Syria for his life and as Israel later fled to Egypt to survive the famine),
 - and then to live in poverty with no place to lay His head,
 - and at last to bear the greatest humiliation of all by serving even to the point of death on the cross!
 - But surely this is over now that He has risen from the dead!
 - And indeed, it is over for Him...
 4. But what does He tell His disciples but that they must follow Him?
 - That on earth they will have much tribulation!
 - That if they want to follow Him to glory, they must first take up their cross and follow Him....
 - and that is what they themselves testify, that if only in this life they have hope, they are of all men most to be pitied!
- C. My brothers and sisters, if you are indeed in Christ, you are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, God's royal Son!
1. He is preparing you to reign!
 - This is your destiny in Jesus Christ.
 - We need to be preparing for glory.
 - Don't you ever forget it!
 2. But understand clearly that the rule of His kingdom is that we must suffer with Him before we reign with Him!
 - This is the pattern that has prevailed for the heirs of Christ's kingdom from the beginning until now, and you must not expect it to change.
 - Those who preach a gospel that promises prosperity in this life are sadly mistaken.
 - It is true that when God's people have been faithful for generations,
 - He often rewards them even in this world for a time, but even then, they are still called to bear much tribulation in this world.
 - The rule of Jesus is deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.

II. But why must this be so? Why must the heirs of God's kingdom serve in such lowliness before they can reign?

A. It is because though we are forgiven, we must be purged.

1. We are being brought from the cesspool of sin and shame to the glory of God's house, and we must be scourged—
 - We are introduced to God's house by the symbol of washing with water at baptism.
 - We are told that it is not our bodies that need to be purified, but our hearts which must be renewed by the Holy Spirit.
2. And much of the Spirit's cleansing work in us requires suffering.
 - Each of us is given our own cross to bear—and it is not the same for any two of us...
 - We must not compare ourselves and say, "Oh, but I have had to suffer so much more than anyone else."
 - If that is so, remember the reason—it is because God loves you so much—He chastens those that He loves.
 - But do not be quick to make such a comparison.
 - Some may have great outward prosperity in this world, and their lesson is to learn that the world is not all that it is cracked up to be.
 - Just ask all the rich and successful people who turn to drugs and suicide.
 - A believer who learns this lesson as he goes may even greatly enjoy his prosperity to the glory of God—
 - Just as a believer who suffers bereavement and sickness and poverty may be filled with more joy than others because such a person knows that it is the LORD who has done it...
 - and sees how God is working through it all...

B. But what is accomplished by the LORD dragging the heirs of glory through so much suffering? What does the LORD teach us through our suffering?

1. First, through suffering He teaches us to see where sin and ignoring God leads.
 - If we are going to reign as princes in God's house, we must first see that nothing good ever comes from sin.
 - It is the way to death and misery!
 - The fact is, like Jacob, we don't see this—sin often looks like the best way to go forward and we feel like we will miss something good if we obey.
 - We do not see how wretched sin really is until we experience how it destroys relationships and brings anguish to all.
 - Ask the man who lost his marriage because of pornography what he thinks of his porn now.
 - Ask the woman who pushed her children away when they were crying out for her love what she thinks of that selfishness now.
 - Ask the greedy man who was caught for embezzlement what he thinks of such conduct now...

- Jacob knew that he had been forced to flee from home without provision on account of his own sin.
 - He was in Haran as a slave instead of a prince because he had resorted to deception in his efforts to secure the blessing of the firstborn that God had already promised to him!
 - Later on, when this is all over, Jacob will confess that he is not worthy of even the least of God's mercies.
 - In Genesis 32:10, when he comes back to Bethel, he will say to the LORD: **"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant;"**
 - But he is not ready to make such a confession in Genesis 29—
 - He is not ready to reign because he has not been taught to hate his sin—but this is what God is graciously teaching him at Haran.
 - After 20 years of hard labour, he will make his confession of unworthiness.
 - As long as you continue think that you are deserving of better treatment than you are getting, you are in need of a lot more suffering.
- The second way that Jacob's time at Haran shows how suffering benefits us also has to do with understanding sin...
2. Secondly, we can see from Jacob's experience how suffering has a way of exposing our sins and how vile they are.
- a. How many times have I had someone do some nasty turn against me only to realise that I have done the same thing to others!
 - Someone has been unkind to me and I am thinking, "How could they do this to me?" and then it occurs that I have done the very same thing to someone else!
 - b. That is, of course, what the LORD brought home so vividly to Jacob in this account...
 - 1) Here he is, the deceiver, now the victim of Laban's deception...
 - Just think of it—after seven years of service for Rachel and Laban pulls the switcheroo on him and gives him Leah instead of Rachel!
 - This was easy to do given the customs of the day...
 - It was the custom that on the first night of the wedding feast, the woman would be brought to the man at night, after a day of feasting, and, as the Hebrew word indicates, a drinking feast...
 - The man would take her into the bed chamber to consummate the marriage.
 - It was the custom that the bride would be veiled at this time for the sake of her own modesty.
 - And so it was that Laban took advantage of this custom and brought his firstborn daughter Leah to Jacob rather than Rachael! Leah, of course, was fully in on the deception.

- It was not until the morning that Jacob realised what had been done to him!
 - The undecorated statement says it all...
 - **Gen 29:25: So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah.**
- 2) And if ever a man was intended to see his own sin in the sins of others that were committed against him—it is here!
- He goes to Laban, in the typical eastern fashion, and says, **“What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?”**
 - This reminds me so much of my Persian friend Fariborz when Jeff Kingswood gave him some double salted licorice...
 - And Fariborz said, “My brother, what sin have I committed against you that you have done this to me?”
 - But look at Laban’s answer!
 - It must have hit Jacob like a freight train!
 - **Gen 29:26 And Laban said, “It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.”**
 - Ouch—Jacob is not only the victim of Laban’s deception, but now he is the victim of his own guilty conscience!
 - The stench of his own sin was brought to him with great forcefulness!
 - Jacob was now getting a taste of his own medicine!
 - Had you put him on a throne of power to reign as he was before this, you would have had nothing but exploitation and oppression—the abuse of power...
 - But now his is the victim of abuse!
 - Through Laban, he learns to loathe such wickedness.
 - So often when we are sinned against, we realise that we are seeing our own sins as in a mirror!
 - And let me add here that we can learn from sins committed against us even when we have not committed those same sins.
 - In David, we see the beautiful example of a man who suffered under the hands of an oppressive master,
 - And learned to hate oppression before he took the throne.
 - That is what God is doing in His children before we enter glory—He is teaching us to hate such selfishness before we reign.
 - He is teaching us to hate it in ourselves.
- So God uses suffering to expose our sin in these two ways—
- by showing us that it leads to death and suffering...
 - by showing us how vile it is to be sinned against—so unfit for one who is to inherit a place in God’s house!

3. A third thing that suffering does to prepare us to reign is break our pride and self-sufficiency...
 - a. Last week we saw how Jacob was quite impressed with himself when he came to Haran!
 - He showed the arrogance and self-confidence of one who thought nothing could stop him now!
 - Things were coming together for him and rather than doubling down on his prayer, he lurched ahead with pride.
 - b. It seems that even after his seven years of labour for Rachel, he is still riding high...
 - He truly did love this woman, the seven years to obtain her hand passed very quickly—he was the master of his own destiny...he was riding high...
 - Until Laban's trick was completed!
 - Had Jacob thought himself quite smart to deceive his father and his brother?
 - Had he chuckled at his brother's strong desire for the red stew that caused him to sell his birthright?
 - Well now Jacob meets a deceiver that out-does him!
 - What a master Laban was at this!
 - He exploited Jacob's strong desire for his daughter...never once does he actually promise to give her to him...he only says that it would better to give her to him than to another man...
 - And when Jacob has done his seven years, Laban does not come to him, but waits for Jacob to come to him,
 - And when Jacob says, give me my wife, Laban says, sure, and gives him Leah instead!
 - And when Jacob challenges him, Laban exploits him even more...
 - He knows that Jacob is desperate for Rachel, and that because this is so, Jacob would not want to embarrass the family by making a scene at the wedding...
 - This is what he ought to have done because no marriage is valid without the mutual consent of the parties involved...
 - But Jacob knows that if he were to bring shame on Laban over this, Laban would never consent to give Rachel to him!
 - It would end all hope of every having Rachel!
 - Laban has him in a trap, very much like Esau was in, because Jacob so desperately wants Rachel, now more than ever!
 - So he offers her to Jacob—as soon as the wedding with Leah is over...in exchange for seven more years of service.
 - Look at verse 27:

- **“Fulfill her week, [complete the wedding week with Leah] and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.”**
- What is Jacob going to say?
 - He has already consummated with Leah before witnesses, and he desperately wants to marry Rachel—his heart was set on her...
 - But what can he do now but accept Laban’s offer?
 - He is backed into a corner—
 - Now of course it was wrong for him to take two wives, especially two sisters, and he is going to pay for this with a very unhappy home...
 - He still has to learn that sin always leads to ruin...
 - The consequences of this sinful acceptance of Laban’s proposal will remain with him for many years to come—
 - but through all of this Jacob’s pride is being broken.
 - He is not so capable and self-sufficient as he thought he was.
 - He needs the LORD like everybody else.
- c. Suffering has this way of teaching us how much we need the LORD.
 - It teaches us that we don’t have so much control of the situation as we thought we did.
 - It teaches us, instead of relying on our own wisdom and strength, that we must rather cry out the Lord in a spirit of true prayer and supplication.
 - Away with all superficial prayers!
 - After Haran, we will find Jacob crying out to God as if everything depends on obtaining His mercy grace...
 - and indeed, everything does depend on obtaining His mercy and grace!
 - After His time in Haran, he will say LORD, **“I will not let you go unless you bless me.”**
 - That is real prayer!
- And a fourth thing we learn through suffering may not seem to make sense at first...
- 4. Through suffering, we learn to see the grace of God as we have never seen it before.
 - Remember that Jacob was oblivious to the grace of the LORD,
 - but that was when everything was going his way.
 - Once trouble comes and we learn to look to the LORD in the midst of our troubles, it is then that we learn of His grace.

- Not if you are an unbeliever, of course—then you just get more hardened and bitter and filled with cursing toward God.
- But as believers, suffering awakens us to see the good hand of the LORD upon us.
 - We see that it is all because of His mercy that we are not destroyed.
 - We realise that He has been with us all along to teach us what we need to learn, and that it is His purpose to prepare us for glory.
 - It is then that we become truly thankful in all things.

TRANS> How good the LORD is to teach us through our sufferings!

- How we are changed by them when the LORD is pleased to work in us!
- They are His scouring pad to scrub away the death and the rot and to vile corruption that is upon us that we might be prepared to reign...

C. But I would submit to you that it is not only our individual suffering that is necessary—but the suffering of the entire kingdom of God!

1. The whole church had to suffer as a body before we could reign with God.
 - We were unfit to reign until we had first suffered the full wrath and curse of God.
2. And Jesus Christ is the one who alone suffered for the entire church!
 - Jacob's suffering before he could be given his bride is but a pale reflection of the suffering that Jesus Christ had to endure.
 - We were unfit to reign in God's house until we had paid the full penalty that our sin had incurred...
 - And Jesus, the Son of God, was the only one who could do that!
 - He did this to prepare us for glory!
 - There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus!
 - Our sin was imputed to Him and was fully punished all that we might reign with Him.
3. And when we behold the suffering of Christ for the whole church, we learn all of those lessons that God teaches us through our own sufferings all more fully!
 - a. Christ on the cross shows us where sin leads—only to death and misery.
 - b. Christ on the cross shows us how vile sin is—our sin put Him there.
 - c. Christ on the cross breaks our pride and self-sufficiency—we realise that without Christ and His saving work for us, we are without hope—that no one can come to God but through Him.
 - d. And finally, Christ on the cross reveals the grace of God to us—when we see just how far He was willing to go to bring salvation to us!

TRANS> All this helps to prepare us to reign!

- Not only does Christ actually and truly atone for our sins,
 - but as we grow in our understanding of His cross, it truly prepares us to reign with Him...
 - We see more and more that sin has no place and that pride has no place and that love and service are the rule!

- The cross comes before the crown, suffering comes before glory.
 - Without the cross, we are unfit to reign.
 - We must come to Christ and trust in His complete suffering, and then we must take up our own cross and follow Him to glory.
 - We are not ready to reign until we have embraced the cross.

III. So my brothers and sisters, embrace the cross!

A. Embrace your cross by being thankful for it—never bitter!

- **Romans 5:1-5: Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**
 - You desperately need it!
 - The sorrows Jacob had at Haran were just what he needed.
 - And your sorrows are just what you need too!

B. Embrace the cross by being eager to learn from it. Be eager to learn from your sufferings...that you might be prepared for glory...

- Ask the LORD to do whatever it takes to prepare you to reign with Jesus, and then, when suffering comes, embrace it—do not lose heart because it is brought to you to prepare you for glory.
 - **Therefore [says Paul in 2 Cor 4:16] we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

C. Embrace the cross by remembering the lessons learned in your sufferings—don't dismiss your sufferings as a bad memory—but embrace them as a time when you learned how much you need the Lord...

- Moses instructed Israel after those bitter years of suffering in the wilderness (40 of them to be exact) to remember what they had learned...
 - **Deut 8:2-3: And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. We do not sustain our own lives, but God speaks what we need into our lives.**
- By suffering the LORD showed you that you are totally dependent on Him—do not forget that when you prosper again...
 - Embrace the cross by remembering what you were taught there.
 - Do not let the precious lessons you learned be lost on you!

D. Embrace the cross by sharing what you have learned through suffering with others.

- Don't be too proud to tell others how God dealt with your pride...
 - Like David in Psalm 119:71, we need to tell people, **“It has been very good for me that I was humbled low. It through affliction was that I Thy statutes came to know.”**
 - Let experienced believers testify to young believers of the faithfulness of God of how they have learned more through sorrow and adversity to prepare them from heaven than through prosperity and ease.
- What an encouragement it is for us to hear Paul testify that even he, who was so faithful, benefitted from afflictions to keep his pride in check...
 - **2 Cor 12:7-10: And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

E. Embrace the cross and draw from the wells of salvation...

- In your sufferings, draw near to God and look for that grace that God gives to His suffering saints if only they ask for it.
 - He is at work in you whether you ask Him or not, but suffering can be a sweet time if you will diligently seek Him...
- You will find in such times to have living water for you, you will find Him to be a fountain of grace for you.
 - Drink, drink deeply, and you will be satisfied.

Conclusion: Embrace that cross because this is what God has given you to prepare you to reign with Him in glory!

- How good the LORD is to send affliction to His children, just when we need it.
 - It is not what you might expect for children of the king, but the Lord knows that is exactly what you need if you are to be fit for glory.