

We  
entreat you  
on behalf  
of Christ, be  
to God.

Comfort/encouragement from Second Corinthians ...

## Learning through Suffering

What the Christian must remember is that the eternal Father is working an eternal plan. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, His ways are higher than our ways. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" is Paul's exclamation. "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). One of the most unfathomable aspects of God's ways is how He uses suffering as a vehicle for His overall plan. In fact, one of the main queries of the atheist concerns how a "good" God could allow "bad" things like suffering to occur. (Side note: an atheist, if he is trying to be at all consistent in his reasoning processes, cannot admit that "bad" things happen, because the very concept of "good versus bad" requires an outside standard giver

[God] to define what is good or bad!) But God uses suffering to forward His purpose, including the suffering of His Son, Jesus Christ.

- **Christ learned obedience** — The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews is one who brings to light the graphic suffering of Christ. "In the days of His flesh," begins the statement, "He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety" (Hebrews 5:7). Certainly the One whose "appearance was marred more than any man" (Isaiah 52:14), suffered with the highest intensity, and would cry out to the Father to bring Him safely through the pangs and separation of death, and deliver Him to the resurrection side. But it was more than that: "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Even our Lord, during the days of His flesh, had to learn complete obedience, trusting in God through His suffering.
- **Paul learned to trust** — Luke, in his inspired record denoted as the book of Acts, did not see fit to record Paul's afflictions in Ephesus, capital of the Roman province of Asia. But in his second epistle to the Corinthian brethren, Paul is willing to recall those for the encouragement of the brethren. "For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren," is how he arrests their attention, "of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired of life" (2 Corinthians 1:8). For the apostle Paul — Mr. Positive — to make the statement that he despaired of life, underscores the intensity of this suffering. "Indeed," he says, "we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9). This is the way the Lord teaches the lesson apparently; Paul was taken to the point of such anguish and such despair that the only thing left was to trust in God. Which was God's point!
- **Deliverance** — How the Father got Paul and his companions out of the situation is unknown to us. But He did, and the apostle lived to write this letter. God, affirmed Paul, "delivered us from so great a peril of death" (2 Corinthians 1:10). Furthermore, having learned his obedience from the things he suffered, the apostle was confident that, as long as was necessary, that the Almighty "will deliver us from death."

What lessons can the modern saint learn from this discourse? Certainly it is clear that suffering is something that God allows the saint to experience as part of his learning to be obedient to the Father in all things. In addition, through extreme suffering, the disciple of Christ learns to trust in God, to trust Him who raises the dead. If the individual Christian can learn to trust in the power of God to raise him from the dead, or to deliver him from what appears to be certain death, then the saint can trust God for all lesser things also. Hence it is written: "we are fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, in order that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:17).

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learn to trust God  
in suffering, he can  
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