

2 CORINTHIANS: DEFENDING GOD'S SERVANT TO HIS CRITICS

Part VIII: God's Use Of Suffering In His Servants To Disciple Others

(2 Corinthians 4:8-15)

I. Introduction

- A. 2 Corinthians was written "to defend the authenticity of " Paul's "apostleship and his message" to a church of believers who were susceptible to heeding false teachers who critiqued him, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552.
- B. God allowed this suffering for Paul and his evangelistic team as a necessary factor toward the discipling of their hearers, a program every servant of God needs to understand to stay productive when facing suffering:

II. God's Use Of Suffering In His Servants To Disciple Others, 2 Corinthians 4:8-15.

- A. In 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, Paul reported how he and his ministry team suffered while discipling others:
 - 1. They were hard pressed on every side, but not crushed by these pressures, 2 Corinthians 4:8a NIV.
 - 2. They were perplexed, but not allowed by the Lord to despair, 2 Corinthians 4:8b NIV.
 - 3. They were persecuted by foes, but not abandoned by the Lord in the process, 2 Corinthians 4:9a NIV.
 - 4. They were struck down, but not destroyed, 2 Corinthians 4:9b NIV.
- B. The fact that these sufferings were obviously carefully allowed but nevertheless limited in degree and effect so as to keep Paul and his ministry team from total defeat indicated that God was letting these servants of His face these sufferings, and Paul explained the reason why in 2 Corinthians 4:10-11:
 - 1. God the Father had planned for His servants in the Church era to bear in their human bodies the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus, conforming them to what His Son suffered, 2 Corinthians 4:10a.
 - 2. In this way, God also wanted to expose Christ's supernatural resurrection life that sustained His servants in the midst of their sufferings, a clear testimony of the power of God to their onlookers, 2 Corinthians 4:10b.
 - 3. Thus, God's servants were always being given over to the sufferings Christ experienced that there might be seen a type of His dying for Jesus' sake in the ministry that the resurrection life of their Lord might also be evidenced in their mortal bodies as a testimony to the reality of their witness to others, 2 Cor. 4:11.
- C. Paul applied this principle to his Corinthian readers, explaining that the sufferings he and his ministry team experienced, a kind of "death" to this life, worked to produce life in their hearers, for the power of God to sustain Paul and his team amid their extensive sufferings made their words believable to their hearers, resulting those hearers expressing faith in God's truth and hence leading to life for them, 2 Corinthians 4:12.
- D. Thus, the faith in Paul's hearers was the same faith in Paul and his ministry team, and Paul's team not only had believed in the truth, but they were also sharing it through suffering for the production of faith in others, v. 13.
- E. Paul and his team looked forward to the blessed hope of the rapture when God would raise them with their believing hearers as He had raised up their Savior, Jesus Christ, and bring them into His presence, 2 Cor. 4:14.
- F. In summary, Paul explained that all the sufferings he and his team were experiencing was for the sake of his hearers like the Corinthian readers of his epistle, 2 Corinthians 4:15a. The grace of God was extended more and more through sustaining them amid their sufferings so as to make their message believable and thus effectively disciple others. This divinely assigned suffering was thus designed to increase the thanksgiving of believers to the glory of God Who was behind this program of suffering for His servants, 2 Corinthians 4:15b.

Lesson: *Just as Christ accomplished our great salvation through His suffering, His believing servants today are led of God to suffer in many ways but in a carefully measured amount so as not to hinder them from continuing to serve the Lord, that the resurrection power of Christ in contrast to their sufferings might be seen in them by their hearers that their hearers might believe their message. As this suffering-for-discipling program continues, producing more disciples with greater spiritual growth, thanksgiving to the Lord for His use of such suffering in His servants is to be made by God's people to the glory of the grace of God in the discipling process.*

Application: *(1) Since SUFFERING in SERVING God is a CRUCIAL PART of GOD'S PLAN to EXPOSE the RESURRECTION POWER of GOD in His servants before their hearers that their hearers might BELIEVE the servants' message as from GOD and thus be discipled to the thanksgiving and glory of God, may we NOT be DISILLUSIONED if we suffer while serving the Lord, but may we rather EXPECT it and even be GRATEFUL for it since God is using it to clarify the TRUTHFULNESS of what we teach to our hearers! (2) If we face trials in many realms but never experience total defeat, may we realize that God is sustaining us, demonstrating His resurrection power in us as a witness to others. (3) If we see other believers face multiple fronts of suffering in serving the Lord, may we inform them of these truths for their edification.*