

## A Sermon on Suffering

There is a mainstream idea in our society about life after submission to Christ. Many have the view that in giving ones life over to Jesus, suffering, disappointment, loss and such the like magically vanish from their lives. This mainstream view has made many think that if bad things are happening to someone, den a sopm rang dem a du, for it is only “blessings” that follow those who love God. Many have clung to the “prosperity gospel” way in which Jesus is some sort of machine popping out “good life” for all those who would “sow a seed”.

Now we in our daily walk with God know se notn no go so! In our own personal lives, weve suffered greatly; sometimes our suffering caught us by surprise. We have often seen those devout to the way of the cross have a series of unfortunate events, bringing them to their knees. Som piipl tek op dem kraas, onggi fi jrap it bak dong when they realized that this wasn’t what they bargained for. It seems as though suffering is here to stay...

We think that suffering is innately a bad thing and that is the reason we conclude that it shouldn’t exist in a Christlike life. What if we were to change that sort of thinking? What if we by engaging the passage of scripture read in 2 Corinthians could see that suffering played a part in the Christlike life just as much as blessings did?

The Church in Corinth had rejected Pauls teaching because they had encountered preachers that were articulate, lived a higher quality of life and were thought of to be successful. Paul’s suffering and impoverished state had pushed people away from his teaching. Apparently, di sofareishan neva luk so nais! Paul in the text in 2 Corinthians responds to the Church in Corinth by outlining his suffering and showing us the readers how useful it can be in our walk with Christ.

Firstly, suffering shows that one is the “real deal”. The Apostle Paul mentions in his letter that we (meaning the apostles) commend ourselves to EVERYTHING as servants of God. “Wi shuo se wi a Gad servant iina evriting we wi a du (JNT)”. In the text, Paul despite his hardship gives service to God and lives by his standard of right and wrong. Despite the suffering, the Apostle demonstrates purity, understanding, patience and kindness. Our service to God, our adoration of God and the need to commune with Him tend to be heightened when things are good. However, it’s often not the same story when we suffer... One might say that “we are only human; you can’t call us out for that. Think of this however. Imagine having a friend that loved you to death when things were good but ‘dash yu we’ when things got ugly. Would that friend be the “real deal”?

The second thing that Paul demonstrates through his suffering is who to really depend on. In this day an age, people crave self-reliance. The tendency to depend on another entity is frowned upon because people have been known to take advantage of others. We see this happening in all walks of life: politics, the workplace, marriage and sadly even the Church... As a result, people hoard power and material wealth to secure themselves. We hear terms such as “self-made” and “independent gyal” on the lips of many! Now I’m not thrashing self-reliance. In fact, I think it is a good quality to have. However, the demands of our walk with God are so high that dependence on another entity, namely the Holy Spirit is required.

In the text, Paul not just outlines his suffering but demonstrates that through the dependence on the Holy Spirit, he is still working, despite the hardships. One might ask, “How does suffering help you to recognize God’s power through the Holy Spirit?” Material wealth and worldly value are like musical instruments being played in a performance. They tend to be so loud that we never hear the metronome keeping the timing of everything. In a period of suffering, it is only God’s power that will

keep us going. If we can recognize God's power at work, then we are in good hands whether we suffer or whether we are blessed.

Thirdly, Paul through his suffering shows us what really matters. The Church in Corinth had rejected Paul because they had come upon more impressive and wealthy preachers. It would seem as though they were saying "Paul can't be living the abundant life. Luk pan ou im pap dung!". Paul in his rebuttal to the Church in Corinth states "it komiin laik se wi naa notn bot wi av evriting kaaz wi biliiv iina Gad" (JNT). Losing everything but at the same time having everything comes from a knowledge of what really and truly matters. One can recall the conversation between Jesus and the rich young ruler. His priorities were not in order. Money took priority in his life so he could not give up his material wealth to follow Jesus. He had everything but at the same time lost everything.

Our priority is a firm belief in God and His way of life for humanity. Through suffering, we lose everything. We lose our grip on things that have little value: fame, fortune, relevance from our peers; but we find everything- the abundant life, a life submitted to Jesus, a life without worry, a life fuelled by the power of God through the Holy Spirit. The loss of things that don't really matter help us to find what matters most. Suffering affords us that blessing.

So in closing, I now hand out invitations to suffer... I challenge you to reflect on your own suffering. Has it proven you to be committed to your Creator? Has suffering directed you to Him? Has your suffering allowed you to prioritize what really mattered? Let us think on these things...