

Devotion Pentecost 2

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord;

O Lord, hear my voice. Let Your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope.

My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with Him is full redemption.

He Himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

2 Corinthians 4:1-18

Jesus our Treasure and Light

How does the 'god of this world' blind the minds of unbelievers?

How does the true God open our minds to the knowledge of Jesus as Saviour?

How does God encourage us in the sufferings of life?

Mark 3:1-34

Jesus' teaching and healing provoke controversy

Why did Jesus make a point of healing on the Sabbath?

Why did Jesus not allow unclean spirits to identify Him?

What do think is the sin against the Holy Spirit?

"SUFFERING & AFFLICTION"

The question of suffering has perplexed people throughout the ages. Why do people suffer? What causes human suffering? What purpose if any, does suffering have in human life? Some people see suffering as a sign of the non-existence of God. Some people say, "if God really existed there would be no suffering." Some people say "suffering is proof that if there is a God, He is not good." Atheist writer Christopher Hitchens wrote a best-selling book entitled "God is not Good." His premise was that suffering in the natural world shows that if there is a God, He is not good! If you have watched and cared for a loved one who endured extreme physical or spiritual pain, or if you have yourself suffered these things, you also may have wondered in your heart or asked out loud, "how a loving God could allow such suffering?"

There is suffering, because this world is separated from the fullness of relationship with the Creator, through its sin. The creation is no longer very good and humans are no longer good! We bring suffering upon ourselves through our actions. People bring suffering to other people through their actions. The creation is subject to decay, which results in natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Suffering comes because of sin! God condemns sin and sends judgements on the world. Our bodies are born with defects, we are vulnerable to illness and susceptible to injury and death.

Of itself the question of suffering leads nowhere. It doesn't lessen suffering or make it easier to bear. If anything, the question makes us feel worse! To help us bear our sorrows, the scriptures speak abundantly about God's presence in times of affliction. The psalmist sang, "*God is an ever-present help at all times; especially in times of trouble.*" The scriptures speak of how God works His good in our lives in time and for eternity, through the hardships we all must face in life. St. Paul wrote in the letter to the Romans, "*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" God works good through the sufferings and afflictions of life.

Most importantly, the scriptures speak of God sharing in our sorrows, giving us strength, encouragement and hope. God shares in our sufferings and afflictions most fully through the humanity of Christ Jesus. It is written in the letter to the Hebrews, "*We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses...Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace help in time of need.*" Suffering and affliction lead us to Jesus, through whom we receive strength to bear our burdens and the promise of a greater glory to come. St. Paul wrote, "*For this light and momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.*"

“NEARER MY GOD TO THEE”

(Public Domain)

**Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be: Nearer my God to Thee,
Nearer my God to Thee, Nearer to Thee!**

**Nearer, my Lord, to Thee, Nearer to Thee,
Who to Thy cross didst come, Dying for me!
Strengthen my willing feet, Hold me in service sweet
Nearer, O Christ, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!**

**Nearer, O Comforter, Nearer to Thee,
Who with my loving Lord Dwellest with me!
Grant me Thy fellowship! Help me each day to keep
Nearer, my Guide, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!**

**But to be nearer still, Bring me, O God,
Not by the visioned steeps Angels have trod.
Here where Thy cross I see, Jesus I wait for Thee,
Then evermore to be Nearer to Thee!**

PRAYER

Dearest Jesus, bless us to sense Your presence in all the afflictions, sufferings and sorrows of our lives. In Your humanity You know our struggles. On Your cross You suffered the pain of the sin of the world. There is no suffering that You have not Yourself experienced. Bless us with Your Spirit that we may be drawn closer to You through the afflictions of life. Open our hearts to the pain of others that in their afflictions we may share the good news of Your love in forgiveness and the promise of an eternity, in which sin and sorrow, death and mourning, are forever gone. In Your Name. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen

THE CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

BENEDICTION

2 Corinthians 1:5

“For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.”

Bible Knowledge Quiz

How many times was St. Paul involved in ship wrecks?
What affliction was St. Paul given to keep him from being proud?
What comfort did Christ give St. Paul in his afflictions?

Answers to last week’s quiz

Burning coal from the altar (Isaiah 6:6-7).
Water from the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:10).
The blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7).