

F.B. Meyer:

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake - Philippians 1:29

The child of God is often called to suffer, because nothing will convince on-lookers of the reality and power of true religion as suffering will do, when it is borne with Christian resignation and fortitude. And how great the compensations are!

He can keep in such perfect peace. He can make lonely times, when no one is near the couch, to be so full of sweet fellowship and communion. He can put such strong, soft hands under the tired limbs, resting them. He can give refreshment to the spirit when the body is deprived of sleep.

Every one cannot be trusted with suffering. All could not stand the fiery ordeal. They would speak rashly and complainingly. So the Master has to select with careful scrutiny the branches which can stand the knife; the jewels which can bear the wheel. It is given to some to preach, to others to work, but to others to suffer. Accept it as a gift from His hand. Look up and take each throb of pain, each hour of agony, as His gift. Dare to thank Him for it. Look inside the envelope of pain for the message it enfolds. It is a rough packing-case, but there is treasure in it.

And can you not minister to other sufferers? Can you not dictate letters of comfort, or pray for them, or devise little alleviations and surprises for those who have not what you have? Suffering is on Christ's behalf; it must, then, be intended as part of that great ministry for the world in which He, with His saints, is engaged. There is a sense in which all suffering, borne in the spirit of Calvary, helps men, not in the way of atonement or propitiation, of course, but by the exhibition of the power of God's grace in the sufferer.

He was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick - Philippians 2:26

Some have identified Epaphroditus here with Epaphras in the Epistle to the Colossians. Here he is represented as sorrowful, even to agony, because his friends had heard of his illness, and he would have wished that no one should be burdened on his account. But in the other epistle he is represented as always striving for the saints in prayer.

It is very beautiful to discover his unwillingness to have his sickness published. When we are in trouble it is best not to speak much of it, save to God. "Only inexperienced sufferers are voluble; those familiar with the secrets of anguish are silent." Let us anoint the head, and wash the face, that we may not appear unto men to fast, but to the Father who is in secret; and our Father who seeth in secret will Himself reward openly. The Comforter will draw near, will whisper His own consolations, and amid much sorrow we shall be calm and strong.

But with Epaphras there was probably another thought. He knew that the Philippians were bearing a very heavy load of sorrow. It was a hard and difficult fight for them, as for him. And with much generosity he was most unwilling that the news of his illness should add a feather-weight to their grief.

This eagerness to conceal pain, lest it should add sorrow to those who already have almost as much as they can bear, is very characteristic of noble souls. And we may quote here Robert Hall's words, on recovering from a keen paroxysm of anguish: "I have not complained, have I, sir? No, and I will not complain." How much of God's strength and comfort we miss in our incessant endeavor to secure the support which notoriety for pain and privation may bring from our fellows!

The working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself - Philippians 3:21

What cannot He do? From the dust of mother Earth He was able to build up man in the image of God, in the first creation; and from the dust to which death shall again reduce us He will build up again our bodies in the likeness of His resurrection body. The formless clay shall be obliged to yield to His voice, His touch; and if He can do this, what can He not do?

There may be sins within your heart that have long resisted control. Do with them as you will, they still defy you. So long have they been entrenched within the citadel of your soul that, like the Jebusites in the days of David, they laugh you to scorn. But if you will hand over the conflict to Jesus, He will subdue them; He will

bring them under His strong, subjecting hand. Be of good cheer. What you cannot do, He can. Whenever the old temptation arises, directly you are aware of it, lift your heart instantly to Jesus, and reckon on Him to cope with it in your behalf. The Lord will fight for you, whilst you shall hold your peace.

So with other difficulties in your life. The raising of a noble nature and character within you; the calling of souls, by your voice, from the death of sin to a life of righteousness; the bringing forth of a fair and well-ordered work from one which seems mere chaos and ruin - all such things are within the scope of this wonderful text. They must be easy to Him who from the dust of death can raise a body ethereal enough to be the home and vehicle of the new celestial life, which shall unfold into perfect beauty in His presence. Repeat the words until the rhythm charms away your doubts, "He is able to subject all things unto Himself."

Be careful for nothing - Philippians 4:6

Black care! It has always been among men, and perhaps more so to-day than ever, when the pressure of life is heavier and the constraint of circumstances more imperious. Are there not hours in which the clouds gather densely over the Ark of God, and the stoutest hearts tremble? Is it easy for even the Christian soul to look on a family of little ones, sleeping soundly, and know that they will certainly awake hungry for food, of which the cupboard is bare, and have no tinge of anxiety?

It is at such times that the apostle bids us pray. "Make your requests known unto God." We have not to agonize before Him, as though, like the priests of Baal, who cried and cut themselves, we shall move Him by our anguish. Calmly, quietly, simply, make your requests known. Take your burden into His presence and lay it down there. He is your Father. He who made the body, and gave it you, will see to the supply of its needs. Your health, your children, the condition of His Church, are dear to Him who notices a falling sparrow, and by whom the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

We shall not escape life's discipline. We may expect to abound here, and to be abased there. But amid all, Peace, God's white winged sentinel-angel, shall come down to keep the heart with its affections, the mind with its thoughts. Worry, unrest, anxiety, will stand without, as the noise of the street breaks in vain on the double windows of the city counting house, whilst the child of God learns humbly and patiently the lesson of his Father's love. Careful for nothing; prayerful and thankful in everything.