

## **ST. PAUL'S SORROWS AND JOYS**

– **SEPTEMBER 3. – 2 CORINTHIANS 11:21-33. –**

ST. PAUL THE HERO – HIS LOYALTY, FAITHFULNESS, ENDURANCE – HE SUFFERED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE – AND FOR THE BRETHERN'S SAKE – IN THAT HE DELIGHTED TO CARRY THE MESSAGE OF GOD'S GRACE – WHY THE ENUMERATION OF HIS SUFFERINGS IN THIS LESSON – SURELY "A CHOSEN VESSEL!"

**"My grace is sufficient for thee; for My power is made perfect in weakness." – 2 Corinthians 12:9.**

WHAT a wonderful man was St. Paul! Doubtless the secret of his brilliancy lay in the fact that he so fully gave himself up to God – to do, not his own will, but the Father's will – that the Lord could use him as an Apostle, as a mouthpiece, as a servant, to a greater extent than He ever used any other man, perhaps. In this we are not implying that St. Paul was greater than his Master. Our Lord had only three and one-half years of service, while St. Paul had a long ministry – a long period of service for God and for the Church. Besides, it was not possible for the Master to go into the details of the Divine Plan; for even His devoted followers, including the Apostles, were natural men, who did not receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit until Pentecost. Hence we read that Jesus' teachings were chiefly in parables and dark sayings. – 1 Cor. 2:14; Matt. 13:10-17.

On one occasion the Master declared to His disciples, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth;...and will show you things to come." (John 16:12,13.) There were no such limitations on St. Paul and the other Apostles. Their epistles were addressed to the saints of God in various quarters, to

whom they wrote freely upon every feature of the great subject – the Divine Plan of Salvation. Some of their writings were along lines that they declared were suitable for "babes" in Christ, and others were "strong meat" – the deeper things of the Divine Plan. (Hebrews 5:13,14; 1 Peter 2:1-3.) But they wrote only to the spirit-begotten, not to the worldly.

## **ST. PAUL'S QUALIFICATIONS**

It is not strange that the Adversary was able to stir up some little sectarianism even in the primitive Church, as St. Paul remarked, criticizing it: Some said that they were of Paul; some, that they were of Apollos; some, that they were of Peter. (1 Corinthians 1:11-13; 3:1-7.) But all such partisan sentiment the Apostle rebuked, reminding them that not one of these teachers had died for them; and that they should all be Christians, taking none other name than that of the Master. This same spirit manifested itself otherwise, too. The Apostles needed to grow in grace and in knowledge, as well as did the remainder of the Household of Faith; and although they had special blessings of the Lord, yet they did not all have the same length of vision at the same time.

St. Paul, the most learned of The Twelve, the one who took the place of Judas, had naturally the best opportunity for breadth of thought. True, as Saul of Tarsus, he had showed himself to be very narrow and bigoted in his warfare against Christ and His followers. But after his eyes of understanding had been opened, and after he had become a spirit-begotten New Creature, St. Paul manifested a wonderful insight into the things Divine. Explaining this insight, he declared that he had visions and revelations more than had all the other Apostles of the Lord together. – 2 Corinthians 12:1,7,11,12.

All this was in harmony with what the Lord had said respecting him: "He is a chosen vessel unto Me... I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:15,16.) Naturally, the Lord could use a well-talented man, a well-educated

man, who had fully given up his own will, to better advantage than He could use an illiterate man; and of some of the remainder of the Apostles it is written that even the multitude perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant. (Acts 4:13.) Not so with St. Paul, however. He had education and a wonderful breadth of mind. All the spirit-begotten children of God, able to understand the deep things of the Bible, are surely amazed at the logic, the wisdom and the power of St. Paul's writings! We know of nothing in the world that will compare with them.

Pushed to the front as the Lord's mouthpiece to the Gentiles, St. Paul's mind grasped more quickly than did the minds of the other Apostles, the things pertaining to the New Dispensation; and he perceived that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs with the Jews in the Kingdom privileges. (Ephesians 3:1-12; Colossians 1:25-27.) Naturally, some thought that St. Paul was going too far; and the argument was raised that he was not one of The Twelve, that he was not to be ranked as an Apostle, etc.

However willing St. Paul might have been to be nothing and to let others take their own estimate of him, nevertheless he felt a duty toward the Truth. This led him to tell us in no uncertain terms that he had full proof of his apostleship, and that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles in the understanding of the Divine Program – yea, that to him more than to all the others the Lord had revealed more of those things to come of which our Lord Jesus had spoken. – John 16:13; 2 Corinthians 11:5; Galatians 2:2-10; etc. **[R5942 : page 248]**

## **HIS SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST**

St. Paul labored hard with the Church at Corinth; and to have them fail to make proper progress in the Truth because they thought of him as an incompetent teacher seemed to him to be a pity. Hence in our lesson he is doing what he styles "foolish boasting." He did not approve of boasting; and yet for the sake of his hearers, he would

inform them along certain lines. And how glad we are that the Holy Spirit so directed the Apostle, that we also may know him better and may fully appreciate his loving loyalty to the King of kings and the fact that he was the chosen vessel of the Lord for the communication of the Truth even to the Household of today!

But the Apostle did not boast about himself – about his talents, about his oratory, about how the people were spellbound, about how many people recognized his ability, etc. No; he rather would boast of the things which others would think to be for his shame. He would tell them what God's providence had permitted him to suffer for the Truth's sake – scourging, whipping with rods, imprisonment, perils of the deep, perils from false brethren, perils from the heathen. To him these things were the [R5942 : page 249] marks of Divine love and favor, and bore witness also that he was a lover of the Lord and His righteousness, and that he had been willing to suffer for the Lord's sake, for the Truth's sake.

Thus seen this lesson is a very valuable portion of the Word of the Lord. It gives us information which we find in no other quarter. It sets before us crisply a picture of a soldier of the Cross and what he endured. It says to us, "Be thou faithful unto death" – follow in the footsteps of Jesus and this noble follower of His – boast not in yourself, but in the Lord and in your privileges of service in connection with His Truth.

### **THE SECRET OF HIS SUCCESS**

By and by will come the time when the noble St. Paul and the less prominent of the Lord's followers will all be received by Him into eternal glory, and be presented before the Father without spot or blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-30.) But we may be sure that every one in that glorious company will have been a faithful soldier, not a deserter, not ashamed of the Lord, not ashamed of His Truth. Of such the Master declares that He will not be ashamed, but will

confess their names before the Father and His holy angels.  
– Matthew 10:32,33.

The secret of the Apostle's endurance of so great privations – scourgings, imprisonments, buffetings of various kinds – is presented to us in the words of our Golden Text. The Lord's grace was sufficient. The Lord's power was made perfect in his weakness. And is this not the secret of every successful Christian life? Was it not even so of our Master – that the Father's Spirit in Him, His reliance upon the Father, and His looking for the light of the Father's countenance, were indeed the power of God working in our Savior to will and to do the Father's good pleasure?

The same is true with every follower of the Lord since His day. The Master truly said to His followers, "Without Me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5.) It is the Divine Power which operates through our Lord Jesus, through the Word of Truth, through the followers of Jesus; and this Power can operate in the weakest members of the Body of Christ as well as in the strongest. The Lord's grace is sufficient for all and for every time of need. We are not to forget, however, that this great sufficiency is not poured out upon the Lord's people unconditionally, but in answer to their appreciation of their need and their prayerful request for grace Divine in every time of need.

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