

Luther's Works, v.42 p.49

When God hears us in the first three petitions and hallows his name in us, he incorporates us into his kingdom and pours into us his grace, which begins to make us godly. As soon as this grace starts to do God's will, it encounters a resisting Adam. Thus St. Paul laments in Romans 7 [:19] that he does not do what he wants very much to do. One's own will, inborn from Adam, contends with all our members against the good impulses. Then the grace in our hearts cries to God for help against this Adam and says, "Thy will be done." For man finds himself heavily burdened with his own self.

When God hears this cry, he resolves to come to the aid of his precious grace and to enlarge his newborn kingdom. He attacks the arch-knave, the old Adam, with might and main, inflicts all kinds of adversity on him, thwarts all of his plans, and blinds him and foils him on every side. This occurs when God visits all kinds of woe and grief upon us. Slandering tongues and evil, unfaithful men are the means for this. And where such men are not adequate, the devils themselves have to serve this end. All this takes place so that our will shall be throttled with all its evil inclinations and so that God's will may be done in such a way that grace may reign in the kingdom and only God's glory and honor prevail.

Luther's Works, v. 44 p.77

Therefore, to destroy such works of ours as well as the old Adam in us, God overwhelms us with those things which move us to anger, with many sufferings which rouse us to impatience, and last of all, even with death and the abuse of the world. **By means of these he seeks nothing else but to drive out of us anger, impatience, and unrest, and to perfect his own work in us, that is, his peace.** Thus Isaiah 28[:21] says, "He takes upon himself an alien work, that he may do his own proper work." **What does that mean? He sends us suffering and unrest to teach us to have patience and peace. He bids us die that he may make us live. He does this as long as and until a man, thoroughly trained, reaches such a pitch of peace and poise that he is no longer upset whether things go well or ill with him, whether he dies or lives, whether he is honored or dishonored. [In such a man] only God himself dwells; there there are no works of man.** This is what it means to observe the day of rest and keep it holy. It is then that a man ceases to rule his own life, then that he desires nothing for himself, then that nothing disturbs him: God himself leads him. It is then that there is nothing but godly happiness, joy, and peace, and all other works and virtues as well.

23. God considers these works so great that he commands us not only to keep the day of rest, but also to hallow it or regard it as holy. In so doing he declares that there is nothing more precious than suffering, dying, and all manner of misfortune. They are something sacred, and set a man apart from his own works for the works of God, just as a church is set apart from natural works for the worship of God. Therefore, a man should recognize them as something holy too. When they fall to his lot, he should be glad and thank God. When they come they serve to make him holy, so that he [can] fulfil this commandment and become blessed, redeemed from his sinful works. **Thus says David, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" [Ps. 116:15].**

Luther's Works #52 Don't Let Go of the Comforting Passages

Therefore in affliction every Christian should so arm himself that he may defend and guard himself with the fine, comfortable assurances which Christ, our dear Lord, has left us when we suffer for his Word's sake. But if we do not do this, if we let the comforting sayings go, then when the cross comes the same thing that happened to Eve in paradise will happen to us. She had God's commandment and with it she should have beaten down the devil's suggestions and instigations. But what did she do? She let the Word go and kept thinking what a fine apple it was and that after all such a little thing was of no great importance. So she went her way. And when one lets the Word go, there can be no other result. But when we stay with the Word and hold on to it, we shall certainly have the experience of conquering and coming out of it fine.

You see that we teach these two things [*1. that God has appointed that we should suffer and that it cannot be otherwise. 2. We have the promise and assurance that God will keep his Word*] when we preach on suffering and cross. And anybody who accuses us of teaching nothing about suffering is doing us an injustice. But this we do not do; we do not make our suffering meritorious before God. No, far from it. Christ alone did that and nobody else, and to him alone belongs the glory. (Luther's Works, v.51, p.205-206)

#56 Why Suffering? 3. Lest We Become Sleepy and Secure Apart From the Word

Thirdly, it is also **highly necessary that we suffer** not only that God may prove his honor, power, and strength against the devil, but also in order that when we are not in trouble and suffering this excellent treasure which we have may not merely make us **sleepy and secure**. We see so many people, unfortunately it is all too common, so misusing the gospel that it is a sin and a shame, as if now of course they have been so liberated by the gospel **that there is no further need to do anything, give anything, or suffer anything**.

This kind of wickedness our God cannot check **except through suffering**. Hence he must keep disciplining and driving us, **that our faith may increase and grow stronger** and thus bring the Savior more deeply into our hearts. For just as we cannot get along without eating and drinking so we cannot get along without affliction and suffering. Therefore we must necessarily be afflicted of the devil by persecution or else by a secret thorn which thrusts into the heart, as also St. Paul laments [cf. II Cor. 12:7]. Therefore, since it is better to have a cross than to be without one, nobody should dread or be afraid of it. After all, you have a good strong promise with which to comfort yourself. Besides, the gospel cannot come to the fore except through and in suffering and cross. (Luther's Works, v.51, p.207)

#58 Summary Concerning Suffering

Since we know then that it is God's good pleasure that we should suffer, and that God's glory is manifested in our suffering, better than in any other way, and since we are the kind of people who cannot hold on to the Word and our faith without suffering, and moreover since we have the noble, previous promise that the cross which God sends to us is not a bad thing, but rather an utterly precious and noble holy thing, why should we not be bold to suffer? As for those who will not suffer, let them go and be cavaliers; we preach this only to the devout who want to be Christians, the others wouldn't carry it out anyhow. After all, we have so many assurances and promises that he will not allow us to stick in our suffering but will help us out of it, even though all men should doubt it. Therefore, even though it hurts, so be it, you have to go through some suffering anyhow; things cannot always go smoothly. It is just as well, nay, a thousand times better, to have suffered for the sake of Christ, who promised us comfort and help in suffering, than to suffer and despair and perish without comfort and help for the sake of the devil. (Luther's Works, v.51, p.208)