

MID-WEEK LENT 2

(Compline & Vespers)

March 20 2019 / D.M. Kerns

Psalm: 142

Epistle: 2 Cor. 11:21-33

Epistle: 1 Peter 4:12-19

Standing...

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Sitting...

By now you know that we are in a series on suffering,
which as Pr. Bruss said last week comes to us in so many different forms.

In our lesson from 2 Corinthians 11,
we have the form of suffering Paul experienced—
imprisonments, beatings, stoning...
being shipwrecked, adrift at sea, all sorts of danger...
sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, cold and exposure...
These sufferings came as a result of his faith.

I'm not talking about the general kind of suffering that humanity in general experiences
as the result of living in a fallen world and our own inherent sinfulness.

I'm talking about the suffering that comes to us because of our faith.
And when it happens God uses it as a refining fire
to burn away the silliness,
the superficiality, the sugar-coated spirituality...
He uses it to boil off the Chicken Soup of the Soul,
leaving behind patient endurance, character and hope.

We do not have Paul's list of suffering for the faith,
but we do have a list—
It might be the suffering of insult,
ridicule, loss of a friendship,
maybe discrimination, certainly loss of credibility...

Truth be told, these are light and momentary but, to be sure,
there's more suffering to come.

This is what Peter told the Christians scattered all over Asia Minor.

Nero and the imperial government in Rome were taking a hostile attitude toward Christianity. Peter's point is the Roman authorities in the provinces will soon adopt the same attitude, in that it'll trickle down.

And when it does, great suffering for the faith will commence.

All will be affected by it

and even in exile, the Christians weren't safe.

A fiery ordeal was coming to test them.

And they should not be surprised when it happens.

Neither should you.

You should not be surprised when your time comes to endure suffering,
hardship, or loss because of the Name of Jesus.

And as crazy as this may sound, it will come.

Sure—we live in relative peace and liberty, with freedom to assemble and the freedom to practice the faith we hold. But the looming clouds of persecution and suffering are on the horizon, and you know it...

Now listen, I'm not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet,
actually I work at a non-profit...

but this suffering for the faith...it's coming—and when it does,
welcome it.

Don't say, "Why me God?!"

I've already told you why...

If you want to say something you're given Psalm 142 to pray—
but when suffering for the faith comes, welcome it.

For God uses it.

Persecution and suffering are tools in His hand.

He doesn't cause it in the sense of stirring it up.

The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh do that.

But God, nevertheless, uses it.

He uses the heat of persecution as a refining fire to burn away the
junk, to rip off the veneer, to eliminate the trite and trivial,
going for the gold,

the nuggets of genuine faith in Christ.

So beloved, when you experience suffering for your faith, remember...

Jesus suffered for you first.

His suffering saves you;

your suffering honors Him.

His suffering was for your sins;

Your suffering is for His Name,

and ultimately for your good.

May God keep us all firm and steadfast in the one true faith.

Amen.