

The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke (17:12-19; II Cor. 4:6-15)

+ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit +

The glorious and all laudable Apostle Paul says, we are troubled; we are afflicted; we suffer and are pressed, squeezed on every side, but not crushed. We are perplexed, at a loss, confused, dismayed, but not driven to despair. We are persecuted but not forsaken. We are smitten, thrown down, but not destroyed. And Paul does a strange thing. He doesn't just acknowledge the negativity, he actually boasts about it. Boasts about being trouble, perplexed, persecuted, and thrown down.

Why? Because he is a masochist? Is he being flippant and doesn't care? No. Paul boasts in these things because they are a sign of God's power. Essentially he is saying, that these things only confirm God's power and that he is on the right path. Because were it not for God's power we would be crushed, we would despair, we would be forsaken and destroyed. So Paul wears his affliction, his dismay, his persecution, his being thrown down by the world, he wears these things as a badge of honor because they are a sign of God's love for man. They are the sign that he is bearing in his body the dying of Jesus Christ.

This is serious message for us. Are we not troubled on every side? Our finances; this building; our struggle to be a parish. Are we not perplexed and dismayed? People leaving us; change; the unknown. Does not this world persecuted and hound us, to say nothing of our own thoughts and passions. Are we not thrown down by the world?

But we are not crushed. We are not driven to despair, we are not forsaken, and we haven't been destroyed. Our trials, tribulations, and temptations do nothing but show the power of God and disclose to us His grace.ⁱ We wear trials and afflictions like a purple heart, tribulations like a medal of valor on our chest, and temptations like a stripe on our shoulder. Because these are signs to us and the

world that we are bearing about in our bodies, and bearing about as a Body, this Church, the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if these are things are the reality of our bearing the deadness of our Lord then, says Paul, they must also manifest in us the life of Jesus Christ. Only by sharing in the death of Christ do share in the life. This means we die to ourselves daily and pick up our cross and follow Christ, knowing that we are baptized into His death and resurrection. But it's more than that. We have to actually die.

ⁱIn the beginning God created 'adam, Adam, human being. But Adam, 'adam, human being, says Paulⁱⁱⁱ was type, a typos, a prefiguring, a shadow of Him who was to come- Jesus Christ. Pontius Pilate brought the real Man, Jesus Christ, before the people and said "Behold the Man!" Behold the anthropos, the 'adam. Behold the Man. And this Man, crucified and dying on the cross said, "It is finished." What is finished? Creation is finished. Humanity is finished, completed, and perfected in the crucified Body of Jesus Christ.

And so we too need to die that our humanity may be completed, perfected and full, being clothed with the crucified, but nevertheless resurrected and glorified Humanity of Jesus Christ. So that should this very building crumble before us, should we be dismayed, persecuted, and thrown down, even killed nevertheless these things are for our salvation, for our becoming fully human.

So we believe, and so we say, that trials, tribulations, and temptations are all for our salvation to God's glory.

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ⁱ St. John Chrysostom, "Homily IX," Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, v. 12, p.321-323

ⁱⁱ The following is inspired by Fr. Thomas Hopko, and Fr. John Behr via Bp. JOHN Abdalah.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rom. 5:15