distress. God does not send or allow distress to come to the believer unless it will enrich his life or bring him back from ways of error.

David found this so. He said, "Thou (God) hast enlarged me when I was in distress." He found distress was soul-stretching and character building. It made room for added graces, graces that crowned David's life to the end. This is true in every believer's life. The grace with which we can take soul-stretching determines the quality and quantity of the fruits of our lives.

Paul sought the Lord three times that he might be freed from a distressing messenger that buffeted him. Paul relates his experience thereafter in these words: "My grace (God speaking) is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I (Paul) rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Corinthians 12:9-10).

Writing to youthful Timothy, Paul the Aged was able to say before his decease: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

Distress was one of the agents that taught Paul to fight a good fight, a victorious and winning fight. He knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that the crown of righteousness was awaiting him "at that day," and that others that loved the Lord's appearing will also receive a crown at Christ's appearing.

Distress teaches us to call upon God. The Psalmist said, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

The prayer of distress brings God upon the scene in an unusual way. Distress makes room for more of God in you. "Tight places" and "no way out places" gives the believer an opportunity to demonstrate that God answers prayer.

Read Psalm 107 and note the effects of distress upon four classes: the redeemed people, the rebellious, fools, and seafaring folk. Distress is the element that makes each group pray. Speaking of God, Isaiah says, "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in distress."

Had we not experienced distress we would not know how to pray. It is spiritual distress that causes us to seek the Lord for regeneration. It is temporal distress that causes us to seek aid for temporal needs. It is physical distress that causes us to ask the Lord for the healing of our mortal bodies. It is the distress of ignorance that forces us to seek wisdom from God who giveth to all liberally and without upbraiding.

CHRIST — With us in Trial

One thing which contributed to make Caesar's soldiers invincible was their seeing him always take his share in danger, and never desire any exemption form labor and fatigue. We have a far higher incentive in the war for truth and goodness when we consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

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