
In the Valley

A Reader on Suffering

St John's Anglican Church Darlinghurst, 19 August 2014
Version 1.1



What is 'A Reader on Suffering'?

In August 2014, we started a series of sermons on suffering under the title 'In the Valley'. The title is taken from a Sovereign Grace song of that name. This 'Reader on Suffering' is a collection of various thoughts, Bible verses, quotes, hymns etc, all relating to the theme of suffering.

The idea is that you can browse through it and read the entries that attract you. There is no one particular theme- just a whole range of responses of people who love Jesus to the issue of suffering. Some are theological, some are philosophical, some are personal. We hope you find at least some of them encouraging

We envisage it to be an evolving work. So if you have something you'd like to contribute, send it along and we'll put in in subsequent editions (email to Ed at edward.vaughan@stjohnsanglican.org.au).

The contributors so far include CS Lewis, Tim Keller, John Stott and Theresa of Avila. And also some slightly less famous Christians- including Mary Kemister, Ana Luisa Riccitelli Mullan, and Brenda Pue.

Thanks to Jonathan Adams who got it all started.

A Reader on Suffering

'I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.' Psalm 119:75

'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' Hebrews 13:5

'I will be with him in trouble.' Psalm 91:15

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert those forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands...know in your heart that as a father disciplines his child, do the Lord disciplines you. Deuteronomy 8:2,5

Suffering as 'Chastening'

God says that he is disciplining in order to do you good in the end (Deuteronomy 8:16). Ways of suffering and chastening will not remain as such. Suffering will not be the final outcome. The dark path will end in radiant light. What a message for the people of God in their deep distress and inner conflict! And down through the ages this has been the experience of all who believed in God's promise that dark paths of suffering are followed by an "afterwards" when the heart rejoices and give thanks for the outcome of suffering. As our Father, God promises us an "afterwards" when He will "do us good in the end". Because his heart overflows with love for us, He cannot lead us into suffering and chastening without letting us experience consolation and happiness in the end. Hard pathways will never end in suffering alone. Of God the Father it is written "In all their affliction he was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9) And so his fatherly heart cannot bear to see us experience nothing but suffering.

Basileia Schlink, In Whom the Father Delights: Growing Closer to God Through Suffering

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been transformed by it. Therefore strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees! Hebrews 12: 11

Pondering Pain

Brenda is a Canadian Christian, who unexpectedly was diagnosed with cancer at the beginning of 2014. She has been keeping a blog about her experiences. This is one of the first entries...

It was good to have a break from radiation treatment today. We've been told that the radiation keeps working post treatments. I confess that this afternoon has been physically hard for me. So I'm pondering the difficult concept of pain and suffering. I've had a range of feelings about this. And this isn't my first time in the ring, staring pain down. We all instinctively avoid it. And yet it is unavoidable. So what do we do with it? Some run. Some self-soothe. Some get angry and frustrated. And every now and again, you come across a remarkable soul who embraces it. These ones, I believe, have learned profound truths about themselves, about the world, and about God in the very act of embracing. I'm aware that crux of our struggle is marrying the idea of a good God with human suffering. It just doesn't seem to 'couple' very well. One of my favorite books on the subject is called *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis. He tackles this unseemly marriage in this book. I commend it to you, if this is something you are wrestling with as a result of my circumstances or someone else's situation. This quote from the book resonates with me:

"We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Thank you you for your kind words and beautiful prayers for me and my family. Please know that we pray for you too!

Brenda Pue, January 25 2014

Her blog can be found at www.caringbridge.org/visit/brendapue/journal

'Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation.' Psalm 68:19

Suffering and the Cross

I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the One Nietzsche ridiculed as 'God on the cross'. In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through his hands and feet, back lacerated,

limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of his. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross which symbolizes divine suffering.'

John Stott, The Cross of Christ

Martin Luther on Suffering

It is God's nature to make something out of nothing: hence one is not yet nothing, out of him, God cannot make anything

Therefore God accepts only the forsaken, cures only the sick, gives sight only to the blind, restores life only to the dead, sanctifies only the sinners, gives wisdom only to the unwise. in short, He has mercy only on those who are wretched.

Quoted in Tim Keller, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering

A Hymn by Luther- A Mighty Fortress

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.

Martin Luther, 1529

Out of Chaos

Another blog from Brenda Pue

One of my favourite life quotes comes from Bruce Waltke. "Without intentionality, life will always tend towards chaos." Indeed.

The first words in the Bible tell me that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." The verses that follow describe, how order, peace, and beauty came to be out of this chaos.

This past January, I was told that my physical body was in chaos. When our bodies function according to their intended design, it is remarkable.

When everything in our bodies, minds, and souls reflects God's order and harmony it is nothing short of amazing. Years ago Dr. Leonard Hayflick discovered that most cells in our bodies age and die after approximately fifty divisions. This programmed cell division is uniquely, genetically predetermined for different parts of the human body. This means that different cells for facial features, stop growing when they should for example. One exception are cells related to procreation and birth which are considered immortal.

Unfortunately, cancer cells are also considered immortal. They have the ability to re-invent themselves to resist treatment, giving these cells an 'immortal' quality. At a physical level, this is chaos. God wants to bring order to my physical body but He doesn't want to stop there. He desires my mind and spirit to have order and peace as well. Redeeming what is in chaos is God's very nature.

What I know to be true of God is that He loves to bring order out of chaos. Knowing this about God brings great peace to me. The God of the universe has a good design for my life. He is for me, not against me. He is for you too!

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Romans 8:31

Brenda Pue, April 2014

Her blog can be found at www.caringbridge.org/visit/brendapue/journal

Suffering and Grace

Then I saw in my dream, that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a place where was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it, to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter.

Then said Christian, What means this?

The Interpreter answered, This fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it to extinguish and put it out, is the devil: but in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burn higher and hotter, thou shalt also see the reason of that. So he had him about to the back side of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of the which he did also continually cast (but secretly) into the fire.

Then said Christian, What means this?

The Interpreter answered, This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of His grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart; by the means of which, notwithstanding what the devil can do, the souls of His people prove gracious still. And in that thou sawest, that the man stood behind the wall to maintain the fire; this is to teach thee, that it is hard for the tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul.

John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress

I always knew, in principle, that 'Jesus is all you need' to get through. But you don't really know Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have.

A Christian brother or sister, quoted in Tim Keller, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering

Tears and Grief

Ambrose (born 339, died 397) was a bishop in Milan.

Ambrose did not apologise for the tears and grief over the death of his brother. Pointing to Jesus' tears at the tomb of Lazarus, he wrote: We have not incurred any grievous sin by our tears. Not all weeping proceeds from unbelief or weakness...The Lord also wept. He wept for one not related to Him, I for my brother. He wept for all in weeping for one. I will weep for all, in my brother

Quoted in Tim Keller, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering

'Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my god.' Psalm 42:5-6

God moves in mysterious ways

I guess that expression comes from this hymn...

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

William Cowper, 1774

Suffering and Atheism

I think that within many religious traditions there is much more of an acceptance of suffering as a part of life and not necessarily always a terrible thing, because it can help you become a fuller person. Whereas, at least in my limited experience, secular utilitarians hate suffering. They see nothing good in it, they want to eliminate it, and they see themselves as responsible for doing so.

Larissa MacFarquhar, secular humanist, Quoted in Tim Keller, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering

Encouraged Today

Another blog from Brenda Pue

This will be short and sweet. Carson (Brenda's husband) and I went to see our doctor this afternoon to followup with him regarding the seizures, the medication, and to ask questions.

Because of the nature of cancer and seizures, it's difficult to get a definitive explanation of what is going on in the brain. What we do know is that of all the kinds of seizures a person can have, mine is the best case scenario.

He reported that brain CT scan didn't show anything which may mean a lot of things, but my personal favourite is that my treatment (including prayer) is working. So we will wait for an MRI which will give more detailed info.

We also discussed the upcoming bone scan this Wednesday. When we asked our doctor about it, he said he didn't think it was related to the cancer (every medical person on my care team says the same thing - interesting, huh?). But here's the highlight of the appointment... Our doctor said, "You should be thankful for that pain, whatever it is. Because of that pain, we discovered the tumour. If you hadn't had that pain, you would not have come in to see me." Enough said.

Now I'm thanking God for THAT pain.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things"
Philippians 4:6-8 NIV

By Brenda Pue — Jul 21, 2014 11:26pm

The End and Beginning of Faith

When people ask me what drove me out the doors of the church and then what brought me back, my answer to both questions is the same. I left the church in part because I was mad at God about human suffering and injustice. And I came back to church because of that same struggle. I realised that I couldn't even talk about justice without standing inside of a theistic framework. In a naturalistic worldview, a parentless orphan in the slums of Nairobi can only be explained in terms of the survival of the fittest. We are all just animals slumming it in a godless world, fighting for space and resources. The idea of justice doesn't really mean anything. to talk about justice, you have to talk about objective reality, and to talk about objective reality, you have to talk about God.
Andrea Palpant Dilley Quoted in Tim Keller, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering

Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ
1 Peter 4:12-13

Christ learned humanhood from his suffering (Hebrews 5:8). And therefore we learn Christhood from our suffering.
Dan McCartney Quoted in Tim Keller, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered *Hebrews 5:8*

From moment to moment, you can bear a lot
Theresa of Avila

When Through the Deep Waters...

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You, who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

Attributed variously to John Keene, Kirkham, and John Keith

From Facebook

We asked our friends on Facebook what insights they have. And this is what we received...

Christine Jensen Just read Psalm 27 'The Lord is the stronghold of my life'

Susan Sharp Ps 46 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ...

Mary Kemister Psalm 139, Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 1:6

Dave McDonald 17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. 18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34)

Sean Mullan Psalm 88 is my best - mainly because there's no resolution - it starts in darkness and ends in darkness and that's the way it can be at time - and then there's Mr Tolkein: But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned to a new strength. Sam's plain hobbit-face grew stern, almost grim, as the will hardened in him, and he felt through all his limbs a thrill, as if he was turning into some creature of stone and steel that neither despair nor weariness nor endless barren miles could subdue.

The Return of the King: "Mount Doom," p. 211

Alan Peek An elderly nun who was a guest speaker at New Wine one year spoke on suffering and finding God and hope in the dark places and she told us not to dismiss or avoid suffering because (and I quote) "it is out of the shit that the roses grow"! Wise words.

Dave McDonald 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many. (2 Cor 1:9-11)

Geoff Scargill Psalm 119:50. Says it all!

Amanda Garlato And Psalm 121 is always a strong quiet encouragement.

Andrew-Penny Wilkinson 1 Cor 10:13

Our Father will always provide us our way out

Hugh Byrne The fact that a lot of Psalms are "lament" psalms says something to me. Then perhaps "Jesus wept" has a meaning here

Mark Calder I love how Psalm 13 starts with expressing complaint but then ends up with trust and love for God. Nothing's changed; there have been no answers given but the psalmist has realised God has been good and there is no one else to trust

Ana Luisa Riccitelli Mullan Psalm 42 is a very realistic Psalm. David talks to himself, he looks inside to see what is going on, and he talks to God. When we suffer we look inside we will find in us certain things that we might not have seen before and we might also realised that may be we have believed that because we are following Jesus, everything will fall into place all the time. Suffering is not something that we should seek but something that we should not avoid, which is an Ignatian way of thinking, something that I have been learning...

So, the psalmist has a conversation with himself and then an honest conversation with God, he takes his suffering to the one who knows about suffering. Jesus' words: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken', show us how Jesus in his humanity understands us.

Joanna Bolton Habakkuk 3:16-19.... "i got nothin, I see no light, and yet I will choose to stay with you God" (perhaps a slight paraphrase there)

Habakkuk 3:16-19

16 I heard and my heart pounded,

my lips quivered at the sound;

decay crept into my bones,

and my legs trembled.

Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity

to come on the nation invading us.

17 Though the fig tree does not bud

and there are no grapes on the vines,

though the olive crop fails

and the fields produce no food,

though there are no sheep in the pen

and no cattle in the stalls,

18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

19 The Sovereign Lord is my strength;

he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,

he enables me to tread on the heights.

A firm persuasion of the superintendence of Providence

'My dear Cousin, a firm persuasion of the superintendence of Providence over all our concerns is absolutely necessary to our happiness. Without it, we cannot be said to believe in the Scripture, or practise any thing like resignation to his will. If I am convinced, that no affliction can befall me, without the permission of God, I am convinced likewise, that he sees, and knows, that I am afflicted; believing this, I must, in the same degree, believe, that if I pray to him for deliverance, he hears me; I must needs know likewise, with equal assurance, that if he hears, he will also deliver me, if that will upon the whole be most conducive to my happiness; and if he does not deliver me, I may be well assured, that he has none but the most benevolent intention in declining it. He made us, not because we could add to his happiness, which was always perfect, but that we might be happy ourselves; and will he not in all his dispensations towards us, even in the minutest, consult that end for which he made us? To suppose the contrary, is (which we are not always aware of) affronting every one of his attributes; and at the same time the certain consequence of disbelieving his care for us is, that we renounce utterly our dependence upon him. In this view it will appear plainly, that the line of duty is not stretched too tight, when we are told, that we ought to accept every thing at his hands as a blessing, and to be thankful even while we smart under the rod of iron, with which he sometimes rules us. Without this persuasion, every blessing, however we may think ourselves happy in it, loses its greatest recommendation; and every affliction is intolerable. Death itself must be welcome to him who has this faith, and he who has it not, must aim at it, if he is not a madman.'

William Cowper, Letter to Lady Hesketh, 4 September 1765.

Adrian Plass – God doesn't call us to give ourselves in little bits and pieces

When I became a Christian, I said "Lord fill me in, tell me what I'll suffer in this world of shame and sin?"

He said "Your body may be killed and left to rot and stink"

He said "Do you still want to follow me?" and I said "Amen – I think".

"I think I said Amen, Amen I said I think. Amen, Amen – I'm not completely sure.

Let's run through that again. You said my body maybe killed and left to rot and stink". I said "Amen – I think".

"But there must be other ways to follow you" I said "I really would prefer to end up dying in my bed".

"Well yes, you could put up with scorn and sneers and spit. Do you still want to follow me?"

I said "Amen – a bit"

"A bit Amen, Amen a bit, I'm not completely sure, could we just run through that again?"

You said I could put with scorn and sneers and maybe also spit.

Well yes, I have made up my mind and I say Amen – a bit"

Well I sat back and thought a while and tried a different ploy

"O Lord" I said "the good book says that Christians live in joy".

"That's true" he said "you are going to need the joy to bear the pain and sorrow".

And he said "Do you want to follow me?" and I said "Amen – tomorrow".

"Tomorrow Lord I'll say it then, I've got to get it clear, let's run through that again?"

You say that I will need the joy to bear the pain and sorrow. Well, yes I think I've got it straight – I'll bear the pain – tomorrow"

He said "Look I'm not asking you to spend an hour with me, a quick salvation sandwich and a cup of sanctitea. The cost is you, not half of you but every single bit. Now tell me will you follow me?" I said "Amen – no I quit".

I'm awfully sorry God but I don't think that religion is a manly thing to do.

He said "Forget religion than and think about my son and tell me if you are man enough to do what he has done?"

Are you man enough to see the needs

Are you man enough to go

Are you man enough to care for those who no one wants to know

Are you man enough to say the things that people hate to hear

Are you man enough to battle through Gethsemane in loneliness and fear

And listen are you man enough stand it at the end the moment of betrayal by the kisses of a friend

Are you man enough to hold your tongue

Are you man enough to cry

Are you man enough when the nails break your body

Are you man enough to die

Are you man enough to take the pain and wear it like a crown

Are you man enough to love the world and turn it upside down

Are you man enough to follow me? I ask you once again?"

I said "O Lord, I'm frightened, but I also said Amen".

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen. I said "O Lord, I'm frightened, but I also said Amen".

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are his everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you. Deuteronomy 33:27

SONG ON YOUTUBE

I Have to Believe, sung by Rita Springer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKK130u2uGA>

She sure can sing!!!

'Dredging the very depths of his soul'

'Remember your Creator, and make it a conviction that God is a good Creator. Yes, our lives may be hectic. But before tragedy comes, remember the Lord. Get that truth into your minds and your hearts.

One of the most painful situations or pastoral situations I've ever been called into was one night I got a phone call from a family to go and visit an elderly couple, and break to them the news that their only son had dropped dead that very afternoon. He had gone out, I think it was to a speedway race or a motor car race, relatively young; hadn't known anything of any heart trouble, and that very afternoon dropped dead with a heart attack. Well, I was asked to go and break the news to that elderly couple. And I remember the

father as he sobbed, repeated over and over again, words to the effect – I can't say I'm quoting the exact words – but to the effect that the Lord is good, the Lord is good, the Lord is good.

You see, what he was doing was dredging the very depths of his soul to find strength to face the next minute. And I'll tell you this: the resources were there, the resources were there. The Word of God was there, the convictions were there – not by accident, but because they had been placed there, they had been stored there, like a harvest. He had all his life been harvesting in the good things that God had given to him in the Word of God. And they were there when he needed them. They were convictions; they weren't just stray thoughts that floated on the top of his mind. They were in the depths of his conviction. And they were there for him. They were there as a strength.'

- Excerpt of a sermon delivered by Reverend Andrew Stewart, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Geelong

Psalm 66:8-20

*Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard;
he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.*

For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs.

*You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance.*

*I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you- vows my lips
promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble.*

I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats.

Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue.

*If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely
listened and has heard my prayer.*

Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

Romans 8:35-39

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? **36** As it is written:

'For your sake we face death all day long;

we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39** neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A Commentary on Romans 8:35-39

“What conclusion are we to draw from this? Surely the strongest possible comfort and encouragement. With God on our side what enemy can we fear?

As Abraham spared not Isaac, so He spared not the Son who shared His Godhead, but allowed him to die for all believers.

Is not this a sure proof that along with that one transcendent gift His bounty will provide all that is necessary for our salvation?

Where shall accusers be found against those whom God has chosen? When God pronounces righteous, who shall condemn? For us Christ has died- I should say rather rose again, and not only rose but sits enthroned at His Father's side , and there continually pleads for us. His love is our security. And that love is so strong that nothing on earth can come between us and it.

The sea of troubles that a Christian has to face, hardship and persecution of every kind, are powerless against it. Though the words of the Psalmist might well be applied to us, in which speaking of the faithful few in his own generation, he described them as 'for God's sake butchered all day long, treated like sheep in the shambles'. We too are no better than they. And yet, crushed and routed though we may seem, the love of Christ crowns us with surpassing victory. For I am convinced that no form or phase of being, whether abstract or personal; not life or its negation; not any hierarchy of spirits; no dimension of time; no supernatural powers; no dimension of space; no world invisible to us now, - will ever come between us and the love which God has brought so near to us in Jesus Messiah our Lord.

From The International Critical Commentary on Romans Sanday and Hedlam (1895)

Some Good Books to Read

