

**PAULINE THOUGHT ON SUFFERING: A HISTORICAL-RELIGIOUS
INVESTIGATION**

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NALINI MOSES

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SUPERVISOR: PROF C DU P LE ROUX

JOINT SUPERVISOR: PROF C J A GREYLING

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SUMMARY

This research conducted according to the phenomenological method investigated the Pauline concept of suffering. It traces the historical development in Paul's thinking on suffering. The two lines of Paul's suffering are his personal suffering - his struggle with the thorn in the flesh; and his suffering through persecution for Christ's sake. It is through his personal suffering that Paul endears himself to his readers. 2 Cor.12:1-10 reveals the function of the thorn - it brings vindication. Paul's personal suffering merges with his suffering for Christ, and the note of joy, hope, glory and vindication is emphasized. Just as Paul shares in Christ's suffering, he will share in the victory and glory too. Paul sees his suffering in the light of Christ's suffering and the suffering of his readers in the light of his suffering.

TITLE OF DISSERTATION

PAULINE THOUGHT ON SUFFERING: A HISTORICAL-RELIGIOUS INVESTIGATION.

apostle; Pauline; New Testament; personal suffering; suffering for Christ; vindication; functions; Christ; glory; victory.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Gal.	-	Galatians
Thess.	-	Thessalonians
Cor.	-	Corinthians
Rom.	-	Romans
Eph.	-	Ephesians
Col.	-	Colossians
Phil.	-	Philippians
Tit.	-	Titus
Tim.	-	Timothy

DEDICATION

A. IN MEMORY OF MY HUSBAND, JOHN

whose death set me on this path of search;

B. IN MEMORY OF MY MOTHER,

whose life taught me fortitude, faith and courage;

C. FOR JESUS CHRIST, LORD AND SAVIOUR,

Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 AIMS

The Bible describes suffering in both the Old and New Testament. Much has been written about Job's suffering in the Old Testament and that of Christ's in the New Testament, but this study is directed at the suffering in the context in which Paul experienced it.

Not only will this study discuss Paul's suffering, but it will reveal how Paul saw his suffering: in the light of Christ's suffering and the suffering of Christians against this backdrop. This contextualization demonstrates that neither Paul nor the Christian suffers in isolation, but rather that suffering is an integral part of the walk with Christ.

Since Paul had written several letters in which he mentions his sufferings, this study will trace the historical development in Paul's thinking on suffering in his letters. Each time Paul suffered the circumstances and reasons seemed to differ. A closer look at these changes will help to assess Paul's attitude towards suffering and his overcoming grace and triumph.

The Bible teaches about God, man, evil and about life and death. What does the Bible teach about suffering? A glimpse into the suffering of Paul will introduce the outsider to

what the scripture teaches about suffering. This look at Paul's suffering will evoke a deeper more profound understanding of the Pauline concept of suffering.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology in this thesis consists of the phenomenological approach used in conjunction with the hermeneutical approach. In order to trace the historical development in Paul's thinking on suffering, the methodology will include the historical description as well. The concluding chapter will be interpreted through Bloomquist's (1993) four-fold functions of suffering.

1.2.1 PHENOMENOLOGY

"Phenomenology is used in two distinct senses. Firstly it is used to denote that branch of science of religion which systematizes and classifies religious phenomena. Secondly it is used in a wider sense to denote methodology" (Kruger 1985:19). Epoche, intentionality and essence are the key concepts to be discussed under Phenomenology.

1.2.1.1 EPOCHE

Phenomenology insists on penetration to the core of things. It refuses to take anything for granted. Therefore the researcher has to suspend her own experience and understanding of suffering and concentrate on Paul's concept of suffering and victory. Because the researcher

cannot deny her own ideas and presuppositions, she must be more conscious of preventing it from distorting the investigation on hand.

What was the nature of this phenomenon of suffering as it appears in the letters of Paul?

He suffered as a result of the jealousy of the Jews. Paul's preaching of Jesus as Saviour, stirred up plots to persecute Paul and Barnabas, (Acts 13 v 50). In Lystra he was stoned and dragged out of the city, thinking him to be dead. In spite of the hardships, Paul returned here for the sake of the new converts - always for Christ sake. Paul's life is an example that he had to go through much tribulation to enter the Kingdom.

Another reason for Paul suffering was that Paul was charged by the slave owners for causing racial tension and bringing disorder. Paul and Silas were beaten with rods, cast into prison, and their feet were put into stocks. He was also charged with treason for proclaiming another king other than Caesar.

In Jerusalem, Paul was beaten and dragged out of the temple. During his term of imprisonment, two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome, Paul wrote his most inspiring letters. These letters reflect the most profound spiritual truths.

1.2.1.2 INTENTIONALITY

In the phenomenological perspective, what we want to see and describe adequately is how people themselves experience

their own world. Phenomenology refers to this experience as intentionally. Phenomenology focuses on things as they appear in the human consciousness. By application then in this study, the researcher would focus not on God in Himself but on God as Paul sees him and how Paul perceives his suffering. Paul saw his God as follows:

"Since his Damascus Road encounter, Paul experienced Jesus as the risen Lord - the enthroned Christ who is at the same time the crucified Jesus" (Bruce 1977:100).

Paul describes the Lord as the crucified Jesus and Moltmann calls Him "Suffering One". Greathouse (1968:503) is of the opinion that Paul found in the Suffering Servant figure the pattern for his own ministry. This identification in the suffering of Christ and the church arises out of a redemptive participation in the life and death of Christ which Paul finds at the heart of being in Christ.

Paul describes his own suffering in relation to the Lord (2 Cor 1:3-7). It is because Paul's afflictions are so vitally related to the sufferings of Christ. He unites the sufferings of the Church - apostle and people - with the suffering of Christ.

1.2.1.3 ESSENCE

Kruger states that phenomenology is driving at the heart of things - its insistence to look for "the essence of things" In terms of Paul's suffering this would mean searching for the root cause of Paul's suffering. That is found in Christ.

Paul suffered because the Lord he served suffered (Romans 8:17). Paul continues the idea that there is no sharing in Christ's glory unless there is a sharing in his suffering. This sharing delineates (methodologically) suffering functionally in a four-fold way:

1. It is through his words on suffering that Paul endears himself to the Philippians.
2. Paul never limits his suffering to himself. He includes the suffering of others.
3. Paul's use of the Christ type who as servant suffered and was vindicated.
4. Paul's suffering points beyond itself to vindication. (Bloomquist 1993:192). The concluding chapter will be interpreted in the light of these functions.

1.2.2 THE HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

Hermeneutics deals with the interpretation and communication of the meaning of the text to a contemporary society. In order to appreciate the Pauline letters as a work of literary art, one cannot however, ignore the socio - cultural background against which the text was written.

When interpreting the Pauline letters it is important that the researcher recognises the political religious, cultural and historical situation of contemporary society to which the text is being applied. The exegete then has to identify the way in which this interpretation of the text conforms to the intended message of the text in its original context.

The suffering that Paul was subject to, must be seen in the context of his day. What were the implications of the suffering for the author, Paul, and his original readers? Further what are the implications of Paul's writing on the present day reader?

Thus the underlying problem in hermeneutics is the concept of the two horizons (Gadamer 1979). Hermeneutics in more recent times, begins with the recognition that historical conditioning is two-sided: the modern interpretation, no less than the text, stands in a given historical context and tradition.

If the text is to be understood, there must occur an engagement between the two horizons viz. those of the text - Paul and his context - and those of the modern reader or hearer. The modern reader must be able to relate his own horizons to those of the text. When Paul describes his suffering in 2 Cor 11:23-28, he must be able to perceive Paul's suffering in context of the time and to re-interpret that in terms of the present day in order to understand what Paul was saying.

According to Kruger (1982:21), "the past speaks to us. This implies that when we understand something from the past, we do not merely reconstruct it as it once was, rather we integrate the dynamic past and the actual present. It is not to reproduce or restore, rather it is to experience the spark of meaning when the two worlds meet. It is to reach to

something from where one is. It wants to hear clearly what was said and heard in a world to which the interpreter is a stranger."

1.2.2.1 PAUL'S CONCEPT OF SUFFERING AS KEY HERMENEUTICAL CONCEPT

In his letters, Paul does not consciously work out a theology. His letters are born from a living context - his needs and those of his readers. The passion of Jesus plays a key role in the understanding of Paul's view on his own suffering.

According to Paul, Jesus Christ is the means by which the suffering of this world man's inherent sinfulness and death itself can be overcome. By being at one with Him who suffered, a person is able to achieve finally a state that is free both from suffering and from death.

It was necessary for Jesus, to have been incarnated, crucified and resurrected - that is, to have suffered and died because this is the only way in which the individual might believe that his own suffering and death can through faith in the risen Christ, be overcome. A God who simply promises redemption cannot engender the same depth of conviction as a God who not only promises but, as it were, delivers. God's birth into a human body and his suffering together with resurrection, are evidence of the possibility that believers too, can hope to transcend sin, suffering and death (Eliade 1987:103).

1.2.3 HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

It is necessary to include this method of study as well as historical criticism as a specific way of thinking. This approach gives insight into exactly how one can speak about the New Testament as history or as the source of history.

According to Eliade (1987:400) the historical method is not concerned with facts isolated from their historical contexts and processes but rather with these contexts and processes themselves. The discipline of the history of religion is characterized by the dialectical relationship between its object of study and its method of research. These methods are adapted to historical nature of the subject matter which is essentially inductive, intended to grasp religion in its concreteness, in its historical creativity, and in its meaningfulness for the cultural, social, and individual lives.

This historical approach is contrasted from the hermeneutical approach or the phenomenological approach which aims to capture the meaning of religious phenomena without committing itself to an analysis of the historical, cultural, social and psychological setting of these phenomena.

1.2.4 TEXT - CHAPTERS

The researcher is to investigate the development of Paul's thinking in his letters. The chronological order to be studied will be that of Gundry's (1970) dating of Paul's

letters as follows:-

- Chapter two: The Early Letters of Paul:
Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
- Chapter three: The Major Letters of Paul:
1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans.
- Chapter four: The Prison Letters:
Philippians, Ephesians,
Colossians and Philemon.
- Chapter five: The Pastoral Letters:
1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

1.3 CONCLUSION

Paul has much to say about many theological issues - and his letters formulate sound Biblical doctrines. But it is in the area of his personal suffering, that the reader enters the heart and faith of a man God chose as an apostle to the nations.

A look at Paul's various letters is indicative that Paul's reference to both his personal sufferings and those of his first readers, is worth taking note of. We live in a world so filled with pain and suffering. More and more, people turn to the Bible for guidance. Paul, is most definitely, worthy of such a study. When he first begins his ministry, he encounters oppositions from the Jews. This very opposition becomes a major source of his suffering.

Paul's absolute determination to fulfil his tasks of sharing the gospel is one of the constants throughout his letters. Through his sufferings, Paul teaches how faith, hope, joy and

love can be manifest. As his sufferings intensify, Paul's zeal increases. There is a development in terms of his thinking and attitude towards suffering. Paul was not defeated by his suffering, instead his confidence was founded and rooted in the sufferings of Christ.

CHAPTER TWO

PAUL'S EARLY LETTERS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Nineteen centuries have passed since Paul penned, or more likely, dictated the letters with which we are concerned. They were written to meet one emergency, to solve another problem, or to bear his heart in response to a sacrificial gift from friends. How amazed he would have been to discover that these occasional letters were to become the most widely circulated correspondence in history and the subject of widespread study even today.

That Paul was not consciously writing scripture ^A must be kept in mind throughout this study. He was writing genuine letters to meet real situations. If we are to understand these letters, we must seek, in so far as possible, to understand the situation and the people to whom they were written (Selby 1962:3).

Letters were an unsatisfactory substitute for a personal meeting when adverse situations prevented him from coming to the church. eg. 1 Thessalonians. These letters were dictated by the apostle's work and gospel. "It is a tool used by a man who is himself a tool in the hand of his Master" (Bornkamn 1971: xvi). Yet to many thousands of readers of Paul's letters in every age it seemed as though he were writing to them. The universality of his letters is amongst their most surprising qualities.

In order to understand the Pauline letters more fully, apart from placing them in proper context, we need to assemble his ideas in a orderly arrangement in order to see them in perspective. This has its dangers:

1. "Paul is writing to a specific people in specific situations and what he says is to be understood, in so far as we are capable of doing, as he expected those people to understand it.

2. Paul's thinking does not stand complete in his letters. Again and again, he refers to the instructions that he had given to his churches in person. What he writes, therefore presupposes and supplements and reinforces teaching that is lost to us.

3. That in assembling statements from various places in Paul's letters into a topical system there is the danger that not only the ad hoc nature of the statements will be forgotten, but that the new artificial context of the 'system' will replace the genuine context and will impose a meaning upon Paul's word quite foreign to his intention" (Selby 1962: 297).

Keeping these dangers in mind, it is to be noted that the very essence of Paul's teaching on suffering is: that in and through suffering there is a purpose and victory through Christ.

According to Greathouse (1968:194) what Paul teaches is "not beautiful inspiring theory but experience tried in the fiery trial of suffering and struggle". The nature of Paul's

suffering was varied. In His infinite wisdom, God permitted the messenger of satan to buffet His servant. Through the first missionary journey he had to face a long succession of buffeting. There were perils of robbers, waters, mountain - passes and of violent crowds, but in addition to this, there was the lacerating thorn.

This study will allow the exegete to follow two lines of Paul's suffering:

1. Paul's personal suffering - his reference to the thorn - 2 Cor. 12:7-10.
2. Paul's suffering through persecution for Christ's sake.

In his letters, Paul introduces a third dimension to suffering when he addresses the suffering of the church in Thessalonica. The relevance of these letters apply both to those to whom they were addressed, and also to the present day reader who might be seeking an understanding and insight into the subject of suffering. Some of the problems were peculiar to the time in which he lived, but many of them were more universal. Most of them were basically the same as those which Christians have faced in every age. "Paul's teaching is no ivory tower ideology. It was hammered out in the anvil of life in a difficult and exceedingly complicated age" (Selby 1962:20).

In order to examine Paul's victory over suffering, it is essential to look at Paul's concept of Christ - for much of his suffering was for His sake. Paul interpreted Christ in terms of vital religious experience. Not only his experience of conversion on the Damascus Road, but also his daily consciousness of the reality of Christ in his own life was the basis for the understanding of Christ. Selby (1962:21) emphasizes that "Paul's interpretation of Christ was not the backward look of an historian. Christ was for him a living, present reality. This is a key to his thought. Yet he did not ignore the historical Christ."

There is difficulty in understanding Paul's letters. Part of this arises from the fact that they are not essays or formal epistles but genuine letters. The formal epistle or letter was a popular literary form - addressed to the general public. The genuine letter, on the other hand, is addressed to a particular situation which contains allusions and references that are lost to those who attempt to understand them out of context. Difficulty lies on the recovering of the context of his letters.

Yet these letters are not private letters, they were written to be read before the congregation to which they were addressed. If the character and background of the recipients are important for understanding the letters, the places to which Paul sent them is important for classification (Selby 1962:239).

2.2 PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

The letter of St. Paul to the Galatians brings us into an atmosphere of hot controversy: we hear the noise of conflict within the church. The traditional view is that the opponents were Jewish Christians. This is an internal dispute - a fundamental difference of opinion about the very nature of the church itself in relation to the mother faith, Judaism.

Beare (1962:51) explains that the troubles of the apostle are not caused here by persecution - by the enemies of the Christian faith, as at Thessalonica. All through the letter the white heat of emotion is evident. Paul is conscious that great issues are at stake, and he writes passionately, in indignation and anger and deep sorrow.

The Galatians to whom this letter is addressed are converts from other beliefs, Gentiles by birth, and some who claim that they speak with authority have been preaching this new gospel to Jewish or Gentile Christians - persuading them that they really ought to be circumcised and to undertake to keep the Law of Moses. That is to say, these newcomers are teaching that all Gentile Christians must become proselytes to Judaism, and that the church is never to be anything more than a Messianic sect within the Jewish national community.

To Paul, this is no small matter: it is an attack upon the very heart of the gospel. The churches to which this letter is addressed were those founded by Paul and Barnabas in the

cities of South Galatia. The trouble makers were insisting that it was necessary for the Gentile converts to be circumcised. They were also told that Paul was not an authority because he had received the gospel at second-hand. Paul is therefore driven by these attacks to defend himself and the fullness of his apostolic authority.

It would be impossible for us to make out the nature of the dispute from Galatians itself if we had no outside information to supplement it. Paul does not have to describe the situation for the benefit of his readers for they are already acquainted with it. This is, as previously mentioned, one of the difficulties in interpreting the letters. Fortunately, Acts 15: 1-5, gives the necessary information.

The conflict with the leaders of the Jerusalem Church expose two things:

1. If Paul taught that circumcision is not necessary, then he had no authority to do so. That at no time between his conversion and writing the letter had the Jewish leaders an opportunity of conferring any authority on him.
2. Paul was adamant that the circumcision was not to be imposed on the Gentile Christian. This and other observances to the LAW was a burden as these were features of the old order of law, which had been superseded by the new order of grace
(Beare 1962:53).

Jews and Gentiles alike, Paul insists, are 'justified' - that is forgiven and reconciled to God, freed from the burden of sin and guilt - not through living a life devoted to the keeping of God's law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. His own spiritual life is described as: 'For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me' (2:19-20). This verse is an hermeneutic key to which Paul insists on dying to oneself in order to live for Christ.

2.2.1 THE DISPUTE ABOUT THE LAW

The reason for a detailed explanation of the dispute about the law is that it is the basis of much of Paul's persecution and suffering for Christ's sake. Throughout his letters reference is made to this. Gal 3:1 - 5:12 gives a more detailed account of the issue concerning the law. Paul's key was 'unity with Christ was death to self' (Gal.5:24). Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their sinful nature with its passion and desires. As far as the law is concerned Paul is dead. 'May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world' (Gal.6:14).

The debate over the meaning of descent from Abraham, forces Paul to insist that those words are not to be understood as being of physical descent, but of spiritual kinship. The significant thing about Abraham was that he was a man of

faith. It had nothing to do with blood relation - so the promise was not restricted to one race. The law, on the other hand, does not carry a promise of blessing, but pronounces a curse on everyone who does not do everything that is written in the book.

But Christ has taken upon Himself the curse of the law. One could be redeemed from that curse by faith in Christ, who by the manner of His death absorbed the curse in his own person. Paul stresses that "the law was a parenthetical dispensation, introduced to serve a temporary purpose, but now rendered obsolete by the coming of Christ, the true offspring of Abraham in whom the promises and their fulfillment were embodied" (Bruce 1977:182).

"For Paul the failure of the law was not the failure to keep it, but its failure to produce the right kind of righteousness" Phil.3:9 (Selby 1962:166). Yet, Paul does not condemn the law. 'It has been misused by being made a means for establishing one's own righteousness' (Romans 10:3-5). But we cannot say that 'the law is sin (Romans 7:7), rather it was our custodian until Christ came (Gal 3:24). The nature of Paul's conversion is of basic importance because that experience controls his own concept of his mission and his interpretation of the Christian faith. Selby (1962:168) states that to misunderstand Paul here is to throw his whole treatment of the Law and its place in God's programme of redemption out of perspective.

Paul's pre-Christian life is by no means irrelevant, for it provides the content of the conversion experience. The most prominent feature of Paul's reference to his conversion is the resurrection (1 Cor 15:8-10). The resurrection defined Jesus as the Messiah. That was Paul's experience and his order of thinking. Previously this crucifixion had been a stumbling block for Paul. "The resurrection proved to Paul that Jesus was the Christ inside of the fact that he had become a curse by being crucified. This could only mean that the law in some way had been superceded" (Selby 1962:168).

To Paul, the law was an interim provision until Christ should come. It was like a slave guardian who must watch over the heir until he comes of age. Now that Christ has come the believer is of age. 'Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing?' (Gal 3:3-4). Suffering of both Paul and of the Galatians is evident here, but it is not serious.

The same applies in regards to the persecution Paul faced because of the Jews. Paul cannot come to Galatians personally as much as he would have liked. Evidence of Paul's personal suffering is alluded to as Paul calls attention to his large hand writing. The nature and source of his personal suffering will also be discussed.

Bruce (1977:182) explains "the Galatians did not realize what a retrograde step they were being encouraged to take: a step back from freedom to bondage, from maturity to infancy, from the status of sons to the status of servants. They had come of age in Christ: why would they want to revert to the apron-string stage? The beginning of their Christian life had been attended by the manifestations of the presence and power of the Spirit: were they now to seek the perfection of Christian life in ordinances of an outmoded regime, related not to the Spirit but to the flesh?"

The majority of the Galatian Christians were converts from other beliefs, who had never lived under the Jewish law, how could their submission to the yoke of the law be justified? This would mean that they would need to convert to Christianity and by their acceptance of the law, Judaism. Paul asks 'Have you suffered so much for nothing?' 3:4. As his converts, they must have suffered in the wake of his intense persecution.

Krentz (1985:53) describes the true function of the law is outlined in Gal 3:19-24. It reveals even further the limitations of the law. The law was added because of transgression. The law makes transgression known and stimulated sin. (Romans 7:7f). For Paul the law is the 'law of sin and death' (Romans 8:2), the power of sin from which we need deliverance (1 Cor.15:56). The law is not eternal.

It was added after the promise and lasts only until the Seed should come to whom the promise had been made. For Paul, the law is a temporary expedient.

The law was ordained by angels. The angelic origin means that the law has an origin inferior to that of the promise. God gave the promise directly to Abraham, the law is not directly from God, but from God via angels. The law came through a mediator Moses. The law is at best from God only a third hand, the promise comes directly without intermediaries.

The question is then, is the law against the promises of God? Certainly not. The law, says Paul, does not have the power to make alive; life is on the side of those righteous by faith, not works. The Spirit which gives life does not come by works of law, but by faith hearing. "Luther's suggestion is that the law is a word of the hidden God but the gospel a word of the revealed God. This is Paul's interpretation of the law" (KRENTZ 1985:54).

As Paul viewed man under the bondage of sin, because of his abuse of the law, he could still see a positive benefit of this past bondage - that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. The very fact that righteousness was not possible by the law prepared man for the promise through faith in Jesus Christ. Howard (1965:64) states that "the failure to find salvation through the law prepared man for the hope of such salvation in Christ".

Paul explained the positive function of the law in terms of metaphors. 'Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law' 3:23. Historically the law kept Israel from the sinful excesses of non-belief. The conscientious Jew, had a knowledge of sin, though this knowledge did not keep him from sinning. However the law was a constant source of moral restraint through the guilt and condemnation that is provided.

This picture describes the law as holding humans 'in protective custody'. Humans were under the law kept locked up in jail with the law as the jailer. This lasts, only until faith should be revealed. Paul clarifies this in 3:24. Christ is the ultimate demonstration that righteousness comes by belief, not by law. Christ, for Paul, reveals the end of the rule of the law as custodian. This means that a new era has come in history that calls for the corresponding human reaction: faith not works.

The second metaphor clarifies the first and draws a conclusion from it. The law is a custodian, like a slave who is assigned supervision and responsibility for a minor son in a Greek family. He could exercise disciplinary force on the boy. The law is not a teacher that prepares for faith. It is transitory in its authority, lasting only until Christ came. When faith comes, 3:25, the law loses its authority. Paul stresses that Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified. "Jewish Christians can no longer

plead the authority of the law; its power is over and past" (KRENTZ 1985:56). In conclusion he states that they are free from the law - all sons of God, through faith.

The third metaphor reveals the difference in status of the a heir to a wealthy father, contrasting a minor with an adult in control of the property. The minor is under the protection and authority of guardians and trustees, he is no better than a slave.

The Galatians were returning to the childish status when they accept the law, and so are in bondage once again. God has ended the rule of the law by sending his son that we might receive adoption as sons and therefore through God who is Father, the change from slavery to sonship has taken place. This metaphor proves to the Galatians that they would receive the blessings promised to Abraham's seed by following the way of faith, and not by turning to the way of the law (Krentz 1985:60).

The Galatians were returning to the observing of the Jewish festivals and fast days. Perhaps they did not realise where this led - 'I fear for you' demonstrates the true shepherd's heart as he sees his flock turning down a dangerous path. He fears for their safety and the outcome of their wandering. There is also another reason for Paul's fear. He had gone to Galatia at no small personal price and had laboured there

without reservation. Now he fears that all this labour has been in vain as indeed it would be if they reverted to Judaism.

Pate (1993:275) asserts that "the context of Gal.6:17 indicates that Paul views his suffering for Jesus in an apocalyptic sense: his acceptance of the cross means death to this age (6:14), but participation in the age to come (6:15).

2.2.2 PERSONAL SUFFERING

He exhorts them to follow his example. He, a born Jew had chosen a way of faith. They, having once accepted Christian faith, were now ready to disown it for the way of the law, which he had rejected. The thought having laboured in vain, introduces the second line of Paul suffering ie. his personal suffering. 'As you know it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you' (Gal. 4:13).

This alludes to the fact that Paul's preaching to them was due to his illness. Barclay offers this explanation for Paul's personal suffering. At the same time, it must be stressed that the nature of the 'thorn in the flesh' is unknown. Pamphylia was a low crescent shape stretch of land lying between the mountain plateau and the Mediterranean Sea. It was an unhealthy place and notorious for malaria fever. It was there that the agonising malaria with its prostrating headaches, his thorn in the flesh, first came upon Paul. That is why they had to leave it so speedily and move on

without preaching. It would have been easy for Paul to say I am a sick man and to return Antioch, and rest. But Paul pressed on (BARCLAY 1973: 77).

'I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me'(4:15). This verse suggests that it could have been an eye disease.

The nature of the thorn in the flesh will to be discussed again in chapter three.

Another reason for Paul suffering was the perilous journeys he undertook. Paul was sick. He had to get out of Pamphylia. That was for Paul a road forward - up precipitous roads to the inland plateau. These roads were hard, they were cut by mountain streams, often the beds would be dry, then there would come a deluge of rain, the dry bed would become a raging torrent and a weary traveller might well be swept to his death. Worst still, these roads were the paradise of brigands, marauders who would murder a man for a copper coin. "One cannot but admire the courage of Paul which drove his frail body on to satisfy the imperious urgings of his adventurous spirit (Barclay 1973 :78).

Returning once again to the issue of the law. Paul is moving towards a discussion of Christian life as freedom under the guidance of the Spirit. He uses an allegorical interpretation of the story Hagar who bore Abraham the child Ishmael some years before the birth of Isaac, the son of Sarah. He applies

this to the divine decree that men are to be saved by faith, the way of freedom, not by the works of the law, the way of slavery.

Chapter five is a warning not to be caught again in the toils of slavery. The law, was an interim provision until Christ should come. It was like a slave guardian who must watch over the heir until he comes of age. Now that Christ has come, the believer is of age and free from the guardian. To turn back to circumcision and the observation of the law is to return to guardianship of the slave. He affirms that in 'Jesus Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love' (5:6).

Finally, the Christian freedom does not mean unbridled licence. The Christian is free from the obligation imposed by the law; but his life has come under a new control and direction - it is governed by the Spirit of God which now dwells within him and inspires a life of goodness and truth (BEARE 1962: 60).

Those who are responsible for the threat in Galatians, will pay the penalty. The falsification of the gospel will be made clear on the Day. Paul himself is being accused for pro-circumcision. Were Paul to preach circumcision, then in that case the stumbling block of the error has been removed. That would be to please men. The cross is mentioned each time in the context of persecution. According to Krentz (1985:74)

"a cross whose proclamation arouses no opposition would be one without curse. To add circumcision to the cross would make the cross the enabler of piety, of works, or conformity to the law. Then grace would be gone. Christ would have died in vain - it would not be a matter of a different gospel, but no gospel at all"

The final point of this letter, 6:12-18, Pate (1993: 269) explains that it addresses the suffering aspect of Paul's apocalyptic antinomy in Galatians. Paul's paradox of the cross shares with Jewish apocalypticism the belief that suffering in this age ensures for the righteous the glories of the age to come, except, Paul 'complicates' the issue by emphasizing the crucifixion of Christ, which is a scandal to Judaism. For Paul, Christ's death on the cross is the supreme symbol of righteous suffering inasmuch as he endured not only the persecution of men but also the wrath of God. Moreover, if Christians are to enjoy the blessings of Christ, they too, must embrace his cross, for it alone is the entrance way to the age to come.

2.3 LETTERS TO THE THESSALONIANS

"One of the most intriguing aspects of the study of the Thessalonian letters is that they serve as windows opening into the personality of Paul. Here he bears his heart, his hope, his humanness. An insight into his methods and work as a missionary-pastor comes as a reward of careful study. To

look thoughtfully into the very heart in the great apostle cannot fail to make the reader a better person"

(HOWARD 1965: 437).

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians was not devoted to attacking his opponents or defending himself. Krentz (1985:213) is of the opinion that this letter shows a pastor deeply concerned for his people, grateful to learn that they had survived the first wave of hostility, thankful to God for that. What then was the purpose for this letter? Paul writes not to convert them but to offer encouragement and to help the congregation understand what their confession meant.

The church of Thessalonians was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey after he established a congregation at Philippi. According to Acts 17, Paul came to Thessalonians after having being imprisoned in Philippi. He began his work, as is typical in Acts, by seeking to convert Jews in the synagogue. A minor uprising among local Jews brought his work to an abrupt end only after three weeks. Paul then travelled to Berea and from there to Athens, leaving behind Timothy. This was the typical pattern of Paul's preaching. In any town or city, he began by preaching to the Jews in a synagogue - as commissioned - first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. Always it would come to an abrupt end. Due to the nature of Paul's preaching, it was inevitable that Paul's life should soon be in danger. Paul had a habit of provoking trouble wherever he went. His life was a storm (Bradford 1974: 88).

In Thessalonica Paul began his preaching in the synagogue. This enabled Paul to have a double audience. First, he had the Jews themselves, second, around every synagogue there gathered a great crowd of Gentiles. A few Jews believed, but it was with the Gentiles that Paul had success. A great multitude of them were won for Christ. Immediately, the Jews were infuriated.

Bradford (1974:172) describes that the Jews took their revenge. With some opponents they stirred up a riot. They assaulted the house of Jason where Paul had been staying and they dragged Jason before the magistrates with certain of the Christians. This was serious - Rome would tolerate anything, but riots. To make matters worse, the Jews preferred a charge against the Christians. They accused them of attempting to set up another emperor, one Jesus. Jason and his friends were reprimanded, but for Paul the situation had become impossible and he had to be smuggled by night to Berea. Great things happened in Thessalonica, but they ended with Paul being in peril of his life (Acts 17:1-10).

"Neither Barnabas nor Luke seemed to have been as pre-disposed to getting into trouble as Paul and Silas. But it is noticeable throughout his life that, no matter who was with him, Paul ran into trouble. He sought it out, one might say, as pre-determinedly, as the pilot of a meteorological aircraft who is investigating storms or hurricanes. His was

not the nature of the solid Barnabas to take people by reason or gentle argument, nor of Luke the quite observer. Wherever Paul was, there a storm centre (Bradford 1974: 173).

There are two things to be noted here: the first is the power of the gospel. The Thessalonian - Jews cried that these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also. "Real Christianity is a disturbing thing. It brings change. It ought to be, as it was in Thessalonica, the most explosive force in the world " (Barclay 1973 :102).

The second thing is more important - the total time Paul spent in Thessalonica could not have more than three weeks. If Paul had to settle down in every city and spend months or years before he could make real impression, his task would be hopeless. But if in three weeks he could make Christianity run like wildfire, then there was hope that the whole of the Empire could be won for Christ.

The preaching in Thessalonica was significant. It was the bridge between the east and west. This meant in a real sense the beginning of the preaching of Christianity to the whole world. If Thessalonica was won for Christ, Christianity was planted at the very heart of the Roman Empire. Paul was the master tactician. Thus he suffered for the furtherance of the gospel. "It seems perhaps strange that the message of peace and love should constantly have ended in violence, but the fact was that Paul was challenging thousands of years of

accepted beliefs. People are unwilling to rethink their emotional heritage. For one thing, it requires a considerable intellectual effort" (Bradford 1974 :202).

2.3.1 THE SUFFERING OF THE THESSALONIANS

Paul's attention shifts to the suffering of the Thessalonians In 1 Thessalonians 1:6-2:1 the particular feature of his ministry to which Paul appeals here is his suffering for Christ. "The Thessalonians emulated Paul - and the Lord - in that they received the word in much affliction, which must mean they suffered for their faith" (Krentz 1985: 227). In the aftermath of the riot Paul was not ignorant that the Thessalonians would be exposed to some persecution. In fact persecution was certain. He knew that his converts would be exposed to ridicule.

He tried to return there, but his attempts were unsuccessful - 'satan hindered us' (1 Thess.2:18) "Sometimes, a visitation of Satan could be recognised in retrospect at least - as a means employed or overruled for the furtherance of the divine purpose, as with 'Paul's splinter in the flesh', but whether the satanic hindrance on this occasion was an illness, or a continuation of the political situation which made him leave Thessalonica, does not seem to have discern any divine overruling here" (Bruce 1977:227).

The news that Timothy brought from Thessalonica greatly relieved and cheered Paul. Far from being discouraged or disillusioned by recent events, the new converts had begun to

propagate the gospel on their own initiative so that Paul writes 'you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia'. They had to put up with various degrees of persecution, but this did not dampen their enthusiasm 'your faith in God has gone forth every where, so that we need not say anything' (1 Thess.1:8). This church had become a model to all who believed. Howard (1965:445) states that "the matter involved was genuineness in faith and experience. One senses jubilation and joy. The worst of circumstances cannot muzzle the Word of God. Rather, they serve to amplify the note of victory".

The news that Timothy brought was of personal importance to Paul. It reflects the circumstances of the writer and readers - the affectionate concern of the apostle over his converts the mutual affection of the Christians of Thessalonica. According to Beare (1962:31), "this letter carries us right back into the first century, into the pulsating life of those days, until we seem once again to be living among those early Christians and sharing their struggles, and gaining an insight into their hearts and minds".

Once again Paul's purpose in writing chapter two is in defense of his personal ministry for the sake of truth and the preservation of the church. Obviously the slanderers were fanatical Jews who if they could not strike him physically attempted character assassination. The opposition was not inside, as later in the case of Corinth, but outside the congregation.

In his second letter to the Thessalonians Beare (1962:45) explains further that Paul responds to the reports of fierce persecution that they were facing. They are described in such harrowing terms that Paul is moved to extreme anger - 1:4 He proceeds to vindicate the righteousness of God - the divine justice that will punish the persecutors for their cruelty - 1:5-10. There is evidence of anger and menace that was not found in the first letter. As Paul speaks of the day of the Lord's coming, he thinks of it as the Day of Wrath.

2.3.2 VICTORY THROUGH SUFFERING

Those who now cause his followers to suffer affliction will themselves be caused to suffer the far more dreadful penalties of His avenging justice. For those that are afflicted, there will be a rest. This steadfastness in their suffering is seen as proof of their true faith. "Their suffering for Christ's sake is also a guarantee of future judgement. In a moral universe there must be a rectifying of lifes injustices - the basic principle of reward and punishment" (HOWARD 1965: 447).

Paul gives thanks. It is a great thing in a church when the grace of God is demonstrated in the lives of its members to provide such a powerful witness for Christ. Paul rejoices in their faith and patience that they were able to endure because this faith was in God and His promises.

In this letter Paul clearly indicates that his readers should imitate his suffering lifestyle (1 Thess.1:6, 2:14). Pate (1993:310) stresses, that "these texts are best categorized under the eschatological approach, as they contain the ideas of suffering, on the one hand, and the glory to be rewarded to the faithful at the Parousia, on the other hand."

2.4 CONCLUSION

Thus we are introduced into the nature of Paul's suffering and those of his readers. Although his suffering is evident, it is not serious. In his subsequent letters, his sufferings become more apparent and more and more intense. The historical line is rooted in the Early Letters. Paul's suffering for the sake of the gospel arises out of two reasons: the question of his authority as an apostle and the question of the law.

Paul's defense is that he received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus Christ to Whom he is accountable. Paul preached that the law was not abolished, but that through Christ the law had been superseded. Hence Christ brought grace. In 2 Cor.6:1-10 the question of his apostolic authority gains more momentum and becomes problematic.

The second aspect of Paul's suffering is his personal suffering (Gal.4:13). The thorn in the flesh was cause for much pain, but Paul was determined not to let it hinder his work, neither was he going to dwell on his suffering. The third aspect of suffering is introduced: the sufferings of

Paul's readers (1 Thess.1:6-2:1). They emulated Paul and Christ and have become examples to others because of the steadfast faith. God will vindicate them.

Paul is able to respond to his suffering in a positive manner because he is assured of his identity in Jesus Christ. He knows experientially the One Who has commissioned him. His conversion was a life-changing experience for Paul. It formed the basis for his conviction and commitment. Therefore later when the persecutions become intensified, they were unable to undermine Paul. 'Paul, an apostle-sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead' (Gal.1:1).

3.1 PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

"God," says Adolphe Monod, "left to the Jews the first twelve Apostles, and gave to the Gentiles one only, whom He prepared expressly for them. Like a spiritual Atlas, Paul carries the whole heathen world upon his shoulders. That Roman empire, the most powerful on the face of the earth, which required seven ages to be established, he took only a quarter of an age to regenerate. The greatest among men was Jesus Christ, the greatest among apostles was Paul"

(Meyer 1988:129).

Even on these days of easy and universal communication, the apostle's record as a traveller would have been a remarkable one: Meyer (1988: 129) continues that in his first missionary journey he establishes churches along the highway of Asia Minor - preaching to both Jews and Gentiles; in his second, he proclaims the gospel to Europe; in his third, he strides the Aegean, planting one foot in Asia Minor and the other in Greece; in his fourth, after much tribulation, he reaches Rome a prisoner, but really as a conqueror - witnessing about his Master to the Caesars.

When Paul began his work, the world was being borne to her grave, but when he closed it, some thirty years later, life and salvation had been sown and gave growth to Christian civilization. How did Paul accomplish such a fete? From the commencement to the close of his career, Paul was impelled by

one master-thought that he had been redeemed to serve, saved that he might save others. He bent his strength to save man and for this he was prepared to make any sacrifice, "not as pleasing men, but as God, which tried our hearts"

(1 Thess 2:4). It was the passion of Christ's heart, during his earthly ministry, to glorify his Father, and this was a similar passion in the heart of Paul to glorify the Son

It was this purpose which illuminates Paul's suffering. Paul's letters to the Corinthians, reveal much of his suffering:-

1. 1 Corinthians - his suffering for the sake of the gospel.
2. 2 Corinthians - his own personal suffering.

Unlike in his Early Letters, Paul's suffering intensifies here. It builds up to a climax. To the end of his ministry the purpose grew even stronger. It was always his earnest expectation and hope to be ashamed of nothing, but as always Christ should be magnified and his body, whether by life or death (Phil.1:21). Each time Paul suffered, instead of sitting down in despair and pleading physical infirmity as an excuse for doing nothing, he bravely proclaimed Christ through God's enabling grace. By implication then, the disabilities and difficulties can be met as God's grace is at hand - sufficient and at its best when human weakness is most profound.

It is probable then, that from the very hour that Paul began to follow the Saviour, he became identified with His sorrowful progress through the world: hated, resisted and crucified, but pursuing his triumphant progress to His throne (Meyer 1988:62).

Paul left Berea and Athens after preaching there and went to Corinth (see Acts 18 where his stay is described). Paul entered Corinth 'in weakness, fear and much trembling' (1 Cor.2:3) after experiencing much contempt at Athens. That was not Paul's only difficulty. He may have been suffering due to 'the thorn in the flesh' (2 Cor.12:7) and without Luke to treat it, it aggravated the situation.

There were also other difficulties in Corinth, which made his ministry more difficult, but his successes more conspicuous.

1. The necessity for continual manual toil - he resumed his tent making. He suffered rather than allow anything to hinder the gospel's progress.
2. The resistance of the Jews. Paul preached that Jesus was Christ. Jews opposed, blasphemed and drove him out of the synagogue.
3. The character of the converts. They were of the lowest caste, but under the power of the Holy Ghost, became sanctified and justified in Jesus Christ (Meyer 1988:104).

In Acts 18, Luke tells us, shortly after Paul's arrival in Corinth, he had a vision in which the Lord said to him 'do

not be afraid : speak, and do not be silent. I am with you, and no one shall harm you by any attack; I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9).

3.1.2 THE CITY OF CORINTH

Corinth was an ancient city of Greece. Of all strategic centres Corinth was the most commanding. Barclay (1973:113) describes the city as follows: It was a prosperous commercial centre. Both land and sea traffic converged on Corinth. Due to its commercial advantages, Corinth, enjoyed great prosperity in classical times. There was still more to Corinth. It was one of the most wicked cities in the world. 'Corinth' became proverbial which meant to 'live in drunkenness and moral debauchery. It was also the centre for the worship of Aphrodite - with a thousand temple prostitutes. One of its famous functions was the Isthmian Games.

Of all the places in the world there cannot have seemed a less likely field for Christianity than Corinth and yet, in the most impossible circumstances, Paul witnessed for Christ. Here he spent longer than in any city except Ephesus. When he arrived here, he lodged with Aquila and Priscilla. They too were tent makers and Paul worked with them. He began preaching in the synagogues as was his practice, after which he turned to the Gentiles. He lived with Titius Justus next to the synagogue and continued to proclaim salvation through Christ crucified and the number of his converts grew (Bruce 1977: 252).

An attempt was made to stir up trouble for Paul at Corinth, similar to the one in Thessalonica and Berea but less successful. Gallio became the new Roman governor. The Jews determined that they would try and take advantage of Gallio's newness to his post, brought Paul to him. They accused him of teaching men to worship God contrary to the law. Gallio was not going to arbitrate in a Jewish religious controversy. Thus Gallio refused to take up the charge against Paul. So continued Paul's suffering for the sake of the gospel. Paul lived and worked and taught in Corinth for almost two years.

3.1.3 I CORINTHIANS : PAUL'S SUFFERING FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

Now for a closer look at what exactly was Paul's suffering. In 1 Cor.4:10-13, Paul describes specific details about the physical hardships of the apostolic ministry - his suffering for the sake of the gospel. He proceeds to contrast himself and his fellow-workers and the self-satisfied Corinthians. Paul was regarded as foolish and stupid because he preached the gospel of the crucified Redeemer. The Corinthians regarded themselves as extremely prudent. Paul knows well that in his weakness, divine strength is manifested; it is in Christ he is weak and this makes him formidable to his opponents, whereas the strength of Corinthians is likely to evaporate into mere talk.

In 4:11 'to this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, and we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless'. In contrast to the Corinthians who seem to have arrived at a

superior state of spiritual and material prosperity, the apostles still suffer without respite. In their extensive travels they have often gone hungry and thirsty. Because of their travels and the lack of funds, their sandals were often tattered and their clothing frayed (Greathouse 1968: 343).

Up to the time of writing these words, no relief to his suffering was expected. "Maybe Paul tries to point out that the apostolic story has no happy ending in this age" (Barrett 1971: 111). They were beaten or lashed with a whip, they had no place to stay and were regarded as vagrants. Their wanderings, however, was not the aimless wandering of a tramp but was a deliberate forsaking of the comforts of home for a cause. Paul also laboured manually, which for Greeks was a shame.

Paul had gone from generalities (9-10) to specific details about the physical hardships of the apostolic ministry (11-12a). He now gives a portrayal of the inner response to the ill-treatment they received. Being sneered at and treated with contempt, they wished their tormentors well. When they were mistreated and abused, the apostles maintained their poise and did not yield to either discouragement or retaliation. Greathouse (1968:344) aptly states "this idea of patient endurance without revenge was a sharp thrust at the petty quarreling of the Corinthians"

Paul uses his experiences to teach how God is using his suffering to equip him for Christ's service. Paul sees his suffering in a positive light. He teaches his readers that they too can live through suffering. How does Paul evaluate his suffering? Do they have a function?

Paul pleads with the Corinthians, "I urge you, be imitators of me" (4:16). Paul's ministry is an example to be imitated. The list of suffering (9-13) is presented as exemplary conduct, an object of imitation. God in His wisdom and power has ordained that apostolic suffering and weakness. So persecution and labour intrinsically belong to the apostolic vocation" (Lambrecht 1990:58). Paul uses this list not to prove his unity with Christ, but to provide his converts with an example.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he discusses his suffering and that of his fellow apostles. Is he concerned with the suffering of the Christians? Lambrecht (1990:62) asks several questions: "Does suffering in Paul encompass the everyday adversities of life for example human tension, natural calamities and various diseases? Must a purpose/function be given to all suffering so that all sorrow can be fruitful? Is suffering for a Christian inevitable, intended by God?" These and other questions arise.

Pate (1993: 94) offers this explanation. The content of 1 Corinthians is addressed to those who find themselves in the midst of the final cosmic battle. Paul's ethical challenges

to the Corinthians should be seen then, in the light of his eschatology: Paul takes everyday Christian experience seriously, and he reminds the Corinthians that there is another level of reality behind the events of their lives. Christian life is to be lived in the light of the apocalypse of Christ's death. It is determined both by the past and the future, by the destruction of the evil powers, begun in the cross and by the completion of God's victory in the imminent future.

3.1.4 II CORINTHIANS : PAUL'S SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL MERGES WITH HIS PERSONAL SUFFERING

The distinction between apostolic and personal suffering disappears in 2 Cor.1:3 -11. Paul the apostle of Christ suffers. He shares abundantly in Christ's suffering; his suffering is for the sake of the Corinthians; his suffering goes to the limit of death, but God always delivers him; his weakness makes him rely not on himself, but on God alone who raises the dead. The Corinthians endure the same suffering which Paul suffers. 'If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation, if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same suffering. Our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our suffering, so also you share in our comfort' (2 Cor.1:6-7).

Paul praises God for his comfort in 2 Cor.1:3-11. His thoughts flow from a perilous personal experience in Asia to the role of such suffering in his ministry. This suggests the

place of suffering in the life of a genuine apostle. According to Greathouse (1968: 502), here is an "interchange of comfort and affliction that permeates Paul's words of praise. The thought which links the two opposites is the suffering of Christ. Paul describes his own suffering in relation to those of our Lord".

The God of all comfort, comforts Paul and enables him to comfort others. It is because Paul's afflictions are so vitally related to the suffering of Christ that his comfort also abounds through Christ to the Corinthians. The more we share of Christ's suffering, the more we are able to give of his encouragement. "This comfort is more than consolation in trial, it includes encouragement, and inspires the divine gift of strength to meet and master life's crises" (Greathouse 1968:503).

When Paul speaks of God as the God of all comfort, he is speaking of something he has himself experienced, for the 'us' refers primarily, though not exclusively to himself. Tasker (1973:41) adds that he can testify that on every occasion when he has been in tribulation, he has been so sustained and strengthened by the hand of God, that he has been able not merely to endure it but to derive blessing from it. Of the many solutions given in the Scriptures of the mystery of pain, the sufferer who feels his suffering equips him as a missionary of comfort to others will feel that they are well explained.

Paul finds the source of mutual comfort in the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. He does this by uniting the suffering of the church - apostles and people - with the suffering of Christ. This identification of the suffering of Christ and the church arises out of a redemptive participation in the life and death which Paul finds at the very heart of being 'in Christ'.

This sets the Divine pattern for his followers. "As Jesus' own way, by divine necessity leads to rejection, suffering and death and only so to glory, so also the way of those who follow Him" (Greathouse 1968:503). Paul found in the Suffering Servant figure the pattern for his own ministry.

The suffering of the Christian is undoubtedly of the same kind as that of the apostle. Lambrecht (1990:64) explains that the apostle does have his own suffering connected with the specificity of his vocation. So in 2 Cor 5:18-19, Paul in all clarity presents his vision of the apostle's position within God's salvific work. But then again one should realize that every person, as soon as he or she becomes a Christian, must be seen as a potential apostle and is already an apostle in some real sense. It would therefore be unwise to radically divorce the apostolic hardships of 2 Cor 4:7-15 from those of all Christians.

Paul goes on to describe the trouble in Asia (1:8-11) which is obscure as to place and kind. It is suggested that it may have been due to mob violence, a serious illness, Paul's

thorn in the flesh, his fighting with wild beasts in Ephesus. Whatever the exact nature of the trouble may have been, Paul felt he was at death's door.

What he learned here was to prove to him his own helplessness and the divine purpose was to teach him to rely utterly on 'God who raises the dead' (1:9). This is the basis for Paul's commitment and inspiration which is found throughout the letter. "The God who delivered Paul and on whom he had set his hope for the future deliverance, is the God who raised Jesus from the dead - the God of the Resurrection" (Greathouse 1968: 505). This is Paul's testimony and source of victory.

The narration ends by Paul referring to the power of intercessory prayer; and though the display of God's mercy does not depend upon it, we may be sure He desires nothing more than that His people should be united in mutual intercession in His name. For Greathouse (1968:506), the function of such prayer is twofold: it emphasizes the utter dependence of man and the absolute sovereignty of God; and it promotes the fellowship of the saints.

In order to trace Paul's personal suffering, 2 Cor.4:7-12, offers a closer glimpse. Here the reader sees the actual misery of Paul's physical existence. The apostle was continually exposed to suffering and death. But it was a suffering that revealed the resurrection life of Jesus to the Corinthians. Even the apostle himself in the midst of outer

decay was experiencing inner renewal (4:16-18). The boldness of the new covenant was advanced rather than being hindered by the weakness of human frailty.

For Paul suffering and glory belonged inseparably together. Through his actual physical hardships and dangers Paul has re-enacted the suffering of Christ (1-5) and thus confronted men with the resurrected power of the living Christ. Paul is entrusted with this 'treasure' of the gospel. But he has it in a personality which he compares to a common and fragile clay vessel. "But the weakness of the man only serves to magnify the message. It is the message that possesses the value" (Greathouse 1968: 536).

In the light of the above, Lambrecht (1990:50) states that the breakable vessel that is, the frailty of the apostle, is required so that it may appear that the great power of this service does not come from humans but from God. Paul demonstrates that the power in his ministry is clearly God's. Persecution becomes even more intense, but the redeeming factor is the presence of the Lord. Paul and his helpers are troubled on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed.

3.1.4.1 PAUL'S SUFFERING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING

He connects his suffering, as well as the continuation of his life with the dying and the life of Jesus. He suffers Jesus dying; because of Jesus he is delivered to death, so that

Jesus' life may be manifested in him. In 4:12 he addresses the Corinthians: 'death is at work in us, life is at work in you.' Paul's reference to the life in Jesus is not only his earthly life. It includes the life of the risen Christ. He deals not only with his present situation - his life before death, but the whole person of Paul. Paul is certain of his future resurrection. God has raised Jesus. With Jesus, God will raise him also. So, both Paul and the Corinthians will be brought into the presence of Jesus (Lambrecht 1990:51).

Such a perspective is possible for Paul only because of the particular character of his faith. Because of his faith, Paul finds it impossible to keep silent. He exhorts the Thessalonians to arm themselves with faith, the Ephesians he asks to carry the shield of faith. Faith is crucial for victory. The faith, which transformed Paul's present, is the hope of the final transformation of the resurrection.

Paul is able to endure his suffering because of his conviction of the certainty of a triumphant future (4:14) and by his concern for his converts. Another reason for his endurance is his concern for God's plan and purpose in the world. The ultimate goal of all suffering is the glory of God. Therefore, for Greathouse (1968:540) Paul has the faith and is willing to suffer first for Christ's sake, then for his converts, but most of all for the eternal glory of God.

Now 2 Cor.4: 5-15, too, contains a list of trials. Suffering is a reality which is already present, which is not chosen, but is intrinsically related to his vocation. Paul sees this in the light of Christ's passion and death. Again and again Paul states the reason for his tribulation is his faith in Jesus and the preaching of Jesus' gospel (4:5).

How does Paul evaluate his hardships? According to Lambrecht (1990: 59), to him they do have a function: there must be suffering in the apostle so that it may be evident that the power does not come from himself, but belongs to God; also that Paul suffers for Christ's sake. Paul's dying brings life to those addressed and lastly Paul suffers so that he can share in God's glory.

But how has Paul endured his sufferings? What was his attitude towards his suffering? In 4:13, Paul considers faith as a vital force of power. 'I believe, and because of this I speak.' Paul's faith is an enduring gift from the past. It allows him to suffer while proclaiming the gospel.

Then also, Paul can suffer because in the midst of his tribulation he truly experiences God's power and Jesus' life (4:7-12). The future and the hope are as much a part of Paul's spiritual strength. Paul speaks of this life of the resurrection. 'Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them

all. So fix your eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal' (2 Cor.4:16-18) (Lambrecht 1990:61).

Paul is eager to counter balance allegations that he is weak and dying. He wants the Corinthians to be proud of him. A note of victory is sounded in 2 Cor.2:14-16 where he described himself as a conquered captive led by God in a triumphal procession - the very showpiece of God's triumph. For the first century readers, the imagery would have evoked strong emotional reactions: the captured prisoner being led to death was the most abject of beings. "Paul's paradoxical assertion of his own joyful attitude as he is led to death serves to display his serendipity, capacity and worth. Paul stresses that hardships are an opportunity for the demonstration of power" (Garrett 1990:103). The victory of the gospel is Christ's and Paul is privileged to share in it.

Hafemann (1986:77) explains the point Paul tries to clarify in 2 Cor.6:1-10: For Paul's apostolic ministry is now the means through which God makes his appeal to the world. God has entrusted Paul with the gospel, so that as an 'ambassador of Christ' his ministry occupies the mediating role between God and the world. But having done so, Paul again must stress the unique nature of his apostolic experience - his point is that it is precisely his weakness and suffering that commends him. His understanding of his weaknesses as an apostle is once again derived from the biblical tradition of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

The problem in 2 Cor.6:4-10 which now faced Paul in Corinth was the growing rejection of his authority as an apostle because of his suffering. Weakness as a sign of God's commission was not accepted. Paul's response to this criticism was that his suffering is not an obstacle to the gospel (6:3), but is in fact an essential part of it. For the true apostle verifies and reveals the gospel of Christ by his suffering. It is Paul's weakness itself which recommends him and by implication, disqualifies his opponents as genuine ministers of Christ. The test of faith becomes whether or not the Corinthians will remain loyal to Paul who is the true and genuine representative of the gospel. It is not his ministry that is being called into question, but genuineness of the faith of the Corinthians themselves.

Life for the Christian is life according to God's will. That is never considered to be optional. If suffering comes, God must have a purpose in it. The notion that God uses suffering does not come naturally. Although it is true that suffering is nowhere explained, there is sufficient evidence to show what the Christian attitude towards it should be. "There is no suggestion that God is less than wise or good because suffering exists. Since the supreme example of suffering lies at the heart of God's redemptive activity in Christ, it cannot be maintained that suffering is alien to the purpose of God" (Guthrie 1981:97).

Thus it will always remain a mystery why God chose to redeem mankind the way he did. This very fact must be taken into account when considering Paul's view of God. Jurgen Moltmann (The Crucified God: 1974) shares a similar view of God. He calls Him the Suffering One, the idea that God is in suffering and suffering is in God.

Paul in no way criticizes God for the hardships he has endured. Rather, he sees them as tools in the hand of God. The present affliction is regarded as slight compared to the weight of the glory to follow (4:17). In 2 Cor 11:16 Paul boasts of himself: 'Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then receive me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting.'

He continues through verses 16 -33 about heritage, education and suffering for the gospel's sake. We see that what started as foolish boasting about Jewish heritage becomes the paradoxical boasting of Christian, apostolic suffering and weakness. Paul specifies the nature of his suffering: forty lashes, being beaten with rods, stoned, ship wrecked, dangers from both nature and people, hunger and thirst and his anxiety for his converts. In verses 30 -33 Paul refers to the Damascus incident, his humiliating escape and flight.

3.1.4.2 PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

The next phase of Paul's boasting is in chapter 12, where he moves from the description of the suffering for Christ's sake, to the mention of the heavenly experience given to him.

But as the thorn in the flesh reminds him, his boasting must continue to be only in his weakness, so that his confidence may be only in the power of Christ.

For understanding Paul's difficulty, the nature of the thorn is discussed here. The exact nature of the thorn is unknown. But it can be explained as follows. "The malady which tormented Paul at frequent intervals was: a species of chronic malaria fever - hence the feeling of shame at this weakness; could also be epilepsy; peculiar headache which accompanies the paroxysms or that it could even be 'a messenger of satan'-an obstacle which was impossible to struggle against" (Ramsay 1951: 94). Ramsay's explanation is the basis from which others argue. He adds such are the great. Men know their feats, but not their struggles.

There is much speculation regarding the exact nature of the thorn in the flesh. The thorn was a distressing and humiliating, physical ailment, which Paul feared might be a handicap to his effective ministry, but which in fact kept him dependent on divine enabling, proved to be an aid. "Many and various attempts at diagnosis of this ailment has been made - including pain in the ear or head (Tertullian), such troublesome characters as Hymenaeus and Alexander (Chrysostom), epilepsy (M.Krenkel), convulsive attacks (M. Dibelius), ophthalmia (T.J.Brown), malaria (Ramsay), sufferings caused by persecutions (J. Munck), depression (H.Clavier) and the agony caused by the unbelief of the Jews (P.Menoud)" (Bruce 1971:248).

What the exact nature of the thorn was is not of importance here. Sufficient to say that it was very painful. Paul calls it a 'stake' as though he were impaled. He prayed for its removal, for deliverance from its pain, and received the assurance that though the thorn would remain, more than sufficient grace would be given. Paul is preaching: "My grace is sufficient for you. Sufficient when friends forsake and foes pursue, sufficient to make you strong against a raging synagogue, or a shower of stones, sufficient for excessive labours of the body, and conflicts of the soul, imprisonments - for My strength is made perfect only amid the condition of mental weakness" (Meyer 1988:78).

The above key texts on suffering on 2 Corinthians will support the contention that Paul expects the Corinthians to emulate his suffering lifestyle. Chapter 1:3-7 sets the tone that affliction in the Christian life is the norm, but that God comforts his people in the midst of those hardships. According to Pate (1993:140), the Corinthians are part of this process, therefore God's comfort will manifest itself to them too. Thus, a three-fold unbroken pattern emerges in 1:4-7, Christ's suffering/comfort is re-presented through Paul which, in turn, is being relayed through the Corinthians.

3.2 PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

The letter to the Romans is regarded as a Pauline theological presentation. At the time of writing neither the church nor Paul knew the other. Paul's knowledge of the church at Rome could have been learned from Aquila and Priscilla. His

information about the church seems scanty. One of the reasons for writing this letter was to announce his long planned visit he had always put off and to prepare for his further work (Bornkamn 1971:90).

When Paul wrote the letter he had already left Ephesus and had intended to bring to Jerusalem the collection taken in his churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece. Paul viewed the journey to Jerusalem with some anxiety. He was afraid of persecution from the Jews, and was even more anxious as to whether the mother church would receive him and the collection at all. In Romans 15:30-32 he asks the Christians in Rome to pray that he might be delivered from the dangers to which he is exposed. We learn from Acts 20:3, danger was already ahead at the time of his departure from Corinth. Jews, possibly pilgrims for Passover, who wanted to make the journey, contrived a plot against him.

Historically, Bornkamn (1971:117) states Romans may be described as Paul's testament. But that does not mean that he composed it deliberately as a last declaration of his will before his death. Actually, he was still hoping to be able to start on his great missionary work in the west, though he could not gloss over his anxiety that the conflicts to be expected in Jerusalem might frustrate his plans (15:23-29). In actual fact, if not literally, the letter is his last will and testament. Paul's anxieties were all too well grounded.

In Rom 8:17-18 Paul states 'Now if we are children of God, then we are heirs-heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.' Obviously, Paul does not exclude any type of suffering (Lambrecht 1990: 64).

The thought here is clear enough. In 8:17 Paul asserts that Christian sonship leads inevitably to full reward through the sufferings that are intimately connected with the life in Christ. 'Paul shows that Christian suffering, which has its source in the Spirit's constant war on the flesh is the necessary consequence of all union with Christ'

(Ahern 1960: 15). Such suffering with Christ cannot but end in glory with Him.

Beker (1985 :110) expresses another view. In Romans 8:17ff, a different type of suffering is in view. It is suffering at the hands of nature or at the hands of the power of death. Verses 1-17a describes a new order, that of the Spirit, life and peace. This new order is expressive of a new social reality, one which seems to lift the church out of the world, against the world and separated from the world. Removed it seems from the suffering of the world. There is also the church for the world, one in solidarity with the world and its sufferings. However, the suffering of the present time which engulfs both church and world is set within the context of hope - the hope of the coming triumph of God (v.18ff).

As already mentioned in the study of Romans, "in 8:17-39, Paul does not appear to differentiate his afflictions from those of the Roman Christians. Yet, here, there is an added feature not paralleled in other Pauline texts on hardships - creation suffers along with Christians" (Pate 1993:158).

3.3 CONCLUSION

The Paul we meet in the Early Letters is a man on fire, ablaze with the message of the resurrected Christ, attempting to set the world alight. When we meet him in the Major Letters, he suffers much to keep the fires burning. He endures much but he is still a free man able to carry the torch to places God sends him. His travels enable him to conquer nations for Christ.

His freedom is curtailed as described in the Prison Letters when we meet him next. Paul is confined - but this handicap is only literal. Nothing can keep Paul from proclaiming the gospel for Christ - certainly not imprisonment. How Paul deals with this dilemma makes the study of the Prison Letters so much more worthwhile and pertinent.

CHAPTER FOUR PAUL'S LETTERS FROM PRISON

4.1 INTRODUCTION: PAUL THE PRISONER

The four letters, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, have one feature in common which distinguishes them from the other letters of Paul. The author calls himself a prisoner (Eph.3:1; 4:1; Philemon 1:9) and refers to his bonds (Phil. 1:7; 13 ;14; 17; Col. 4:18; Philemon 10:13) or to his chains (Eph.6:20). But are these words used literally or metaphorically? Paul was fond of metaphors. He would call himself and others slaves of Christ, and refer to his colleagues as fellow slaves, although we know that he was proud of being a free man and a Roman citizen.

There is no reason to suppose that he had ever borne arms, yet he can speak of Christian warfare and of his colleagues as fellow soldiers or fellow prisoners of war. Thus, when describing himself as a 'prisoner of Christ', he is clearly using a metaphor and if this passage stood alone, there would be no reason to suggest it involved a literal imprisonment. On the other hand, the metaphorical nature of this phrase does not exclude the literal. Whenever Paul was in prison, as it often was, it was because he was Christ's man (Caird 1976: 1).

These letters are called prison letters because there are several reasons for believing that when he wrote them, Paul was actually in prison:-

1. He describes Onesimus as his 'child begotten in my bonds.' This shows clearly that Paul has

special affection for him, because of the peculiar circumstances in which he had become a Christian (Philemon 10).

2. Paul tells Philemon and his family that he hopes to be granted to them in answer to their prayers. There would be no need for this had been free of his own movements (v22).
3. He asks the church in Colossae to remember his bonds (Col. 4:18).
4. He tells the church at Philippi that it is common knowledge that his bonds are for the cause of Christ (Phil. 1:3)
5. 'An ambassador in chains' (Eph. 6:20) would be a harsh mixed metaphor unless the chains were intended to be literal (Caird 1976: 2).

For these reasons there is agreement that Paul was in prison when he wrote these letters, and that he was using the word 'prisoner' on two levels at the same time. The next question is: from what prison or prisons, then, were the letters written? On the evidence of their personal names they have in common, Colossians and Philemon certainly belong together, and Ephesians is decisively linked to Colossians by similarities of style and content; Philippians could have been the last letter Paul had written from prison. Acts tells us that Paul was in prison for two years in Caesarea (Acts 24:27) and a further two years in Rome (Acts 28:30). The traditional view was that all four letters were written from Rome, and this is still the opinion of the majority of scholars (Caird 1976: 3).

In the Major Letter, Paul was preparing to take the offering he had collected for the church in Jerusalem. He had been warned not to go up to Jerusalem, that imprisonment and tribulations awaited him there. From Acts 21-28 it is evident that Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he had suffered greatly:- he was mobbed by his opponents; brought before the Sanhedrin; scourged by the Romans; arrested; Jews plotted a conspiracy against him; he was almost killed; was persecuted by the Jews spent two years in prison at Caesarea; was on trial before Felix and Festus and appeared before King Agrippa. On his way to Rome to appeal to Caesar, he was caught in a violent storm, was shipwrecked, spent the winter on the island of Malta before reaching Rome. Each of these great crises in the past has helped to advance the glorious reign of Christ.

4.2 THE CHARACTER OF PAUL

What kind of man is this? How does he survive through all these experiences? What or Who is his keeping force? In order to understand how Paul was able to endure, another look at his character is essential. Suffering often brings out the true nature of the sufferer. Christ, in His greatest moment of suffering, was offered wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it, He chose to suffer instead. Paul, who regarded himself a slave of Christ, "from the very moment that he began to follow Christ became identified with His sorrowful progress through the world. Hated, resisted, despised, crucified, but pursuing his triumphant progress to his throne" (Meyer 1988:62).

Such was the character of Paul. In his suffering, Paul's personality comes out very clearly: zealous, of eager temperament and having a restless spirit - according to Bruce he was called the 'apostle of the free spirit'. His character overshadowed his circumstances. This was the depth of his love for Christ and his zeal to proclaim the gospel. There was no cost. Nothing, not even the atrocities he faced, could cast a shadow on his work and purpose for Christ.

Before embarking on his journey to Jerusalem, Paul was warned that his life was in danger. Paul answered 'I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus' Acts 21:8-13. "There are two kinds of courage. There is the courage of the man who does a brave thing in the heat of the moment, when he has no time to stop and think of what the consequences maybe. And there is the higher courage - the courage of the man who has plenty of time to think, who knows only too clearly the consequences of the thing he is setting out to do, and who yet inflexibly goes on" (Barclay 1973:127) No matter what people said to Paul, no matter what dangers he himself saw looming ahead, his decision was for going on.

The last time we met Paul he was suffering not only for the sake of the gospel but for personal reasons too. Although Paul was suffering his freedom and movement was not affected. He was still a free man able to travel and move about as he pleased. But when writing the prison letters he is confined and restricted. His suffering takes on a different dimension.

So Paul came to Rome. He was handed over to the captain of the guard. He was treated kindly for he was allowed to live in his own house. The only sign of his captivity consisting in the chain that fastened his wrist to a Roman legionary, the soldiers relieving each other every four or six hours. A prisoner Paul might be, but he was a missionary to the end. A large number of people came to him, to whom he expounded the gospel (Acts 28).

At the same time this prison arrangement was very irksome. However, out of those four years of enforced physical inactivity and so-called opportunity for quiet meditation there came the richest of Paul's writing. Thus he was able to perform his highest service" (Mayfield 1965:530).

At all times Paul had a guard with him. To anyone else, these guards would have been perceived as enemies. Paul rises above his suffering and uses it for God's glory. By witnessing in turn to each guard, he could have caused a revival to break out in the barracks. The significance is greater than we think. These guards were no ordinary guards, they were the imperial guards of Caesar's household. This meant that the gospel reached the highest places in the civilized world without Paul even leaving his prison! Thus another of Paul's goals was achieved (Earle 1955: 342).

4.3 PHILEMON

The incident of Onesimus, the runaway slave which prompted the letter to Philemon, seems to have been the initial

occasion for the prison correspondence. Tychicus was to return to Colossae with Onesimus, bearing Paul's letter to Philemon. A closer look at the Prison Letters, will reveal a historical development in Paul's thinking on suffering. It is in these letters that the reasons for his suffering are blurred. His personal suffering fuses with the suffering for the sake of Christ - an idea which is elaborated on in Col.1:24. The reasons for his suffering are one and the same to Paul.

The letter of Paul to Philemon is the only strictly personal letter among all of his writings which has been preserved. The Pastoral Letters were written to individuals, but their messages were for groups or churches as well, while the message was for Philemon alone, greetings to the church were included. In all probability it was the first of Paul's Prison Letters (Earle 1955:316).

Philemon was a layman of Colossae and one of Paul's converts in whose house the Colossian church met. Paul calls him a 'fellow-worker'(v.1). He was a slave owner. Onesimus was the object of the writing of the letter. This is one of the views held. A slave of Philemon, he had run away after having robbed his master. After arriving in Rome, the best possible place to hide, he had come into contact with Paul and had been converted. It finally became evident to him that the Christian thing to do was to return to his master, regardless

of the consequences. Tychicus agreed to accompany him, and Paul determined to guarantee the outcome by writing a letter to Philemon (Earle 1955:317).

The picture sometimes given of Paul meeting Onesimus as a fellow-prisoner is rather misleading. "How very radically Paul's condition of imprisonment in Rome must have changed for the worse if, following two years spent in his own hired house, he was reduced to sharing the same prison-cell as a fugitive slave" (Bruce 1977:399). The situation is more intelligible if we think of Paul as still living under house arrest in his lodgings, hand-cuffed to his military guard, therefore technically a prisoner when Onesimus came to him. The letter throws little light on Paul's attitude on the institution of slavery. "What this letter does is bring the reader into an atmosphere in which the institution could only wilt and die" (Bruce 1977:401). When Onesimus is sent to his master it is 'no longer as a slave, but as a dear brother', confirmation of a new in Christ relationship that has already come into being.

"Paul's use of the title 'prisoner for Jesus Christ' at the beginning of the letter is probably an expression of solidarity with the slave, Onesimus. Paul is also a man in bondage and, since his own conversion, he too suffers his confinement for Christ" (Koenig 1985:193). He does not write from a perspective of one who is trying to change the Roman laws of slavery. Slavery was common to the Roman Empire. The

slave was the property of his master and could have no rights of his own. The conditions of slavery is common knowledge to all. Slavery, like other social ills brought suffering.

Nowhere does Paul comment on the social effects of the gospel for all humanity. To do so would be to set one class over against another in the name of Christ. This letter is a personal note to a slave owner on behalf of a slave known to both the author and addressee. The character of the letter is of a 'graceful persuasion to justice'. Paul presumes that he and Philemon through their partnership, which is sustained and constantly renewed by the Lord, can anticipate a breakthrough in this social relationship. The gospel is meant for everyone and offers salvation to all. It contains the power to remedy all of the ills of society, of which slavery is only one, and make brothers of all men.

How does Paul accomplish this? What he does is to lift the whole issue to a higher spiritual plane. "He solves the question of slavery, not by compulsion, but by redemption" (Howard 1965:700). Paul shows that a believing slave is as truly a Christian brother and 'in Christ' as a believing master.

4.4 PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

Paul had probably never visited the Colossian church (2:1). While he was a prisoner in Rome, Epaphras had come to him from Colossae with word from the church. This visit coincided with the proposed departure of Tychicus and Onesimus to

Colossae. Paul took the opportunity to attempt a solution to some of the problems in the church in Colossae, and he sent this letter by them.

Colossae was located in Asia Minor, east of Ephesus, near the junction of the Meander and Lycus rivers. It was not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis and it gradually gave way in importance to these two cities. The church at Colossae was probably established during Paul's three-year stay at Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19). Epaphras and perhaps Timothy were the evangelists under Paul who were instrumental in its organisation. For this reason it was natural for Paul to feel a particular responsibility for the church, which met in the home of Philemon (Earle 1955:319).

The problem here was a strong tendency among the Christians to embrace a form of teaching which threatened to subvert the gospel of grace which they had recently believed and to replace their Christian liberty with spiritual bondage. The primary purpose of this letter is to expose the errors of this teaching, which was of a philosophical nature. It is very difficult for us to make out the precise nature of this teaching, since Paul is not setting out to expound it, but only to refute it. He was writing to people who knew the situation first hand.

The new teaching appears to be based upon a doctrine of angels who are to be worshipped. "It is becoming more evident that the problem of the Colossian is pertinent to our day in

a way not felt before. The world is rapidly opening up to accept the so-called Gnostic notion of Christ, that he fits in with all religions and systems. The Colossian errors are also today's errors. In the face of so many cults the issue becomes again a perennial one: 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He? (Matt. 22:42). So, once again, each individual must identify Jesus Christ for himself in scriptural terms and understanding. The Colossian letter is superbly suited to make that identification possible" (Howard 1965:361).

It becomes obvious how much Paul must suffer on hearing such news. He has suffered much for the sake of the gospel. He is therefore moved to do something. What exactly can he do? He is imprisoned and his movement is limited. Yet this too he must suffer. What is his attitude towards this suffering?

In Col. 1:24-29 Paul interpreted his imprisonment as sharing with Christ in His sufferings for the sake of the Colossian church in particular. This suffering he considered to be part of his calling as a minister of the gospel - and he rejoiced in it (Earle 1955:322). Here Paul introduces another victory-factor in his suffering: joy. The theme of joy in the midst of suffering is common in the New Testament. Paul's reasons for suffering - both personal and for Christ's sake - become inseparable now.

Paul was divinely sent as their minister. Though miles intervene, though many of the Colossians are not known to him personally, Paul is deeply involved in their establishment in Christ. Once Paul would have inflicted such suffering on others, now he welcomes them in order to win men to Christ. This is a remarkable change. There is definitely personal growth and development which have occurred. Paul has been transformed -it is evident in his love for the Gentiles.

With the opening paradox, (rejoice/suffering) Paul continues the theme of his ministry with one of the most controverted verses in the Bible. Paul rejoices, not only because of the suffering he endures, but in them for the good they bring. Included in the suffering, is not only Paul's suffering, but all suffering, that of Epaphras and others in bringing the gospel to them (Howard 1965:387).

"Christ lives on in the church and makes its suffering his own, so that suffering borne for the gospel can be the deepest form of fellowship with him " (Caird 1976:184). However Paul does not emphasise the spiritual benefits of suffering to himself but its effects on others. Paul has reached a stage where he is above his suffering. Paul states that he suffers not only on their account, but in their stead.

What does Paul mean in Col. 1:24 by 'what is lacking in Christ's afflictions? It cannot be that the atonement is insufficient. He is thinking rather of what Christ continues to suffer in his body, the church. "In this corporate sense

of the word 'Christ', Christ's afflictions will not be complete until the final victory over evil is won"

(Caird 1976:184). Someone must carry the burden, and the strong may take over the share of the weak. Paul is glad he is able to do enough to spare his churches some of their load. 'I am glad to suffer on your account.'

Paul's ministry is redemptive in the sense that he willingly identifies himself with Christ's cause, suffers for Christ's sake, that he may continue to preach the gospel. The reasons for Paul's suffering merge: "The body in which Paul suffers is his own, that for which he suffers is Christ's. Persecution is redemptively endured when it is according to Christ's purpose and when it helps to perpetuate the church" (Howard 1965:388).

Paul has been called and charged with a mission - he is a minister of the gospel. For through his sufferings he is able to communicate something of the power of the gospel. He has laid the foundation for the confrontation with the emerging heresy in the Colossian church. He expresses his confidence in their Christian experience but insists they understand the issues and the consequences. The struggle will reveal who is trustworthy and who is false. The doctrines of the Incarnation and atonement are crucial, for on them hinges the fate of man's redemption and salvation.

"The trials of the Christian and especially of the apostle are the 'sufferings of Christ'" (Ahern 1960:28). The letter to the Colossians gives no clue as to how good or bad things were with Paul or how he thinks they will turn out. He was not concerned about explaining his suffering or the nature of his suffering, rather it is his attitude towards his suffering - that he views it in a positive light - that is the point. "The Christians at Colossae are expected to suffer for righteousness sake if they are to inherit the glory" (Pate 1993:246). Right up to the end of the letter, 4:18, Paul's concern is for his believers and his final prayer for them is for grace.

4.5 THE LETTERS TO THE EPHESIANS

It was generally thought that Ephesians was a circular letter addressed to all the churches of Asia. "Ephesians is acclaimed to be the grandest letter of the Apostle Paul" (Howard 1965:129). This letter speaks in personal and practical terms to the Christian everywhere. The purpose of this letter can be assumed from the circumstances of the writer rather than from the readers. There is no evident problem to which Paul specifically refers in this letter. It contains many instructions to the Christian Church and reveals the eternal purpose of God for the Church, grounded in His own sovereign will (Earle 1955:328).

"In Ephesians we possess the most succinct statement of Paul's central doctrine: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is

the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do' 2:8-10" (Howard 1965:135). Ephesians, along with Colossians, introduces us to the apostle's concern with unity.

Paul resumes his prayer for his readers, but immediately interrupts it to remind them of the special role that he has been chosen to play in the drama of God's universal purpose. He is in prison, but only because he was appointed apostle to the Gentiles 3:1. God bestowed upon Paul grace. "In the work of the Lord, ministerial responsibility with inward grace spells triumph for the church" (Howard 1965:186). He had received his knowledge of God's secret plan by a special revelation and wants his readers to judge the truth of it for themselves 3:6. 'This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Jesus Christ.'

It is no exaggeration to say that Paul died a martyr to the cause of Christian reunion. So Paul's imprisonment is no cause for discouragement, but an opportunity to unfold the secret purpose of God to the powers and authorities of the present world order. Previously Paul faced taunts because of his suffering, 2 Cor.4:17-18, here he makes the point that 'my sufferings are your glory'. The price he paid, he was glad to pay, in order to bring the Gentiles into that union with Christ.

Since he did not lose heart, he did not want his readers to become disheartened. Indeed he sees a deep meaning in his suffering: "they are the glory of those for whom he suffered. They expose both the grandeur of the truth that the readers had embraced and the ministry of the one who proclaimed that truth" (Caird 1976:62). If his readers see his suffering in this light, they will rejoice with Paul and not faint.

At the close of this letter, Paul refers to his relationship to the gospel: he is in chains for it 6:20 (as in 3:1 and 4:1). Yet there is more, for even in his chains, he is an ambassador for it. So he concludes his request for prayer with the hope that he will indeed speak boldly, as an ambassador should. His request does not include special prayers for his personal well-being and peace, but rather for the furtherance of the gospel.

Well the King's leading ambassador is a prisoner. But is he really the prisoner? The fact is that Paul wants so much to preach the gospel at Rome that he feels he can fulfill his ambassadorial duties even though he is chained. He is not seeking sympathy, only their prayers that he will be able to speak boldly when the opportunity is presented (Howard 1965:268).

"Christ has won the crucial battle, but the war goes on. Christians are daily involved in the war but they do not provide their own weapons. God provides them. The movement of

Ephesians has been from glory and praise in chapter one to struggle in chapter six. But it is in this very struggle that the Christian glorifies God" (Taylor 1985:92).

Paul ends his letter by assuring them that Tychicus will give them a full report of his circumstances and they will be encouraged. They will be strengthened and encouraged in their own situation as they know that God is providentially caring for Paul.

4.6 PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The letter to the Philippians is the last of St Paul's letters, and in many ways it is the most beautiful of them all. He wrote it towards the end of his long imprisonment in Rome, when he had come to feel that he would be sentenced to death, though he still hoped, for the sake of his churches, that he would be set free to go on serving them.

It is possible that his prison liberties, by this time, had been curtailed. All through, it breathes a calm serenity of spirit, and an especially warm affection for the Christians of Philippi. This was his favourite church, and that he felt closer to the Philippians than to any of his other converts. There is, besides, a quiet note of joy running through it, which is not disturbed, but if anything intensified, by the prospect of martyrdom which he faces (Beare 1962:120).

This letter touches upon the apostle's situation at Rome and his outlook upon the future; and it makes repeated pleas that the Philippians will be united among themselves in the spirit of Christian love. It is written to thank the Philippians for the gifts which they have sent to Paul as soon as they heard that he was in prison. Also, it warns the readers of two dangers:- against those agitators who had made all the trouble in Galatia by insisting that Christians must be circumcised and made to keep the Law of Moses; - against people who profess to be Christians, but are really bent on all manner of self-indulgence (Beare 1962:120).

" Philippians is more peaceful than Galatians, more personal and affectionate than Ephesians, less anxiously controversial than Colossians, more deliberate and symmetrical than Thessalonians, and of course larger in his applications than the personal messages to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon" (Earle 1955:339).

The city of Philippi was located on the east border of Macedonia, about ten miles from the coast. Neapolis was its seaport on the Aegean Sea. It received its name from Philip II of Macedon, became a port of the Roman Province of Macedonia and thereafter became a Roman colony. It had a small Jewish colony in the time of Paul, but apparently it had no synagogue (Acts 16:13).

Paul had founded the Philippian church, the first church in Europe on his second missionary journey (Acts 16). The households of Lydia and the jailer, with the fortune-telling girl, made up the charter membership. The church had been established about ten years when this letter was written and, had been a source of great joy to Paul. There is a possibility that Luke remained in Philippi when Paul and his fellow-workers had to leave.

While Paul wrote much about himself, the letter is Christocentric. Paul's personal testimony was: 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' His life was so bound up in Christ that he could speak of himself to the glory of God by referring to the suffering of Christ and his own imprisonment in the same breath.

The Philippian letter gives a remarkable insight into the character of Paul. In prison, practically alone and with death hovering near at all times, he wrote the most joyful of all letters. 'The important thing is that in every way Christ is preached, and because of this I rejoice' 1:18. The years had mellowed him, there is no note of complaint or bitterness, only triumph throughout (Earle 1955:341).

According to 1:12-14, Paul's imprisonment has contributed to the forward movement of the gospel in two ways. First, the whole praetorian guard have realised that Paul is been held

prisoner for Christ. Second, Paul's imprisonment has encouraged the other believers to speak God's word more daringly, perhaps at risk to themselves.

The gospel is advancing, and Paul rejoices and he has great confidence that his rejoicing will continue. He has the prayers of his friends and the support of the Holy Spirit. Whether the verdict of the court is life or death, 1:20-21, the only thing that matters is that the greatness of Christ be manifest. Life for him means union with Christ. If he thinks of his own benefit, he chooses death, and the closer presence of Christ. If he thinks of his friends, he would rather be granted a life of useful service. He is prepared to die because he is prepared to live (Howard 1965:308).

Again in 3:10, the concept of power arises. Paul knows Christ already, but in ordinary experiences gets to know his Lord in new ways 'I want to know Christ in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering, becoming like Him in His death.' In other words, Koenig (1985:165) states "power and suffering constitute the two aspects of knowing Christ". This suffering is not just ordinary hurt or illness, but the ongoing experience of being molded together with Christ's death. Hence this qualifies one for the future resurrection. By the time Paul wrote these words, he had advanced beyond the early kerygma and his own doctrine" (Ahern 1960:1). There is considerable personal development in Paul.

In 3:7-8, Paul's aim is to bring to light the 'excelling gains' of which every Christian can boast, in contrast to the privileges of Judaism. For Paul, to attain the ultimate Christian reward, 3:20-21, one had to live and to suffer in the Christian way. The other 'gain', was to urge his converts to firmness in the faith. Ahern (1960: 32) explains further that " 'Fellowship in suffering', is a reality in all Christian living. Tension and struggle are inevitable. But they always result in the sharing of God's glory". Therefore sharing in Christ's suffering is sharing in Christ's glory.

"3:10-11 present Christ's suffering from an eschatological perspective: Christ's passion resulted in his resurrection. It is such a pattern that Paul, too, deeply desires to experience. Phil. 3:20-21 offer the same hope for all Christians" (Pate 1993:204). Paul is not the only one who is suffering. The Philippians and the readers of his letters suffer. What Paul says to them about suffering, becomes meaningful and carries authority due to the fact that Paul himself suffered. He, in turn, can face his suffering and be triumphant because the God he served suffered but was triumphant. Paul has laid bare his heart, because he knows they need a pattern of faith to imitate.

Paul urges his readers in 4:4 to rejoice in the Lord. It is the opinion of Koenig (1985:173) that in the sphere of Christ's reign joy overcomes all pain, Though this is a joy that must be recalled and embraced and expressed to one another. It is no giddiness that washes over believers like a

wave bit rather a deep treasure which needs to be sought and claimed. Paul has demonstrated throughout this letter, his joyous disposition in the face of persecution.

Paul follows his own advice about rejoicing in the Lord by recalling the Philippians recent gift to him in prison. He asserts in 3:12-13 that he has learned the secret of being content. Perhaps he is referring to some recent personal growth in his life, some threshold lately passed in his constant 'straining forward to what lies ahead' 3:3.

The apostle is adequate for every situation, having learned that circumstances as such neither add to nor detract from his higher happiness. He has experienced both pleasant and unpleasant situations and he does not value the one above the other. The reason he gives is: 'I can do everything through him who gives me strength' 4:13. This translated could read: I am strong for all things in the Christ who empowers me. This definitely includes doing that which is in the line of duty or suffering. He is grateful for any and all circumstances, because they are the occasion for the revelation of Christ's power (Howard 1965:350).

The participation of the Philippians in his trouble is one of the many ways God used to make him strong. The theme of unity in the Lord is further heightened when Paul sends greetings from those who are with him. Finally Paul ends the letter on the note he started it: grace. "To Paul, Christ was the totality of life. To 'know' Christ was the great incentive

of his life. To 'be found' in Him was his consuming passion. His desire for his converts was that they should live Christ-centred lives" (Earle 1955:349).

4.6.1 BLOOMQUIST'S FOUR-FOLD FUNCTIONS OF SUFFERING

Leading Christ centred lives involves a four-fold function of suffering which Bloomquist (1993:192) explains through Paul's letter to the Philippians. These functions will be applied to the entire study to determine the concluding chapter:-

1. It is through his words on suffering that Paul endears himself to the Philippians (1:5,7 and 4:10-14).
2. Paul never limits suffering to himself. He includes the suffering of others: his co-workers Timothy and Epaphroditus; the Philippians and Christ (1:29-30, 2:19-30,4:15-16).
3. Paul's use of the Christ type who as servant suffered and was vindicated (1:5,7 and 1:18b-26).
4. Suffering points beyond itself to vindication (3:1-4:7).

4.7 CONCLUSION

This is Paul's message. There is no reason to bemoan one's circumstances and suffering. "Paul commands his readers to imitate his suffering lifestyle in 3:17, which in the light of Phil 3:10, 11, 20, 21, is most certainly rooted in the eschatological tension that he believes has resulted from the Christ event" (Pate 1993:207).

His imprisonment did come to an end, even if only for a brief period. What he does after his release once again, demonstrates the power that flowed through the instrument God chose to send to the Gentiles.

Finally, then what Paul says is that from the moment one decides to follow Christ, one has to accept that it is a path of suffering. To know Christ, is to know His suffering. Christ is not ignorant of our suffering, instead He is with us through the suffering. Not only that, but He promises the reward of His hope and glory.

Paul is released after writing the Prison Letters. In his Pastoral Letters, he is aware that his time is running out. He shares his heartfelt message to Timothy and Titus. His concerns for the gospel remain of paramount importance.

CHAPTER FIVE PAUL'S PASTORAL LETTERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is not to discuss the authorship of the Pastoral letters. For purposes of this dissertation, the traditional view is accepted: that Paul wrote the Pastoral letters.

Three letters - 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus - are commonly known as the Pastoral Letters. They were written to two of Paul's young preachers and contain instructions to Timothy and Titus and to the churches under their charge. They also contain a strong personal element.

It is agreed that Paul could not have written the Pastoral Letters during or before his first Roman imprisonment. Paul was released from prison after two years, because the original charges were not pressed against him, and that he went on another missionary tour. He had previously planned to go to Spain (Roman 15:14, 28). "Clement of Rome in his letter to the Corinthians speaks of Paul's having gone to the west, which would be Spain" (Earle 1955:350).

The letters themselves provide evidence that Paul was released from imprisonment at the end of Acts. This allowed him to engage in travel and active missionary work before he was again arrested and brought to Rome, this time to face martyrdom. On this basis, 1 Timothy and Titus were written during this final missionary tour and 2 Timothy was written in prison just before Paul's death. Paul left Timothy in

Ephesus and Titus in Crete. His final testimony, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, is the word of a man who had received the sentence of death.

The fact that the Pastoral Letters are directed to individuals rather than to a church or to a group marks them as unique in Paul's writing. "Timothy and Titus were young men who held a very intimate and tender place in the apostle's trust and affection. Paul had placed them in Ephesus and Crete respectively, where they were bearing the heavy responsibility of leading these Christian churches" (Howard 1968:541).

In both situations the church was a little island of transformed Christian souls surrounded by a vast ocean of non-believers and moral corruption. To maintain the integrity of the Christian movement amid such surroundings was a colossal task. Howard (1965:548) stresses Paul could not disengage his mind and heart from the events which were transpiring on these battlefronts. He was planning a journey which would bring him within reach of these two under-shepherds and he must see them to encourage and advise them.

But some questions were too pressing to await personal interviews and on these matters he gives written advise. There are bishops and deacons to be appointed, and they must be men of peculiar integrity. There are false teachings which threaten the unity of the faith, and the apostle is constrained to do what he can to keep his young assistant's

vision in sharp in focus. In his second letter to Timothy he is facing the fact that little time remains to him. He leaves with Timothy a final confession of his unfaltering trust in Christ and his assurance that, though the state may destroy his body, it cannot impair his vision of the glorious future (Howard 1965:549).

1 Timothy and Titus were written during the interval of freedom which Paul enjoyed between his two Roman imprisonments. 2 Timothy was written during Paul's final confinement, the outcome of which was becoming increasingly plain. Therefore, Howard (1965:549) states that the Pastoral Letters may be called the last will and testament of the great apostle, the man who Deissman describes as 'the first under Christ' in the inception of the Christian Church.

According to Pate (1993:332) the theme of the pastorals draw attention to nine passages on suffering: 1 Tim. 1:11-17; 2:4-15; 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:9-13; 3:12-15; 4:5-8; 4:18; and Titus 2:12,13. Seven of these passages deal with the afflictions of Christ. Yet, the theme of suffering is never isolated from its eschatological counterpart, glory.

5.2 PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY

Earle (1955:352) sums up Paul's first letter to Timothy as follows; This first letter is written to a young pastor concerning his ministerial duties and his own personal conduct in the ministry. Instructions were included which were to be passed on to the church or churches.

This letter shows the close attachment between Paul and Timothy. They were as father and son. Paul was Timothy's spiritual father. Timothy had come to Paul shortly after John and Mark left him. Paul had guided him in the new life of a Christian, and had drawn him into the ministry. When the churches became more numerous and the organisation more complex, it became more and more necessary for Paul to turn the reins of control to others. Timothy was the one Paul could trust above all the rest.

When Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, he had left him at Ephesus in charge of the work there (1 Tim.1:3). Paul sent for him from Rome just before Paul's death. Timothy is actively involved with Paul during the apostle's first Roman imprisonment and made a journey on his behalf to the church at Philippi. Whatever else is known of Timothy in relation to Paul must be derived from Paul's two letters to him. "The whole record exhibits a deep, fatherly concern of Paul for his most distinguished convert and assistant in the gospel work" (Howard 1965:555).

5.2.1 PAUL'S CONCERN FOR THE GOSPEL

Paul was free for the time he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. He was eager to visit and supervise the work he had been so concerned about during his imprisonment. He was much older now and had to his advantage the knowledge of the experience of the cost of following Christ. He was fully aware of the meaning of his commission. He had paid most dearly with much

suffering for the sake of the gospel. He had developed in the sense of practical experience. He knew first-hand what it meant. Therefore he was concerned about the future of the gospel.

As in Philemon, Paul was aware of the effects of the social evils of the day and its effects on the gospel. More than life itself, Paul valued his commission. Therefore nothing could be allowed to interfere or cast a shadow over God's work. Paul was an older man now, ably experienced, therefore he was the only one who could speak with absolute authority about how God's commission should continue.

Paul was very conscious of the untold suffering which could surface in the churches if these community issues were to be left unaddressed. This would most certainly hinder the furtherance of the gospel. That Paul could not tolerate. He had suffered too much for the work to do nothing about these issues. So, he addressed certain problems that the church at Ephesus was facing, giving specific guidelines which were to be followed. This was done to prevent unnecessary suffering and pain for the Christians, the Church and the church leaders.

The reader is all too familiar with the effects of some of the problems Paul addressed. These problems are all too prevalent in our society today: heresy, church organisation, moral behaviour of members and leaders and other pastoral duties. Paul writes then, to "reinforce his charge about

false teachers, to lay down rules on certain points of public worship and the character of the officers in the church, and to give Timothy guidance as to his own life and teaching " (Lock 1973:1).

No man was more conscious of his divine appointment than was Paul. Once Christ had won Saul to himself, there was no holding Paul back - he preached Christ. Paul is forthright in his declaration in 1 Tim. 1:12 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.' Here is the testimony of Christ's servant, grown old in the service of his Lord.

In verses 1 Tim 1:12-17, Paul described his own situation. He is acutely aware of the time when he persecuted the church. From then to now, there is a development in Paul's attitude towards Christ that is undeniable. "The memory of the persecution of the church remained to lacerate his soul and induce a never-ending sense of sorrow " (Howard 1965:561). Paul is moved to give thanks to God for His infinite mercy.

The grace and mercy of God had been extended to him. This is an example of encouragement to others that because God saved Paul, He could save the worst sinner. These verses close with Paul's reference to his commission. "Paul was not merely commissioned to preach the gospel, but was the living

evidence of its meaning and power, and what it had done for him it could do for all men. This passage is integral to the purpose of the Pastoral Letters " (Scott 1957:12).

It is this commission that concerned Paul. In 1 Tim.1 :18-19, he returns to the commission which was placed upon Timothy. Timothy is reminded of the circumstances under which his ministry was launched. More importantly, Timothy is exhorted to be steadfast in his faith. This idea of faithfulness is repeated in chapter 1 Tim. 6:13-16. Here, Paul seeks to impress Timothy's mind and conscience with the importance of being faithful to the awesome responsibility that rests upon him as a man of God and leader of the Holy Church (Howard 1965:565).

This obligation is underscored by Howard (1965:619). He is in momentary expectation of the return of Christ in judgement and reward. The apostle had all but given up hope that he himself would live to see that glorious day of the Lord. Paul never wavered concerning the certainty of Christ's return, only his living to see it now seemed unlikely. But Timothy could witness the coming of that day. To him Paul says 'I charge you to live and labour with that day clearly in your view.

Paul's great love for the church and his commission is revealed as he demonstrates his concerns for the continuance of the preaching of the gospel for Christ. He knows that the work must continue even without him. What he does not want is

for the suffering to be in vain - for any reason. He wants the gospel to remain undiluted and for the ministers to be pure and true in order to be effective. This letter it must be noted, does not dwell on suffering whether his or that of the church.

5.3 PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS

The letter to Titus is next to the last of Paul's writings. It is less personal than 2 Timothy, while it has much of the emphasis already made in 1 Timothy. Written to one of Paul's most trusted workers, it displays much trust and confidence. Titus was another young companion of Paul. Titus was with Paul in Jerusalem at the first church council. He was chosen by Paul to supervise the work of the most difficult of churches - Corinth, that he was capable, highly trustworthy and an asset to Paul in his work. Titus could be depended upon in hard places (Earle 1955:361).

"While Titus may not be as gifted as Timothy, he was of a more even temperament and less given to discouragement" (Earle 1955:361). At the time Paul wrote to him, he was supervising the work on the island of Crete. Paul was on his travels. He left Titus behind at Crete to complete the organisation of the churches there. Paul sends a letter to Titus which is to guide him in his work and teaching there.

The chief aim of this guidance was to raise the level of character as pointed out by Lock (1973:122). Whereas in 1 and 2 Timothy the main stress was on the character of the

officers of the church, on the teachers, here it is also and mainly on the character of the taught. Paul is dealing with communities in the fairly early stage of Christian life. He lays stress on the duties of the members of a family and on those of citizens of the state.

There is no mention of suffering as in 1 Timothy, either about Paul or his readers. It is possible that Paul was concerned more with the church development. That he was interested in instructing Titus with important guidelines to equip him for the task ahead.

Paul leaves with Timothy and Titus, "who are pastors themselves, advise and warning, exhortation and encouragement. Out of the wealth of his knowledge of the faith and his experience in dealing with men and churches of varying types, he gives these younger ministers admonitions and guidance" (Howard 1965:541).

5.4 PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY

5.4.1 INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy and Titus offer a brief respite between Paul's imprisonments. The last time that Paul was in prison, he wrote his letter of joy to the Philippians. After a brief respite, he is imprisoned again. Only this time it is different: he is no longer hopeful of a release. The conditions of his imprisonment were much more stringent than before. He knows that he is facing martyrdom. Previously, he was sure of being released. This time he knows beyond doubt

that he is facing death. "Among the Pastorals, it is 2 Timothy that emphasizes most clearly the afflictions of Paul. 2 :8-10, 3:10-12 and 4:6-8 present him as the exemplar of suffering of Christ" (Pate 1993:335).

"That Paul's life was brought to an end in Rome by the executioner's sword may be accepted, but tradition associates his execution with the persecution of the Christians in Rome which followed the great fire of A.D. 64" (Bruce 1977:441).

Paul is standing at the only door open to him - death. He looks back and recollects his thoughts on the road he has travelled since meeting Jesus Christ: his commission and commitment to preaching the gospel, his accomplishments, which all form part of his past; to the present, his imprisonment and no hope of return; and finally of the future, a way which would bring death. But for Paul this death is not an end in itself.

For purposes of this study, this letter is an important one. Very clearly, it is possible to trace Paul's suffering and to observe his attitude towards his suffering. The Philippian letter reveals Paul's positive attitude, one of joy. But Paul's situation had worsened now. 2 Timothy is the last of Paul's writings which have been preserved.

It is one of the more personal letters, written while he was imprisoned awaiting martyrdom. "As he nears the hour of death, he becomes increasingly conscious of life - the life he has lived for Christ, the life he is about to lay down,

and the eternal life which awaits him. To Paul the past, the present, and the future were ablaze with life" (Earle 1955:364).

5.4.2 PAUL'S ATTITUDE TO HIS PRESENT SUFFERING

Paul, even though in prison, still signs himself an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, not only an apostle still; but still in the will of God; in prison, through the will of God, with the executioner's axe above him, through the will of God, almost entirely forsaken, through the will of God. In all those things he was more than a conqueror through him who loved him (Earle 1955:365).

In 2 Timothy 1:10b, 'Jesus Christ, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality through the gospel' Paul says that Christ has broken the power of death. According to Howard (1965:630), our Lord's own victory over death has robbed it of whatever terror it had, a fact of which Paul's own triumphant testimony in this letter is clear evidence. Because Christ has gone this way before us, we need not fear to follow. not only is death done away, but life and immortality are brought into full view and placed within the reach of faith.

In 2 Tim.1:11-12, Timothy is reminded that Paul's present sufferings are due to the fact that he is a preacher of the gospel. Paul attempts to encourage Timothy in his own sufferings for the gospel. He is not ashamed of the gospel even if others are. Hullgren (1984:115) claims that such

suffering does not cause discouragement or shame, since the one whom Paul believes is also the one whom he knows. His trust is placed in God, who is ever trustworthy. This does not mean that Paul is confident that God will spare his life, but that he has confidence in Christian teaching which will be vindicated at the last day.

Paul's confidence in the divine appointment to the task never wavered. If ever his sense of mission were to waver, it would surely be in his present circumstances, in prison and doomed to almost certain death. The real secret of his fortitude is found in his assurance: I know whom I have believed. "Here is an essential characteristic of the Christian faith. There must be a love fellowship with a Person - none other than Christ - if our faith is to be truly Christian" (Howard 1965:631).

In those crises of our experience of God's grace when one is placing his unknown future at the disposal of the will of God, it gives strength and comfort to the soul to be assured of the keeping power of God. Paul's great witness becomes a rallying cry to the sorely tried spirit and one of the most dearly loved of the New Testament texts.

In 2 Tim.1, Paul notes the failure of some in their loyalty to the gospel. Against this background, he directs his encouragement to Timothy in chapter two. The question is: how may a Christian leader equip himself for this task? "Being a minister of the gospel is like being a soldier (2:3-4), an

athlete (2:5), and a farmer (2:6). Paul exhorts Timothy to obey all the rules of his profession and to be the best workman. Hardships should not hinder him from doing his best" (Earle 1955:366).

There is one point Paul is seeking to make in these three analogies. Whether it be the soldier's expectation of ultimate victory, the athlete's vision of the crown, or the farmer's hope of a harvest, each of them submits to the discipline and the toil for the sake of the glory which shall be.

It is the apostle's loyalty to the gospel which has caused his suffering. In 2 Tim. 2:9, in contrast to Paul's own bonds is the absolute freedom of the word of God. That even though he is in prison, others are carrying on the work of preaching (Guthrie 1964:144). The gospel offers the only true freedom to be found. There is no doubt this imprisonment is more severe than the earlier one, yet the gospel is free. (Earle 1955:366). There is no prison for the word of God. Paul has reached a stage where he is willing to bear whatever suffering may come to him.

In 2 Tim. 2:10 Paul's states a reason for his endurance. It is for the sake of the elect, which seems to mean that they do not believe yet. They have to be won with all the effort Paul and Timothy can muster. All Paul's present trials are would be worthwhile if they accept the message of the gospel. It would be no paradise to Paul to live in paradise alone (Guthrie 1964:144).

In his earlier imprisonment Paul said 'I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances'. Now he is in a position to put to an even sterner test his total submission to the will of God. Howard (1965:640) states that he is able to see in the triumphant suffering of Christ's followers a certain extension of our Lord's redemptive suffering. His example of uttermost devotion could contribute something to the salvation of others.

Paul is not thinking of physical death in martyrdom 2 Tim. 2:11-13, but of the idea of new life in Christ, which must face the call to endurance. It is not so much the suffering as the attitude of mind towards it which is important (Guthrie 1964:146). "The prospect of reigning with Christ more than compensates for the pain that one must bear" (Howard 1965:641).

Paul turns to the example of endurance which he himself has set (3:10-11). These examples of the persecutions which Paul endured was witnessed by Timothy. Not only will conditions grow worse, but Paul has no hope to offer Timothy that his own situation will improve. There are two ways in which the balance between Timothy's situation and his ability to survive might have been gained - by lightening the load or by increasing his strength. "God does not temper the wind to the shorn lamb, He grows more wool on the lamb's back. That is Paul's message to Timothy" (Earle 1955:368).

It could very well be the persecutions that were a major factor in influencing Timothy's attachment to Paul. The thing that Paul proclaims is God's faithfulness to deliver His servant. He did not seek persecution or glory in it for its own sake; he recalls it only to praise God for the strength and grace that brought him through.

Paul is convinced in 3:12, that there is no easy road for the children of God. Jesus declared that the cross would be inescapable for those who followed Him (Howard 1965:651).

"I have never thought that a Christian would be free of suffering. For our Lord suffered. And I have come to believe that He suffered not to save us from suffering, but to teach us how to bear suffering. For He knew that there is no life without suffering" (Paton 1987:193).

There is an obvious degree of solemnity in the final chapter of this letter. Paul writes in full realisation of the fact that time is running out. This is in all probability his farewell to his beloved Timothy. These verses have the ring of the final charge of a general superintendent at his last ordination service.

Paul charges Timothy to preach the Word of God with equal urgency when circumstances are favourable and unfavourable. The coming evil times will make it more difficult to preach as people will chose fables over the truth. Paul could foresee times in the not too distant future when the conditions would be adverse (Earle 1955:368).

But Timothy has one major responsibility: he must with steady faithfulness and inspite of suffering fulfill his call to the ministry. The kind of loyalty Paul seeks to pass onto Timothy becomes necessary in the face of Paul's own fate. Paul knew full well he was facing the supreme sacrifice 'for I am already being poured out as a drink offering '4:6.

For Paul, 4:7, this is the end. His own fight is over. But Paul is not overwhelmed by the prospect before him. He recalls the course he has pursued and proclaims it good. "Paul reviewed his life as having been a battle, a race, and a test of truth of the gospel, and he has achieved victory in whatever way he considered it" (Earle 1955:369). He fought the good fight. 'I have finished the race I have kept the faith.'

There are no regrets in such a testimony. "The toils and sorrows and suffering are now forgotten in the assurance of a task well done. And the highest testimony of all is : I have kept the faith" (Howard 1965:655).

5.4.3 SHARING IN CHRIST'S SUFFERING

In death Paul was sharing in the sufferings of Christ on the cross. "Death to Paul was a sacrament. It was part of his total ministry for the cause of Christ and the spread of the gospel. For that reason he would triumph in death even as he had triumphed in life. The past with its many duties is

completed; the present is secure in faith; the future is aglow with prospect" (Earle 1955:369). 'Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness' 4:8.

The comfort which these verses bring to the Christian hearts is not to be found alone in Paul's own triumphant spirit, but also in the assurance that all of Christ's followers may enjoy such victory (Howard 1965:656).

Paul has been portrayed to this point as being in prison at Rome, deserted by his former companions, and expecting martyrdom. Timothy is believed to be at Ephesus but is summoned to join Paul at Rome soon, before the winter when travel becomes difficult. He is to bring certain articles belonging to Paul. It is very possible that Timothy was with Paul in the last days of his life.

The main section of Paul's letter is now complete and Paul turns to personal matters. He begins by describing his own situation. He is alone - apart from the presence of his most faithful friend Luke. He asks Timothy to bring Mark with him. He asks for a cloak against the cold of the prison, and for some books. Paul's request for his parchments could be his papers.

Paul rejoices in God's faithfulness in 4:16-18. He recalls how, when forsaken by others, God demonstrated His faithfulness. As was Jesus, so too was Paul, completely forsaken by his friends in the hour of his supreme need.

Nevertheless, Paul was not to become embittered by it. "The desertion of his friends is mentioned to bring into greater prominence the divine assistance" (Guthrie 1964:176). For this Paul forgives them.

'But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength' 4:17. Paul is referring to the many perilous situations he faced when preaching the gospel. But he was victorious over all of Satan's attacks, through Christ. But now he is expecting no deliverance from physical death. On the contrary, he is prepared for the worst. The Lord will save him for His heavenly kingdom. "His mind is clearly centred more on eternal realities than any hope of further release" (Guthrie 1964:178).

Paul's final greetings, no matter how tragic his own circumstances, include his gratitude to his friends. One last time, Paul returns to his earlier plea for a visit from Timothy before it is too late. The winter storms might make sailing too dangerous. The final benediction is a moving one. It is addressed to Timothy but includes all his readers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

"Paul was borne a man, an Apostle, not carved out, as the rest, in time, an Apostle poured out, and cast in a Mold. He belongs to that select company who leave their mark on their time, who mould their contemporaries and exert an influence which stretches far into the future" (Bruce 1977:462).

5.5 CONCLUSION

From the day Paul encountered Him on the Damascus Road and learned that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, through all the trials, tribulations and cares of his incredible ministry Paul was possessed of one great passion: to be with Christ Phil. 1:23, by whose living presence within him Paul had laboured and had endured more than other apostle. His influence on Christian thought during the succeeding centuries, in his timeless ethical principles, in the inspiration of his indefatigable labours and devotion to Christ, Paul stands alone. He is par excellence The Apostle of Christ (Sebly 1962:334).

Thus this concludes the survey of the collection of Paul's correspondence. As ancient collections of letters go, it is not large; yet no correspondence, ancient or modern, has shown such greatness or exerted such influence - probably the chief reason - is that Paul's letters are the oldest and greatest interpretations of Jesus (Selby 1962:295).

The study of Paul's references to suffering in all his letters are now completed. It is important to trace that there is a historical development in his thinking towards his suffering. What does his attitude towards suffering teach the Christian of his day and his present reader? These and questions relevant to the functions of suffering will be investigated in the conclusion.

CHAPTER SIX INTERPRETATION

There are definitely key hermeneutical shifts that have occurred in the Pauline concept of suffering. These key shifts are best explained through the interpretation of Bloomquist's fourfold functions found in Paul's letter to the Philippians. The letters will illustrate the extent to which these functions are applicable. The whole purpose of this chapter is to show the development in Paul's understanding of the phenomenon of suffering as guiding hermeneutical notion.

6.1 SUFFERING BRINGS ENDEARMENT

The study has shown that there is a historical line of development in the Pauline concept of suffering. Bloomquist's (1993:192) first function illustrates how this process began. It is through his words on suffering that Paul endears himself to his readers. Galatians introduces the first signs of Paul's suffering that is both his personal suffering and his suffering for Christ sake.

It must be borne in mind that when writing these letters, Paul was not working out a theology. He was not a theologian but a missionary. Therefore what Paul writes is written out of experience. But this does not mean that Paul was ignorant about his commission and the peril attached to it. He knew experientially that following Jesus would cost him everything: he was an eye-witness to the persecutions the early Christians suffered. He had come to accept that the cross was the personification of suffering.

Therefore when Paul began his preaching, he was not ignorant that he would suffer. At the same time, Paul did not know how or how much he would suffer. Neither did Paul want a way out of the suffering. He knew that the way to the Father was the way through the cross and he was determined to walk that way. So, in writing about suffering, he was not working out a deliberate scheme. But this study shows that there is a development in this suffering and there is much to learn from Paul's suffering, but these were not of Paul's intention.

In preaching the cross and Jesus crucified, Paul antagonised the Jews. This became the root cause of his suffering. When he preached to the Galatians 3:1-5:12 and 4:13 respectively, Paul states the reason for his suffering: for the sake of the gospel and his physical ailment.

It is through his words on suffering that Paul endears himself to his readers. The Galatians were drawn to Paul because he suffered. There can be no doubt that there was a strong attraction between Paul and them. When his physical illness is mentioned, it could not have been Paul's intention to ask for help. By their response it is evident that they felt greatly for him. They were prepared to give their own eyes, if it could have helped 4:15. Definitely then, here Paul suffering endears him to the Galatians.

A similiar response is observed again in his letters to the Corinthians and Philippians. In regards to his suffering for the sake of the gospel, the readers were encouraged through Paul's sufferings. This endeared Paul to his readers. They had the opportunity to recognise Paul's depth of committment and sense of integrity.

In I Cor.4:10-13 Paul describes the physical hardships of the apostolic ministry. He endured all kinds of difficulty. He gives a list of suffering to provide his converts with an example. 'Therefore I urge you to imitate me' 16. Paul sees his suffering in a positive light. The purpose of such suffering can result in Paul being endeared to his readers.

Second Corinthians fills much the same place in the New Testament as does the book of Job in the Old. It is a letter written by one whose heart has been broken by the many intolerable burdens heaped on him: a man struggling with a disobedient church and a malignant foe (Akin 1989:119). The distinction between apostolic and personal suffering disappears in 2 Cor.1:3-11.

Here Paul shares abundantly in Christ's suffering; his suffering is for the sake of the Corinthians. Although this suffering takes him to the limit of death, God delivers him. It is not only Paul who suffers, but the Corinthians themselves who suffer. Paul praises God for comfort. He describes his own suffering in relation to those of our Lord's.

This function of endearment continues however, only until the Philippian Letter. In Phil.1:5,7, it is in and through his suffering that Paul indicates the participation of the Philippians. This participation is the living relationship of the apostle and the Philippians to Christ and then to each other. This relationship has expressed itself to him at various times.

Paul's suffering for the sake of the gospel endeared him to the Philippians also because he was able to relate to their suffering in the light of his own suffering. This mutual suffering put them on par. Paul was able to minister to them not from a superior position as an objective observer, but rather as a fellow-sufferer. Therefore what he said had value, meaning and purpose. He was able to preach that suffering was part of the Christian life.

However, as Paul's suffering intensified, he was no longer concerned with his personal suffering. From the Philippian Letter his only concern is for the preaching of the gospel. His own sufferings are no longer mentioned. Towards the latter letters, Paul is Christ-centred. His emphasis has shifted, his eyes are focussed on the coming glory. 'For me to live is Christ, to die is gain' 1:21. This is how the first function can be explained. The application is thus restrictive and limited to the above discussion.

6.2 SUFFERING OF OTHERS

It would appear that the remaining three functions can be more aptly applied to the Paul's suffering for the sake of the gospel. The second function states that Paul never limits suffering to himself. He includes the suffering of others: his co-workers Timothy and Epaphroditus, his readers and Christ (Phil. 1:12-14, 1:29-30, 2:29-30, 3:1 and 4:15-16). Paul never uses suffering or his example of suffering in order to reprove his readers or to humble them.

Paul suffered for the sake of the gospel in Galatians because he preached the resurrected life in Christ. This view opposed the traditional Jewish practices and was the source of much hardship for Paul. The first time the suffering of others is mentioned is in reference to the sufferings of the Thessalonians in I Thess. 1:6-2:1.

They suffered in the aftermath of the riot caused by Paul's preaching. Paul knew that his converts would be exposed to ridicule. Paul encouraged them in their faith in 1 Thess.1:8. This church had become a model to all who believed. The Thessalonians were a witness to God's faithfulness. In 2 Thess.1:4 Paul is moved to anger in response to the news of their fierce persecution. Paul sees their steadfastness in their suffering as proof of their faith. Their suffering for Christ's sake is a guarantee for the future reward.

This is indicative that there is a purpose in suffering, not only purpose, but a reward for faithfulness as well. So began the suffering for Paul's readers. Since then, all who chose to follow Christ and all who will choose to follow Christ will suffer. This becomes and remains the pattern for all Christians past and present.

This persecution continues in 2 Cor.4:7-15. Paul is not alone in his suffering. Therefore it is no surprise that the sufferings of the readers are once again mentioned in these verses. Suffering is not limited to Christ or to Paul, but includes others. Paul's suffering becomes a sign of his genuine apostleship. His sufferings for Christ's sake enables others to be won for Christ sake. The Corinthians see Paul's life as an example for Christ.

According to Lambrecht (1990:60) the purpose of the suffering of Paul and the others reveal how the all surpassing power does not come from himself or themselves, but belongs to God. This suffering becomes the sign of genuine apostleship. Paul's dying brings about life in those addressed and lastly the purpose of suffering is for God's glory. "Suffering is both a sign of the reality of their faith and a product of it" (Tasker 1973:75).

Lambrecht (1990:64) explains that it would be unwise to divorce the apostolic hardships of 2 Cor. 4:7-15 from all Christians. But through the Christian way we may endure our suffering, we are able to transform them as it were and make

them function in life with sense and purpose. 'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all' v 17.

Paul includes the suffering of Timothy in this letter, 2 Cor 5:20, 'We are therefore ambassadors'. Paul and his helpers serve as representatives of Christ. His co-workers cannot be above suffering - Paul's or Christ's. Christ's suffering is the underlying factor in the lives of those who follow Him. All suffering is seen in the light of Christ's suffering.

Paul's co-workers, Timothy and Ephaphroditus are said to suffer. This is evident in Phil. 2:19-30. Paul also alludes to the Philippian's suffering. Finally there is the suffering of Christ, in 2:6-8 and 3:10. These examples enable the reader to see that while suffering is central in the Philippian letter, Paul never limits suffering to himself. This demonstrates that Paul in no way uses suffering to glorify himself or to humble others.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, Paul is discussing the suffering of others, which is yet to come. He is warning Timothy about the suffering that was yet to come to Timothy and his readers, after Paul's death. Paul is referring to the suffering that would be experienced in the last days. His emphasis to Timothy and the readers is found in 2 Tim. 4:5 'But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardships'.

6.3 CHRIST TYPE SUFFERING

The third function refers to Paul's use of the Christ type who as servant suffered and was vindicated. Paul perceives that in his own experiences; in those of his co-workers; and in those of the readers, the experiences that identified Christ are being fulfilled or re-enacted. In other words, the experiences of Paul's co-workers and of his readers mirror his experience of suffering and persecution.

It is in this third function that the concept of vindication is introduced. Vindication establishes a higher purpose of suffering. This in turn allows suffering to be viewed in a more positive light. In 2 Cor. 6: 4-10, the apostolic suffering as a sign of Christian existence and identity is revealed. While his opponents measure themselves with each others achievements in the ministry, Paul sees his own crown in suffering.

He is therefore able to defend his office by the nature of the message which has been committed to him and experienced by the Corinthians. In these few verses, Paul tries to highlight his own understanding of the fate of the servant of Christ. In so doing, he provides his readers with a theoretical model to which every Christian must be willing to submit. For Paul, suffering has a positive meaning.

It is linked to the events of the last days. The suffering Paul experiences is not caused or permitted by God in order to test, educate or discipline man as Judaism would have

the reader accept. Paul's sufferings and hardships must be viewed in terms of Paul's own theology.

The two main ideas in verse 9 are dying and living. Paul's sufferings inform Christians of the circumstances which deeply affected the apostle. These circumstances are neither caused or chosen by Paul himself. They happen to him apart from his own will and desire. Whether external changes and hardships or human division, opposition and persecution, Paul sees all suffering as intimately connected with life as an apostle. As such, he lives in Christ.

Paul, who according to verse 10b lacked the very things that make life tolerable, conducted himself as though he was the possessor of all things. And so, in fact he was - because to have Christ is to have all, for Christ is all. This passage challenges every reader to re-examine as before God his own relationship to the crucified, risen and ascended Lord and to dedicate his life and talents to the prosecution of the cause of Christ.

What is the real cause of the unavoidable suffering? In 2 Cor. 4:10-11 Paul is quoted saying that he always carries in his body the death of Jesus and that he is given to death for Jesus sake. In Romans 8:17, Paul declares that Christians are children and heirs of God, fellow-heirs with Christ, provided they suffer with him in order that they may be glorified with him.

In Romans 6:3-4 Paul reminds us of our baptism into Jesus' death and in 2 Cor. 5:14, he affirms that one has died for all, all have died. These texts directly show that Paul considers his suffering as related to the suffering and death on the cross. He is sharing through his hardships in Jesus' suffering. More importantly, in the midst of his suffering, he sees himself as participating in Jesus death and passion.

Paul emphatically declares that our present life is not a final one. Rather, life in Christ is therefore no more than an anticipation of the future life. Jesus' resurrectional life is already manifest in our bodies and herein lies our hope. Thus in dying yet living, Paul is affirming that he is in union with Christ and has his being in Christ.

Paul's use of the Christ type who as servant suffered and was vindicated is evident also in Col. 1:24-29. Here Paul interpreted his imprisonment as sharing with Christ in His sufferings for the sake of the Colossian church in particular. He rejoices not because of the suffering he endures, but in them for the good they bring. Included in the suffering is not only Paul's suffering, but all suffering, that of Epaphras and others in bringing the gospel to them.

According to his theory, Bloomquist (1993:193) states that in Philippians Paul emphasises that he, like Christ, is a servant who suffers. But Paul's suffering is not meaningless, because it serves as a pointer or guidepost to the victory of

God. Paul focuses on suffering in Philippians in order to stress that, as in the case of Christ:

1. Whatever happens to him will not undermine the progress of the gospel;

2. Suffering prefaces the inevitable vindication of the one suffering.

The important point Bloomquist (1993:195) makes in Phil. 2:6-11 is: the experiences of Paul's life, reflecting the Christ type, lead him to see that even as Christ as servant suffered and was vindicated, so too will Paul, as well as his co-workers and the Philippians; they will be vindicated or exalted. Timothy and Epaphroditus are both servants in more than just their suffering. Timothy encourages Paul when he brings good news to him in prison. Epaphroditus and the Philippian church reassure Paul of God's triumphant grace - and are signs of the ultimate vindication.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy 2:9-13, it is the apostle's loyalty to the gospel which has caused his suffering. Although he is in prison, the gospel is free. In verse 10, Paul states the reason for his endurance: it is for the sake of the elect, which seems to mean that they do not believe yet. All Paul's present troubles would be worthwhile if they would believe.

In his earlier imprisonment Paul states that he learned to be content whatever the circumstances. Now he is in a position to put to an even sterner test his total submission to the

will of God. He is able to see in the triumphant suffering of Christ's followers a certain extension of our Lord's redemptive suffering. Paul is not concerned with physical death in verses 11-13, but the idea of the new life in Christ. The prospect of reigning with Christ more than compensates for the pain that one must bear.

6.4 SUFFERING AND VINDICATION

Bloomquist's (1993:196) final function of suffering points beyond itself to vindication. He explains that here Paul sets before his readers his proof for the value of his suffering. Paul argues that even as Christ suffered and that suffering served to advance the gospel, so too, the suffering of Christ's servants, in whom the Christ type is fulfilled, advances the gospel.

In 2 Cor. 12:1-10 Paul mentions being given a vision and a thorn. According to Tasker (1973:172) the purpose of his vision was for Paul alone, to strengthen his belief in the reality of heaven and to reassure him during his suffering on earth of the glory that awaited him for remaining faithful to his Lord. As the Lord was lowly in His earthly ministry, so the vessels dare to be earthen only, if they are to transmit the gospel. The thorn was given so that his ministry might be exercised in deepest humility.

In v.9, the basis of Paul's apostolic authority is indeed rooted in his weakness Christology. Paul's weaknesses - whether exhibited in his suffering for the gospel or centred

in the thorn in the flesh - have been his criteria for true apostleship. His weakness is the power of the crucified.

It is Paul's perception that this thorn had been given by God. Paul asked the Lord to remove it three times. But the Lord said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'. For those who follow the Lord, suffering and pain must be expected, for they will relive the mission and passion of Jesus.

The emphasis of the fourth function is vindication. This is clearly evident in verse 10 'when I am weak then I am strong'. "There is vindication: God's way of working - to men an inefficient way, and thus a proof of it's divinity - is the way of weakness. Hidden in the cross and weakness is resurrection power" (Akin 1989:143).

According to Paul, in Phil. 3:18-19, the opponents' expectation of life was exhausted by the here and now, so denying future vindication or chastisement. Paul sees in his suffering a partial fulfillment of the Christ type and so he is confident that suffering will be followed by vindication.

Thus he explains that even as Jesus did not experience suffering in vain, though others thought he had, neither will the Christ type servants suffer in vain. According to Bloomquist (1993:197), Paul makes no attempt here to equate the actual state of suffering and vindication of Christ and his followers.

Paul is convinced in 3:12 that there is no easy road for those who follow Christ: the cross is inescapable. "I have never thought that a Christian would be free of suffering. For our Lord suffered. And I have come to believe that He suffered not to save us from suffering, but to teach us how to bear suffering. For He knew that there is no life without suffering" (Paton 1987:193).

Up to now Paul was running the race, in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 Paul had reached the end of the race. The concept of his vindication is emphasised. Paul's final testimony is found in 4:7-8. 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.' In 4: 1-5 he leaves with Timothy a charge to continue in his absence. Paul's sufferings are almost over.

In death Paul was sharing in the sufferings of Christ on the cross. "Death to Paul was a sacrament. It was part of his total ministry for the cause of Christ and the spread of the gospel. For that reason he would triumph in death even as he had triumphed in life" (Earle 1955:369). 'Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness' v.8. The comfort which these verses bring to the Christian hearts is not to be found alone in Paul's own triumphant spirit, but also in the assurance that all of Christ's followers may enjoy such victory.

Paul rejoices in God's faithfulness in 4:16-18. He recalls how, when forsaken by others, God demonstrated His faithfulness. As was Jesus, so too was Paul, completely forsaken by his friends in the hour of his supreme need. 'But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength' v17.

Paul is referring to the many perilous situations he faced when preaching the gospel. But he was victorious over all of Satan's attacks, through Christ. But now he is expecting no deliverance from physical death. On the contrary, he is prepared for the worst. The Lord will save him for His heavenly kingdom. "His mind is clearly centred more on eternal realities than any hope of further release" (Guthrie 1964:178).

CHAPTER SEVEN CONCLUSION

This study has traced Paul's key hermeneutical nature of suffering from the moment of his first encounter with Christ up to the time he faced death. There is a historical development in Paul's thinking regarding his suffering.

This study reveals that in this world there will be suffering not because God does not care. Christ suffered and died, therefore anyone who follows Him will suffer. How should one cope with suffering? Clearly Paul sets an example for Christians to follow.

Guthrie (1981:98) explains that the notion that God could use suffering does not come naturally for Paul. Although it is true that suffering is nowhere explained, there is enough evidence to show what the Christian attitude towards it should be. There is no suggestion that God is less than wise or good because suffering exists. Since the supreme example of suffering lies at the heart of God's redemptive activity in Christ, it cannot be maintained that suffering is alien to the purpose.

What about one's attitude towards suffering?

Paul's answer is: but through Christ we may endure our sufferings, we are able to transform them and make them function in a life with sense and purpose. 'For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all' 2 Cor. 4:17.

In 2 Cor. 4:7-15, according to Lambrecht (1990:67), Paul emphasizes the apostolic, christological and theological functions of his suffering. He makes known what his inner inspiration is: he points to God as a source of the power that drives him. This power comes from his union in Jesus Christ; from the faith that is very much alive; and from the hope of the future; his own resurrection and that of his fellow Christians, and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ forever.

It can be stated that suffering does have a function, meaning or purpose. Paul subscribes to such a view. Through His suffering and death Christ redeemed us. Paul advocates that the suffering of a Christian is an essential part of what is called the theology of the cross. But suffering itself should not be glorified, it belongs to this passing world. Yet, suffering cannot be avoided totally. Paul explains that suffering, for Christians, is necessary because of their union with Christ. Suffering is part of their spirituality and it belongs to the pattern of redemption. But fatalism cannot be a recommended attitude for a Christian.

Faith in Christ crucified tells us that no suffering must remain in despair or in a state of hopelessness. All suffering must be viewed in an apostolic way. To believe in such a message is a great comfort. This is Paul's challenge and appeal to Christians. He preaches that God is the source of the power that drives him. (Lambrecht 1990:67).

Finally, according to Paul and the New Testament, suffering is not a dead end. Paul urges his readers to see their suffering in the light of his suffering as he sees his suffering in the light of Christ's suffering. What lies in the eschatological future is risen life, life without suffering, and, through all this, God's greater glory.

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