**10 30 16**

***Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.”***

Beloved in Christ Jesus, in today’s epistle St. Paul gives us great hope and confidence in the face of troubles in our life, and particularly addresses the problem of unanswered prayer. St. Paul was afflicted with a “thorn in the flesh” that harassed him. Some fathers of the church felt this “thorn” was a physical defect-like severe headaches. Most, however, seem to think that this “thorn” was the persecution from other groups of people within the church who were plotting against Paul and spreading rumors about him. They were trying to oppose his preaching and derail him. Whatever this “thorn” was, the meaning is the same for us.

First, we see that adversities in our life- even if motivated by the evil one or evil people for evil purposes- can be turned into the power of God in our lives. We must realize that God does not allow anything in our lives that will not lead us to salvation and make us better for it. As in the case of Job, when the devil asked God to be permitted to persecute Job- God allowed this for one reason- so that Job would shine like the stars of heaven. So that He would be strengthened in his faith and be glorious among the Saints. Conversely, if some live upon this earth without apparent adversity, this may be that our Lord knows that they would obtain no benefit from it. That their faith is so weak, that they might perish, or perhaps may have already perished. A very important passage in the book of Zechariah makes this clear; ***“And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say,`This is My people'; And each one will say,`The LORD is my God.” (Zec 13:8-9 NKJ)*** Beloved, if we are truly God’s people, we will suffer adversity!!

Second, it is right that we pray to God to be delivered from evil things, from sickness, and from adversity in our lives. God does not desire these things and He does hear our prayers. However, His answer is not always the one that we expect or want. St. Paul who was constantly (three times is taken to mean “numerous times” or “constantly” by most Fathers) praying to the Lord that this ‘thorn’ be removed from him. Yet, he hears the answer “***my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*** This tells us that we do not know what is best for our own lives. Let us ask fervently, and yet trust God for His answer. “**Thy will be done.”** This is true prayer, for our trust in our Lord- that He will grant us everything necessary for our lives- is what faith really is. When St. Paul says “***For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought***” (Rom 8:26 NKJ), it is not the technique or substance of prayer that he is talking about- but is rather the attitude of absolute and total trust in the good and loving God. It is trusting Him Who will not allow anything to ultimately harm us.

Therefore my beloved in our Lord, when adversities or tragedies come into our life, let us face them with boldness. Let us face them with absolute confidence that our Lord is with us and near to us. He does hear our prayers. We should pray for peace and health, and yet if they do not come to us, let us redouble our faith and know that God allows these things to be present in our lives that we may be refined ***“as silver is refined.”*** When troubles come our way, let each one of us, cry out with joy together with St. Paul, ***“I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”*** Amen.