

kept awake all night. Many times Calvin ate only one meal a day. Cramps, indigestion, influenza were regular problems.

– Thea B. Van Halsema. This Was John Calvin. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959. p. 150.

8. God uses our weakness in suffering to demonstrate His power in our lives, both in reality and in realization.

II Corinthians 12:9 – "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

When we are weak, God can strengthen and comfort us, thereby bringing praise to our lips and the lips of those who see us in our suffering. And when we realize we are weak, we can depend on God, and His grace can be poured into our lives so that we, together with those who behold us, can praise Him for it.

9. God sometimes uses the example of our suffering for Christ's sake to further the gospel and to encourage timid believers to speak out for Christ.

Philippians 1:12-14 – "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."

Jonathan Chao writes:

The history of the church in China raises questions. Why did God allow the church in China to go through such prolonged periods of suffering? What has God done through the suffering church? What can we learn from the sufferings of the church in China? These are questions that all Christians in the world should reflect on.

After four years of research I have discovered that the protestant church in China has increased nearly five hundred percent (fifty times). In 1950 there were fewer than a million protestant communicant members: 840,000, to be exact. Today, the Chinese Church Research Center estimates that there are about fifty million believers. The suffering church has been purged of its impurities and has become a missionary church that is trying very hard to reach the 950 million nonbelievers in China.

The church in China is growing by leaps and bounds because it has suffered for Christ's sake and has learned that suffering is central to Christian maturity and church growth. This is one of the important lessons that can be learned from the church in China.