

Ho Pater Ton Oiktirmos: "The Father of Mercies"

Scripture Reading — 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort...

—2 Corinthians 1:3—

In this densely packed prayer, Paul praises God as the God and Father of Jesus Christ and as *Ho Pater ton Oiktirmos*, “the Father of mercies.” The Greek word *oiktirmos*, expressing “compassion, pity, mercy,” literally means “to have a stomach ache for the object of one’s compassion.”

Surprisingly, even though Paul and his coworkers suffered in their work to spread the good news of Jesus, Paul didn’t complain or ask God to remove their suffering. Instead, he acknowledged God’s compassion in the midst of their suffering. Actually, Paul didn’t see suffering as apart from God’s will, but somehow as a part of God’s will for himself and his fellow laborers. Most remarkably, Paul described God as *Ho Pater ton Oiktirmos*, “the Father of mercies,” who comforts us in our afflictions.

What kind of Father is this who allows his children to suffer? We suffer because of sin and its effects in this world. But Paul reminds us that in our suffering *Ho Pater ton Oiktirmos* comforts us through Jesus Christ, who, after all, suffered and died for us, paying the debt of our sin.

Are you suffering? Take comfort and courage that “the Father of Mercies” cares for you. And because he cares for you, you can care for others.

Prayer

Father of Mercies, help us to see your goodness in joy and sorrow, well-being and suffering, and to know your comfort and share it with others. In Jesus, Amen.

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