

“We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself” (2 Corinthians 1:8).

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul, with Timothy, writes about affliction, which seems timely. These days we are, perhaps, feeling somewhat afflicted.

The Greek word for “affliction” means “pressure”. Paul and Timothy were under a lot of pressure in Asia. Things were so bad that they actually had to rely on God.

Yes, he said that. Paul writes that normally he can rely on himself. But things were looking dicey in Asia. Death might be involved. Paul needed help.

Elsewhere Paul has written that he can do all things through him who gives him strength (Phil 4:13), but the first “him” is a little vague. Some think he meant Christ. I think he meant coffee. I can do nearly anything required of me after I have had my coffee. For my wife, substitute Dr. Pepper. We all have our favourite substance. For the general public, it seems to be toilet paper.

Day 23. I have opened my last roll of toilet paper...

This pandemic is taking us a little out of our depth. We can no longer rely just upon ourselves. Or our substances.

This is about a paradigm shift, or second order change. Things were so bad in Asia that Paul had to rely on God. Coffee wouldn't work. The usual solutions wouldn't work. Things were so bad that Paul and Timothy had to reinvent themselves.

For some time now things have been bad, requiring a change. Fossil fuels. Population growth. Pollution. Climate change. We've been trying to fix problems using tools we already had lying around the house. And they haven't been working. But we haven't been desperate enough to try anything else.

Now we can't rely on our existing tools or ways of thought. Now we are forced into a situation that can only be remedied by reaching outside of ourselves. Now we have to turn to a power that is so different and otherworldly that it can bring life to things we long since thought were dead.

And it's Easter. Now what's that about?

- Carl