

The Role of Suffering in Our Lives



Second Corinthians
12:7-10

Remembering Paul's Life

- Confronted by Christ on the Road to Damascus
- Leader of the Non-Jewish church outside Jerusalem
- Journey's of proclamation & miracles
- Profound spiritual experiences & visions (II Corinthians 12)
- Vs. 3&4 'caught up to heaven', 'heard inexpressible things',
- Vs. 7 'surpassingly great revelations'

II Corinthians 12:7-10

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

1. Unusual Gift
 - Need for humility over against the temptation towards spiritual pride

Unusual Gift

- Given (by whom? – God)
- Thorn (stake)
- What was it?
 - Physical – malignant growth, eyes, malaria, epilepsy, weak voice
 - Spiritual attack - people or temptation
 - Mental
- Messenger from Satan

II Corinthians 12:7-10

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

2. Our Response
 - Pleading "take it away"
 - I don't like this at all, therefore it must be bad, demand our way out
 - Like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk. 14:32-42)

Our Response

- To whom does Paul pray?
 - The Lord Jesus Christ
- "The time for prayer had passed. It was now a matter of acceptance of the Lord's will." Dr. Gordon Fee

II Corinthians 12:7-10

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

3. God's View – climax of the text
- Not always our view
 - Sometimes God says "no"
 - "The LORD may grant an end that we properly seek, but not by the means we desire."

God's View

- God's Grace
 - Merciful kindness
 - Do you believe that God is good?
- God's Power is perfected in your weakness
 - Divine empowerment
 - Spiritual provision
 - Maturity

II Corinthians 12:7-10

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

4. Therefore Be resolved
- God pitches His tent with us

Therefore Be resolved


- VS. 10
 - Weaknesses
 - Persecutions
 - Difficulties
 - Insults
 - Hardships
- When I am weak, then I am strong!
- Finding peace & strength by embracing the suffering
- In suffering we meet God's power in a way that is otherwise not possible

Other Scriptures

- Matthew's Sermon on the Mount
 - Who are the blessed?
- "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you." John 15:20
- "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" Philippians 3:10

Other Scriptures

- "We rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope." Romans 5:3-4
- "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness." Hebrews 12:5 & 11



The Role of Suffering in our Lives

- Sometimes God gives us thorns
- In a storm there is both God & the enemy
- God wants to “pitch his tent beside us” in those tough times
- His Grace is sufficient
- His Power is working to perfect
- Trust His love, His will, His ways