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What You Need to Know About Pain: Part 2

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PAIN
(Part Two)

In Part One we looked at the origin of suffering, attempted answers concerning suffering, and the sources of suffering.

Today we consider some reasons for and benefits of suffering. There are at least 22 reasons—

ONE—TO PRODUCE FRUIT IN OUR LIVES

During his final midnight walk through the deserted streets of Jerusalem en route to Gethsemane, our Lord spoke the following words to His disciples:

> *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit"* (John 15:1-2).

The Scriptures present at least five kinds of spiritual fruit produced through purging:

The Fruit of Patience

Several New Testament passages teach us that suffering can produce patience:

> *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience"* (Rom. 5:3).
>
> *"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing"* (James 1:3, 4).
>
> *"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise"* (Heb. 10:36).

The Fruit of Joy

> *"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"* (Psa. 30:5).
>
> *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bering precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Psa. 126:5, 6).

The Fruit of Knowledge

> *"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law"* (Psa. 94:12).

We learn some things from prosperity, but we learn much more from adversity.

The Fruit of Maturity

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

"Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Eccles. 7:3).

The Fruit of Righteousness

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

TWO—TO SILENCE THE DEVIL

One of the most dramatic confrontations of all time between God and Satan is described in the ancient book of Job. Satan arrogantly stands before the Almighty and brazenly attempts to tell Him the only reason the patriarch Job faithfully served Him was due to all the spiritual fringe benefits which accompanied this service. Note this accusation:

"Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land" (Job 1:9-10).

Satan then concludes his slanderous report by daring God to allow him, the devil, to remove all these wonderful things from Job. If this were allowed, he sneeringly predicted Job would turn from God and actually curse Him to His face! Were these terrible changes valid? Would Job defect under persecution? The sovereign and all-knowing God, of course, needed no such assurance. But to silence the devil (among other reasons) and utterly disprove his vicious and unfounded taunts, God allow him to persecute Job.

THREE—TO TEACH US

There are two very practical courses of study offered to those enrolled in the school of suffering:

Course Subject #1: Dependence

Through suffering we learn to depend upon God. I think one of the most difficult statements of Christ for the average Christian to really believe is that little phrase at the end of John 15:5, *"for without me ye can do nothing."*

Course Subject #2: Obedience

The author of Psalm 119 was enrolled in this course. Note his testimony:

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psa. 119:67, 71).

<u>FOUR</u>—TO PURIFY OUR LIVES

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

"For thou, O God, has proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psa. 66:10-12).

"And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin" (Isa. 1:25).

"Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10).

"The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts" (Prov. 17:3).

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

<u>FIVE</u>—TO MAKE US LIKE CHRIST

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:9-10).

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-14).

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body"(2 Cor. 4:7-10).

<u>SIX</u>—TO GLORIFY GOD

"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psa. 60:15).

Writing from a Roman prison, the apostle Paul reminded the church at Philippi of his sufferings and then says:

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with

all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil. 1:19-20).

SEVEN—TO PREVENT US FROM SINNING

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7).

EIGHT—TO MAKE US CONFESS WHEN WE DO SIN

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psa. 32:3-5).

"I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early" (Hosea 5:15).

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hosea 6:1).

NINE—TO CHASTEN US FOR OUR SIN

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God" (1 Peter 4:17).

TEN—TO PROVE OUR SONSHIP

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:5-6).

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

ELEVEN—TO REVEAL OURSELVES TO OURSELVES

During one of Job's defenses against the false accusations of his three "friends," the frustrated patriarch cried out:

"My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live" (Job 27:6).

But through his intense suffering and a personal encounter with God, Job sees himself as he really was. Note his reaction:

"Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).

TWELVE—TO HELP OUR PRAYER LIFE

The prophet Isaiah gave his testimony how this principle of suffering aided his countrymen, the nation Israel.

"Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them" (Isa. 26:16).

<u>THIRTEEN</u>—TO BECOME AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS

"But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings" (2 Cor. 6:4-5).

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia"(1 Thess. 1:6-7).

<u>FOURTEEN</u>—TO QUALIFY US AS COUNSELORS

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15).

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"(Gal. 6:2).

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. 1:3-5).

<u>FIFTEEN</u>—TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL WITNESS

During the second missionary journey, Paul and Silas are arrested, severely beaten, and confined in an inner prison with their feet cruelly secured in the stocks. But then the miracle happened:

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (Acts 16:25-34).

While locked up in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the church at Philippi, which as we have already seen, was born during a midnight prison praise service. He

assures the Philippian believers that some of the same wonderful things were happening at Rome.

> *"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places"*(Phil. 1:12-13).

SIXTEEN—TO MAKE US MORE THAN CONQUERERS

> *"So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places"* (2 Cor. 2:14).
>
> *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Rom. 8:35, 37).

SEVENTEEN—TO GIVE US INSIGHT INTO GOD'S PERSON

After his intense suffering, Job could say:

> *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee"* (Job 42:5).

EIGHTEEN—TO DRIVE US CLOSER TO GOD

> *"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you"*(1 Peter 4:14, NASB).
>
> *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong"*(2 Cor. 12:10).

NINETEEN—TO PREPARE US FOR A GREATER MINISTRY DOWN HERE

> *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"* (John 12:24).

TWENTY—TO PROVIDE FOR US A REWARD

A number of the reward passages are associated with suffering:

> *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together"* (Rom. 8:16-17).
>
> *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"* (Matt. 5:10-11).

TWENTY-ONE—TO PREPARE US FOR THE MILLENNIUM

> *"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him"* (2 Tim. 2:12).
>
> *"…that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer"* (2 Thess. 1:5).

TWENTY-TWO—TO SHOW GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

In regard to God's sovereignty and our suffering, doubtless the greatest verse in all the Bible is Romans 8:28:

> *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Rom. 8:28).

As a final illustration of the beautiful relationship between sovereignty and suffering, consider the case of Joseph's persecution by his own brothers who sold him into cruel slavery (Gen. 37:28). How did Joseph himself react to this terrible injustice? Well, years later, after he had been appointed prime minister of Egypt, he testified to his repentant brothers:

> *"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt"* (Gen. 45:4-8).
>
> *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive"* (Gen. 50:20).

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