

2 Corinthians: Encouragement in Troubling Times
"God's Purpose in Pain"
2 Cor. 12: 5-11
11-13-16 Sun AM

The false apostles had evidently claimed visions and revelations, so it's with this backdrop that Paul reluctantly shared his genuine revelations, and in doing so, gives us insight into suffering.

TT- Why is pain a gift from God? What is God's purpose behind suffering, persecutions and hardship in the name of Jesus? We see 5 reasons pain is a gift from God:

I. Pain reveals the believers spiritual condition [vs. 5-6].

Trouble is the truest test of a person's spiritual character. God used pain to reveal the character of a genuine man of God.

1 Peter 1:5-7 ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷That 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:

Paul speaks of himself in the third person and shows humility in doing so. What Paul did boast about was his weaknesses because they proved his apostleship.

I. Pain reveals the believers spiritual condition.

II. Pain makes believers humble [v. 7].

Twice in v. 7 Paul says that God allowed his thorn in the flesh to keep him from exalting himself because of his revelations.

In fact, the book of Acts records 6 visions besides this one. He also received the gospel by revelation.

The thorn in the flesh is much debated. Some thoughts

1. Because Paul did not describe it let's us know that the Corinthians knew what it was.

2. Some physical ailment- migraines, malaria, epilepsy, speech impediment, kidney stone, or eye disease.

3. Thorn is translated "stake." This speaks on the intensity of the pain. This thorn was given by God thru Satan to keep him

humble.

4. Paul's thorn could be understood as a demonic messenger of Satan sent to torment him by using the deceivers to seduce the Corinthians into a rebellion against him.

I. Pain reveals the believers spiritual condition [vs. 5-6].

II. Pain makes believers humble [v. 7].

III. Pain draws believers to God [v. 8].

How did Paul react in his pain?

1. Paul did not use human wisdom, exorcism, but went to God. Paul drew near to God in his pain. "Besought" is used frequently by those appealing to Jesus for healing.

2. Paul was persistent in prayer, yet God did not remove the thorn.

I. Pain reveals the believers spiritual condition.

II. Pain makes believers humble.

III. Pain draws believers to God.

IV. Pain displays his God's grace [v. 9a]. Two thoughts-

1. God sometimes does not remove our pain because it is for our spiritual good and God's glory.

It revealed Paul's true character, kept him humble so he could be used, and drew him to God in a deeper intimacy thru prayer.

God gave Paul relief by giving him grace sufficient to endure the thorn. God's grace would be on display thru Paul's pain.

Sufficient means "enough, suffice, or content." His grace is sufficient in every need of life.

2. Pain teaches us God's grace is sufficient.

Grace speaks of God's undeserved favor to mankind. It begins at salvation and continues thru sanctification to glorification.

This grace is sufficient for all of life's problems. There are three powerful passages on the sufficiency of God's grace and God's Word.

(Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:16)

V. Pain perfects God's power [vs. 9b-10].

1. For God to display his grace and power in our life, we must get rid of pride and self-confidence [v. 9b].

We must come to the end of ourselves and trust God completely. It is when we have no where else to turn that we can be most effective.

2. We must embrace the pain because it is a means by which God releases his power [vs. 9c-10].

Pleasure means well content or delighted. In other-wards, he was thrilled with his weaknesses because it was God's will!

We must have the right perspective in our troubles.

We don't need to focus on the removal of the trial, but embrace the trial knowing that God uses it to build and prove our faith, draw us closer, display his grace, and display his power in our lives.

Close with four practical lessons:

1. Spiritual blessings are more important than physical blessings.
2. Unanswered prayer does not always mean the need is not met.
3. Weakness is strength if God is in it.
4. There is grace to meet every need.