

The Tanner St Church of Christ meets each Lord's Day beginning with Bible classes at **9:30 AM**. We continue with our worship at **10:20 AM** and again at **5:00 PM**. We also meet each Wednesday evening at **7:00 PM** for Bible study and worship. Our meeting place is located about ¾ of a mile from I30 at 1512 Tanner St in Malvern, AR.

If you have questions about what we believe and teach, please visit our website, tannerst.com to listen to sermons or read past articles from our bulletin. Or you can contact us and we will be glad to find a convenient time to study with you.

Phone: (501) 332-8806 Email: preacher@tannerst.com

Consider: Acts 10:34-35 Needed News

Paula Laubach is doing better. **Joyce Venable** is some better but has chills and fever. **Conrad Harris** is weak and disoriented at times. The **Venable's** Daughter-in-law, **Judy**, has been diagnosed with colon cancer. She should start treatment in May. Keep these as well as others of our number with ongoing health issues in your prayers.

(Due to space restraints this week's article has been shortened by removing the texts of some of the scripture references. If you have access to the internet the entire article is available on our website, tannerst.com. I usually avoid using articles that require such editing but the topic discussed here is a timely one for most of us and I felt its publication was needed. You can always read the article with your Bible open so that you can read the referenced passages along with the article since all Scripture references are still in place in the article. If you prefer a larger print, paper version I am sure that can be arranged also. DLH)

Seeking His Righteousness

"...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.." Matthew 6:33

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Why God Allows Us To Suffer

Denny Diehl

Our title raises the question: Why is there such a thing as "hurting"? Bluntly: How can a loving God allow His creation to suffer? The question of Theodicy (definition: "seeking to vindicate divine justice in allowing evil to exist" - Webster's New World Collegiate Dictionary) is, indeed, quite relevant. Pain and suffering not only exist - they seem to thrive in a universe gone mad. Why does God allow those who are hurting to hurt?

In this short space allowed to me, I hope to not only answer that question, but give a different perspective whereby when we are visited by pain and suffering, we can use that experience to glorify God. Like the prompting of Job's wife as Job suffered, "Curse God and die!", many see suffering as an occasion to blame God, perhaps even curse Him, and turn from Him. Of course, this is the wrong reaction to the afflictions of life.

Is pain or suffering a good thing? Reflect with me for a moment...What if there was no perception of pain? Well, of course, you have already jumped ahead in your thinking. I put my finger in the fire. What if I couldn't feel the pain produced by that act? Well something worse would be the result. The pain is there to get the message across to me that I better do something, and I'd better do it fast, lest something worse happen to me. Answer to the pain? Remove the finger from the fire. And even though the pain is real, and will continue on for some time, I was saved from something far worse. I believe that is a reason to glorify God, and, in particular, glorify God for being able to experience pain and suffering.

Obedience: The bad things of this life are meant to teach us to turn to God. Jesus "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

When we suffer, that is God's message to us to learn obedience.

This life will soon come to an end. We need to learn obedience before the final curtain is drawn. God's message to us to learn obedience? Pain! Is that a bad thing? Even though it hurts, it helps us know that there is something for worse awaiting us, unless we learn obedience. The Psalmist praised God:

"Before I was afflicted I went astray; But now I keep Thy word...It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Thy statutes" (Psa. 119:67,71). "Good for me"? That's exactly right..."that I may learn thy statutes." Again: "Thou hast seen it, for Thou hast beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Thy hand. The unfortunate commits himself to Thee" (Psa. 10:14).

Even Paul recognized this benefit: "Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (2Cor. 1:9). 2Cor. 4:7,18

We need to learn the difference between that which is temporal and that which is eternal. The pain to earthen vessels is the driving force to learn that lesson.

What else may we learn from the pain that we suffer?

Humility: We learn that this earthen vessel is frail ("let me know how transient I am" (Psa. 39:4). "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (Jas. 4:14). Even if one is strong as an ox when he is young, before God, he should not trust in his own strength. Paul had a "messenger of Satan" visit him with "a thorn in the flesh" (2Cor. 12:7) What was that thorn? Some have suggested poor eyesight. Paul had been blinded on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:8,12,17). When Ananias spoke to him, "there fell from his eyes something like scales" (Acts 9:18). Later, when writing the Galatian letter, Paul noted that they "would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me" (Gal. 4:15). Why? Did Paul have such poor eyesight because of the Damascus Road encounter with the risen Lord? We just don't know. However, whatever the "thorn in the flesh" was, we do know that Paul learned a valuable lesson from it: "to keep me from exalting myself" (2Cor. 12:7). Such a valuable lesson learned only by the pain that Paul had; such pain that he said, "I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me" (2Cor. 12:8). But it didn't. Paul's attitude toward the pain? "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses" (2Cor. 12:9).

Patience: God teaches how to wait upon Him for the relief from

pain. We seem to have a hard time learning patience: God will help us: Psa. 66:12; Jas. 1:2-3; Rom. 5:3

Prayer: Ever visited anyone who was suffering? Have you ever had anyone refuse an offer to pray for them? I haven't. We learn the importance of prayer through suffering. Psa. 18:4-6; Psa. 86:7; Jas. 5:13

Sympathy: We can best sympathize with someone when we have travelled the painful road they are traveling. Without walking in their shoes, we will have a hard time with comforting sympathy. We can use the pain we have experienced to help someone else in their time of trial. 2Cor. 1:3-4

Glorify God: Above all, this perspective should help us to realize the great benefit of pain. It should direct us to glorify God because we have learned that the eternal is of such greater importance than the temporal, that this earthen vessel will indeed decay, but the inner man is being renewed day by day looking forward to the day when we might fully be with Christ.

In Stephen's darkest hour, he learned that Christ was with him: "and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God...and they rushed upon him with one impulse" (Acts 7:56-57). Psa. 34:19

Like Job, then, our perspective should be one of using the pain and suffering of this life as a means to get closer to God. Instead of cursing God for afflictions, ours should be one of praise because it is used to keep us from an even greater problem which will be ours if we don't use the pain to our benefit. So, like Job, we can use pain as an occasion to worship and praise our God. Job 1:20-22

It would be good to find a hymn or have a special prayer to use to praise our God when the moment comes when we experience suffering. We can use those items of praise to not only help us through the physical problem, but, to overcome it. Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison. They had to be suffering. However, instead of complaints and moans, they victoriously praised God. Acts 16:25

Who is listening to us! More importantly, what are they hearing? Are they hearing complaints, maybe even blasphemies? Or, are they hearing victorious children of God praising their God because they have learned the lesson of using the pain of this world to draw closer to God? May that be the case.