

Is Adversity Our Friend?

04/26/26

“Pain is God’s megaphone to a deaf world.” C.S. Lewis once said (Wesley Bible Curriculum). This is a paraphrase from a book called *The Problem of Pain* that C.S. Lewis wrote many years ago. I have the book and it states 1940 as the year it was first published. C.S. Lewis lived in England and the English people would be suffering at the hands of the Nazi Regime at this time with all the bombings and death. So, C.S. Lewis wrote this book which is a deep look into pain and suffering that many people were going through. People start to question God when suffering comes because we fully don’t understand why we must go through suffering or adversity. Suffering and adversity actually should belong only to people who deserve it, like those who cause trouble or death. This is the thought of many people during our age. When suffering and adversity does come their way, they blame God and say it’s not fair. Some Christians will even say it’s not fair that God allows suffering to them because they are so good and don’t deserve it. Some Christians will say that a Christian suffers because they lack faith. Mankind has wrestled with suffering and adversity mentally from the very beginning. This is why we should pray for mental needs as well when we pray for someone who is suffering physically. People just have a hard time with dealing with suffering and adversity. So, when we hear someone like C.S. Lewis state that pain is God’s megaphone to a deaf world, we may become negative to this strong statement. To be truthful, I believe one must get into a right mindset to be able to handle pain and suffering so that we don’t cause more suffering to ourselves. How can we get into the right mindset? Let’s look at some Scripture.

Let’s turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:13 where we read this from Apostle Paul, “¹³ For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of *mere* men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which also is at work in you who believe. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)”

When suffering and adversity comes our way, questions usually pop into our minds like why is this happening to me. We look for answers in many areas and some of those areas are not healthy. We can go to a person we know for advice and encouragement, but we must make sure that person has Christ like compassion or we may become more angry or depressed. Plus, that person may have never experienced the suffering and adversity we are going through. It would be like asking a city person who only rides a bike throughout the city about vehicle maintenance. You would rather ask someone who works on vehicles. The same goes when we have questions about suffering and adversity. Paul tells the Church that they had accepted the word of God, not as human word, but as it actually is, the word of God. So, when we have questions about suffering and adversity, there is no better place to go than to the word of God through prayer. The Bible is filled from the beginning to the end on people who had to face suffering and adversity. Adam and Eve started the ball rolling with original sin and the Bible finishes with Revelation which is penned by John on a deserted island because of preaching Jesus. Then, we can go throughout the Bible and find suffering and adversity from Moses trying to lead a stubborn people to Jeremiah trying to preach to people who won't listen to him to the New Testament Church that was under great persecution because of their love for Jesus. When we accept the word of God as the word of God, it will become a work in those who believe. In other words, the Holy Spirit will help you to deal with suffering and adversity through the word of God to the point where you will understand it better. When Jesus was talking about loving one's enemies, Jesus made this statement in Matthew 5: 45, "For He gives His sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust too. (NLT)" We're all in the same boat here. Everybody on this earth suffers because of original sin that happened in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve first sinned against God, Genesis 3: 16-19 tells us this, "¹⁶To the woman He said,

"I will greatly multiply
Your pain ⁱⁿ childbirth,
In pain you shall deliver children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you."

¹⁷Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';

Cursed is the ground because of you;
With ^[b]hard labor you shall eat *from* it
All the days of your life.
¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
Yet you shall eat the ^[c]plants of the field;
¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
You shall eat bread,
Until you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.” (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)”

The earth is cursed because of sin and we must suffer from it. Then, Paul tells us in Romans 5: 20-21 that sin also causes suffering spiritually, “²⁰ ^[a]The Law came in so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

This body of ours is cursed because of sin and it will die and many things will go wrong with it and we must make due with it till Jesus calls us home to heaven. However, there is the spiritual part of suffering as well. We need Jesus to take care of the spiritual part or that will die because of sin as well. So, we see from Scripture that suffering is and will be part of our life. We can’t hide from it – suffering and adversity will find us. Scripture helps us to be better prepared for it. Plus, it helps us to deal with it when it does come.

When we think about suffering, we usually think of it in the physical realm. However, there can be great suffering in the mental realm as well. You see, if we don’t have guidance from God’s word through His Spirit, our minds will suffer as well through physical suffering and adversity. What do I mean by this? I’ve been reading a book by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a Russian who was a communist, but still was put into Russian work camps during Stalin’s rule. He writes about the great suffering that was faced by the Russian people because of communism. He won the Nobel Prize for his writings. In his book, *The Gulag*, he has a chapter

where he talks about the mental suffering they had to go through during their imprisonment at these work camps. Part of Marxism is the breaking of the human mind so that it can serve the state without question. In this chapter, I found this, “In the camp situation human beings never remain human beings – the camps were created to this end. All human emotions – love, friendship, envy, love of one’s fellows, mercy, thirst for fame, honesty – fell away from us along with the meat of our muscles. We had no pride, no vanity, and even jealousy and passion seemed to be Martian concepts....The only thing left was anger – the most enduring of human emotions. We came to understand that truth and falsehood were kin sisters. (Solzhenitsyn, 314)” I included the last sentence because we are seeing this within our own government and it is very concerning. The problem with suffering and adversity is that we can become angry over time because our mental part is suffering too and if we don’t give it Scripture medication, that suffering can turn our mental thinking to anger because it is the most enduring of human emotions. In the camps, many died because they gave up mentally or they survived by living in anger which breeds hate and bitterness. The author does talk about a few of the camp workers who were just plain different. Their love for people didn’t weaken because of the suffering and they seemed to survive the best. These were people called Christians. When we go through suffering and adversity, we need the right flow of thinking to handle it. For an example of this, let’s continue in 1 Thessalonians 2: 14 – 3: 5, “¹⁴ For you, brothers *and sisters*, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews, ¹⁵ who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and ^[r]drove us out. ^[s]They are not pleasing to God, ^[t]but hostile to all people, ¹⁶ hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always ^[u]reach the limit of their sins. But wrath has come upon them ^[v]fully.¹⁷ But we, brothers *and sisters*, having been orphaned from you *by absence* for a ^[w]short while—in ^[x]person, not in ^[y]spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. ¹⁸ ^[z]For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, ^[aa]more than once—and Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ For who *is* our hope, or joy or crown of pride, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His ^[ab]coming? Or *is it* not

indeed you? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy.³ Therefore, when we could no longer endure *it*, we thought it best to be left behind, alone at Athens, ² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the benefit of your faith, ³ so that no one would be ^[ac]disturbed by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. ⁴ For even when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; ^[ad]and so it happened, ^[ae]as you know. ⁵ For this reason, when I could no longer endure *it*, I also sent to ^[af]find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be for nothing. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)

We see here that the Thessalonians suffered greatly from their own people like the other churches around them were going through. They were suffering because of their relationship with Jesus. Paul reminds them that Jesus and the prophets suffered under the Jews. So, they were not alone, but were in great company. So, when we suffer for Jesus, Scripture like this should give us great comfort because we are not alone in our suffering and adversity.

Then, Paul tells us in verse 18 that Satan had blocked him from returning to them. Satan didn't want Paul to give encouragement to the Thessalonian Church. Usually, when we become angry with suffering, we blame God. There is suffering that is caused by Satan and we should give him credit for it. Satan likes it when we become angry with suffering because then we start to lose focus on Jesus and start to become bitter and mean.

Paul adds onto this in verse 3 that no one should be disturbed by these afflictions for they had been destined for this. Since Jesus was killed and He was the Son of God, why do we think we should have it better than Jesus – we want no suffering for Him. That was not how the early Church saw it. How did the early Church see suffering and adversity?

Romans 5: 3-5, “³ And not only *this*, but ^[a]we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because

the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

2 Corinthians 4: 17, “¹⁷ For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,”

1 Peter 5: 10, “¹⁰ After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, *and* establish you.”

James 1: 2-4, “² Consider it all joy, my brothers *and* sisters, when you encounter various ^[a]trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces ^[b]endurance. ⁴ And let ^[c]endurance have *its* perfect ^[d]result, so that you may be ^[e]perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NASB – www.biblegateway.com)”

We need to see and think suffering and adversity differently than the common man. The only way we can do that is with the guidance of God’s Holy Word through the Holy Spirit. The Scripture we just read is the opposite on how the common man sees suffering and adversity of life. These Scriptures, with the help of the Holy Spirit, will help us to not become angry or give up because we don’t like what we are going through. These trials and sufferings build up our faith and help us to reach others that are suffering as well. It also gets our attention when we drift away from God. We all handle suffering a little differently. Pray that Jesus will help us to get into the right mindset for suffering and adversity when it comes.

Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *The Gulag*. Harperperennial: New York, 2007