

The Promise of Power in Pain

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

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March 21, 2010
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Context (12:1-6) _____

Identifying the Thorn _____

1. The Source of the Thorn (12:7)

A. God _____

B. Satan _____

2. The Purpose of the Thorn (12:7)

A. Reason: The Privilege of Revelation (12:7) _____

B. Result: Humility (12:7) _____

3. The Response to the Thorn (12:8-10)

A. Prayer (12:8) _____

B. Promise (12:9) _____

C. Power (12:9) _____

D. Peace (12:9-10) _____

Comparison is Poison

We should view our God-permitted suffering as His specific calling to us, and not resent it if He calls others to suffer less.

Sufferers commonly ask, "Why me? Why not someone else? Why haven't my friends lost a child or their husband? Why can they walk and ride bikes while I'm in a wheelchair? Why have you treated me differently, God?"

The resurrected Jesus told Peter that one day he'd be taken "where you do not want to go" (John 21:18). Verse 19 reads, "Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He said to him, 'follow Me!'"

On hearing this, Peter immediately looked at John and asked, "Lord, what about him?" Instinctively he wanted to compare God's difficult calling on his life with His plans for John. Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow Me" (John 21:21-22).

Now, Jesus did not want John to remain alive until His return. He wanted Peter to get His point: John's time and manner of death are none of your business. He was saying, "Regardless of when and how my other disciples will suffer and die, you are to trust and follow Me in My plan for you, including your death."

Comparison is poison. We shouldn't resent but rejoice for those who don't have our diseases or losses. We should thank God He knows exactly what suffering and death He's called each of us to endure. Early tradition says that when Peter was about to be crucified, he asked to be turned upside down, judging himself unworthy to die upright like his Lord.

As Jesus knew the details of Peter's death, He knows all about yours and mine. Whatever death God has in view for us, it should likewise be a death by which we will glorify God.

Randy Alcorn, *If God is Good*, 476.

The Valley of Vision (A Puritan Prayer)

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, that to be low is to be high, that the broken heart is the healed heart, that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit, that the repenting soul is the victorious soul, that to have nothing is to possess all, that to bear the cross is to wear the crown, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision.

Let me find Thy light in my darkness, Thy life in my death, Thy joy in my sorrow, Thy grace in my sin, Thy riches in my poverty, Thy glory in my valley.

The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions, xxiv-xxv.

"The Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His." George MacDonald, 1824-1905.