

Series: Words of Counsel and Correction

HOW TO PRAY WHEN YOU ARE HURT 2 CORINTHIANS 12

Text:

Introduction:

I want follow-up somewhat on the message from last Sunday Evening.

Remember Paul explained that the Buffeting that he was experiencing was a Blessing.

He understood that his weakness was necessary so that God strength could be enjoyed.

I would like to share a few thoughts this evening on How To Pray When We You Are Hurting.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 12 verses 1-10.

All of us, as I have said, hurt from time to time.

Paul hurt.

Here we get a glimpse into his prayer life, and into the workings of his heart and how he endured something that he had endured for a long time.

We often are not certain why good people hurt but it good to know how to pray when that time is present.

Note:

1. SOME REASONS WHY WE MAY HURT

There are several reasons but will consider a few:

A. Because of Sin

We know that sin causes suffering. There are people who are eating bitter fruit, and the fruit that they are eating is the fruit of their own ways from the trees that they have planted.

The bitter water that they are drinking are from the wells that they have dug.

Suffering follows sin like night follows day. And, that might be the reason that some are suffering; but, that's not the only reason for suffering.

B. Because of Needing Strengthened

Some also suffer as God's means of strengthening us.

Illustration:

Successful athletes suffer. They practice, run, stretch, sweat, and at times have a coach who drives them.

As they condition their physical body it increases in strength.

Many times, God allows His people to hurt, in order to strengthen them. It has nothing to do with sin; but it's just that they're being strengthened.

Not only does sin cause one to hurt and the strengthening process brings pain but also sometimes it is:

C. To Keep Us From Sin

That was Paul's case here. Paul was hurting, in order to keep him from sinning, lest he should be exalted above measure, lest he should be overcome with pride.

God knows us and knows how we respond to success.

Note not only some reasons why we may hurt but also:

2. HOW WE ARE TO PRAY WHEN WE HURT

Now that you've gotten the background, how do you pray when you hurt? We're going to learn from the Apostle Paul and from his prayer life. May I say that there are three possible responses, three possible ways that you might pray when you're hurting.

A. We May Pray to Escape Suffering

You might pray to escape that hurt and there is nothing wrong with that.

That is normal; that is natural. That's how drugstores stay in business—that, when we hurt, we want to do something about it, and the sooner the better.

That's a God-given instinct of self-preservation.

We may pray, "Lord, take it away. Do it by medicine; do it by miracle—but God, get rid of it, and the sooner the better."

Paul, being human, asked the Lord to do this. He had a thorn in the flesh. He'd had it for 14 years. He came to the Lord, and he said, "Lord, please take it away." Look in verse 8 of this chapter—and he says:

2 Corinthians 12:8

⁸ For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

One time he prayed—it was not removed; again, he prayed—still no answer; the third time he prayed—God gave him the reason, but not the answer he sought.

This is a good illustration of the scripture that says:

Romans 8:26

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

This tells us also that we ought to pray until God does show us what His will and what His plan is in a particular area.

And, there was nothing wrong with Paul when he asked God to take it away.

He's in good company.

Three times Paul prayed, and asked that his problem be taken away.

Go to the Garden of Gethsemane, and you'll find the Lord praying three times that He might not have to endure that bitter cup:

Matthew 26:39

³⁹ And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

One time, two times, three times, our Lord prayed that same kind of prayer.

There's nothing wrong with praying, and saying, "Lord, I want to escape this suffering." But, the Lord had a better plan, and a higher plan.

The first thing we ought to do, when we hurt, is say, "Lord, take it away, please."

And, if He doesn't take it away, ask Him again and continue to ask Him until He tells us that He has a better plan or a higher plan.

Secondly:

B. We May Pray to Endure Suffering

Paul may have prayed to escape suffering, because God had given certain physical promises to His Old Testament people – the children of Israel that we read of in Exodus 15:

Exodus 15:26

²⁶ And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee.

Being a Jew, he may have prayed to escape this suffering. But then, he was also a Roman citizen; and, as a Roman citizen, he may have prayed to endure suffering.

The Romans were tough, and the Romans were known for their bravery and for their endurance. And, there's nothing really wrong with enduring suffering.

If we can't escape it, we do have to endure it.

Sometimes we become proud—even in the enduring of our suffering, if that's all we do.

Preachers and teacher must guard against this.

You might pray to escape it; you might pray to endure it—and, indeed, we're going to have to endure it, if we can't escape it—but there's a higher thing to pray about:

C. We May Pray to Enlist Suffering

To bring our pain, to bring our problems, to bring all of these things, and make them servants.

We may make a servant of our suffering, or we may make a messenger of our pain and of our problems.

Paul says that he's going to glory in his infirmity.

Notice that he says in verse 9:

2 Corinthians 12:9

⁹ And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul wasn't bragging about his sickness—there's a big difference.

I have known people that bragged about their sickness – you never ask how they feel or they'll give you a rehearsed speech.

They will tell you exactly how they feel, if you have the time to listen.

I'm not saying here that we ought not to be sympathetic to people like that; but I'm saying that Paul is not saying that he will glory in his infirmities.

Paul learned that his weakness could become a strength.

How Do We Enlist in Suffering?

How do you pray about your pain, your problem, where God has a higher plan, a better plan, and it is not God's plan that you escape it, and not even God's plan that you merely endure it, but rather that you, in a sense, enlist it, and even enjoy it—take pleasure in your infirmity?

- Receive it as a gift from God

Note verse 7:

2 Corinthians 12:7

⁷ 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.

Paul did not see it as an affliction; Paul saw it as a gift, and Paul saw it as a gift from God. God allowed the devil to inflict it.

But, where Satan rules, or where man rules, God overrules. And, Paul saw that nothing could come to him except somehow God allowed it.

Illustration:

The song writer Fanny Crosby penned these words:

All the way my Savior leads me'
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well

- Rely on God's Grace

With the gift comes the grace.

Note again verse 9:

2 Corinthians 12:9

⁹ And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Charles Spurgeon said this: "The promises of God never shine so brightly as when they do in the furnace of affliction."

You'll discover when your problem comes, receive it as a gift; get into the Word of God, rely upon the grace of God—and God's going to be near to you in a very special way.

One final thought of enlisting in suffering we are too:

- Reflect on God's Glory

Receive the gift of God; rely upon the grace of God; and, reflect the glory of God. That's what Paul did. Notice what he said, in verse 10:

2 Corinthians 12:10

¹⁰ 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.

Paul's pain became a platform and a pulpit from which to glorify God. and, he used t well.

Close:

Everybody suffers whether you're saved or lost. But, isn't it wonderful that the Christian has the option and the privilege to use his suffering to glorify the Father? The unsaved suffer for nothing; but we can make a servant of our suffering.

Remember:

God may make you, or God may allow you to hurt, but He will never harm you.

How do you pray about pain? You may pray to escape it; you may pray to endure it; or you may pray to enlist it by receiving it as a gift. Receive the gift of God; rely upon the grace of God; and then, reflect the glory of God.