

THE BULLETIN

THIS WEEK:

Sunday:
Bible Study & Worship
Monday:
Fl. School of Preaching Class
Wednesday:
Bible Study

UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 20th –
Teen Devotional
March 27th –
Fellowship Meal

PRIVILEGED TO SERVE:

Month of March

Announcements:
Luther Honey

Singing:

a.m. – Jon Thompson
p.m. – John Loanzon
Wed. –Luther Honey

Prayer:

Tommy Mikell

Bible Reading:

Preaching:

Doug Frazier

Lord's Supper:

Ray Cauthen
Ben Stokes
Tim Stanley
Cliff Jones

Prepare communion

Mary Pahman

4th Sunday Fellowship:

March

Angie Stokes
Cathy Hitchcock
Cindy Burgett

The Value of Human Suffering (Part II)

By Wayne Jackson

Suffering: The Seed of Compassion

Suffering prepares us to be compassionate to others. There is an old adage that says, “Do not judge a man until you’ve walked a mile in his shoes.”

I suggest another proverb: “One cannot comfort effectively until he has lain in the bed of suffering.” That may be a bit of an overstatement, but it contains a grain of truth. In the second chapter of Hebrews, the writer effectively argued that Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, is qualified to “succor” (ASV) or “aid” (NASV) those who are tempted.

How is that so? Hear him: “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18, NKJV).

The song lyric, “Are you weary? Are you heavyhearted? Tell it to Jesus; tell it to Jesus,” is wonderfully meaningful in light of this passage.

It has been said that the difference between “sympathy” (from the Greek *syn*, “with,” and *pathos*, “feeling”) and “empathy” (*en*, “in,” and *pathos*) is that in the former instance one “feels with” (i.e., has feelings of tenderness for) those who suffer, whereas in “empathy” one almost is able to “get inside” the friend who suffers—because the one doing the comforting **has been there!**

Suffering: Making Us “Homesick”

Suffering sharpens our awareness that this earth is not a permanent home.

Peter sought to encourage early Christians (who were being persecuted) not to despair, by reminding them that they were but “sojourners and pilgrims” upon this earth (1 Peter 2:11).

The ancient patriarchs “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” and so they looked for “a better country, that is a heavenly [one]” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Paul reminded us that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward” (Romans 8:18).

It is not the will of God that men live upon this evil-plagued planet forever. We never will be “at home” until we are with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8), and suffering helps make us “homesick.”

Henry Ward Beecher once said: “God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more.”

Suffering: Teach Us How to Pray

Suffering enhances our ability to pray. Praying is an instinctive human response to severe hardship. But effective prayer is a learned exercise.

On a certain occasion during his ministry, Jesus was praying. After he had finished, one of the disciples requested of him: “Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). These Hebrew disciples had been praying all their lives; yet, they observed something in the intensity of Jesus’ prayers that sent them “back to school.”

With Calvary ever looming before him, Christ plumbed the depths of prayer. Note the following: “And being in agony he prayed **more earnestly**; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:44).

A song suggests: “Pray when you’re happy; pray when in sorrow.” One should pray frequently, and in all moods; under the burden of suffering, however, one will learn how to pray as he never has prayed before.

Suffering: Grooming the Soul for Eternity

Suffering tempers the soul and helps prepare it for eternity. Peter wrote:

[N]ow for a little while, if necessary, ye have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Just as precious metals are purified by the heat of fire, so life’s trials in general, and suffering for Christ in particular, build strength into the soul. Character does not happen by accident; rather, it is built! Out of the fires of suffering, the human spirit may emerge as precious as gold and as strong as steel.

Suffering: Engenders Nobility

Suffering nurtures the noblest virtues of which mankind is capable. Reflect for a moment upon the quality of courage. Civilizations universally perceive courage to be one of the prime traits of humanity, and, by way of contrast, cowardice is considered to be utterly reprehensible.

Courage may be defined as the ability to act rationally in the face of fear. If, however, the human family were immune to hardship, danger, suffering, etc., there could be no facing it, hence, no courage.

When we sit down to a delicious dinner with friends and loved ones on a balmy autumn evening, no courage is needed. Courage arises in the presence of danger. There are certain qualities that we simply cannot possess in the absence of hardship.

Ralph Sockman wrote:

Without danger there would be no adventure. Without friction our cars would not start and our spirits would not soar. Without tears, eyes would not shine with the richest expressions (1961, 66).

And what of “patience”? John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.), one of the most influential figures among the “church fathers” of the post-apostolic period, described patience as “the mother of piety, fruit that never withers, a fortress that is never taken, a harbour that knows no storms” (as quoted in Barclay 1974, 145).

But could there ever be patience in the absence of difficulty?

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Suffering: Character Probe

Suffering separates the superficial from the stable. Paul cautioned the Corinthian saints against building up the church superficially. Some folks are of the “wood, hay, [and] stubble” variety, while others exhibit those qualities of “gold, silver [and] costly stones” (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Saints of the latter category endure; those of the former do not.

Why so? It is simply because the two groups are tested by “fire” (hardships), and that testing fire separates **quality** converts from those who really are not serious about their Christian commitment.

Jesus once spoke of those who receive the gospel impulsively, and, for a while endure. Eventually, though, “tribulation and persecution” arise, and rather quickly the superficial fade away (see Matthew 13:20-21).

And so, while no one actively seeks suffering in his life, honesty compels us to admit that hardships do have value—great value. Certainly, the existence of suffering is not a valid reason for rejecting the Creator.

[Note: This material is incorporated into our book, *The Bible and Mental Health*.]

Sources/Footnotes

- Barclay, William. 1974. *New Testament Words*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.
- Jackson, Wayne. 1998. *The Bible and Mental Health*. Stockton, CA: Christian Courier Publications.
- Sockman, Ralph. 1961. *The Meaning of Suffering*. New York, NY: Woman’s Division of Christian Service, Board of Missions, Methodist Church.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TIME CHANGE IS HERE:

Hope everyone remembered the time change this week.

SPRING BREAK IS HERE:

Several of our members were gone this past week because of Spring Breaks. We are glad that everyone has returned home safely.

PRE-TEEN DEVOTIONAL: Thanks to the Stokes’ for hosting our devotional yesterday. We enjoyed a great time of fellowship together.

TEEN DEVOTIONAL: We will be having a teen devotional next Sunday following our PM worship service. The devotional will be held at the Frazier’s house. We hope that all of the teens will be able to stay for this.

SICK AND/OR INJURED:

Continue to remember Shirley Rogers, Jean Gause, Carl Lee, Sherrelle Kendirck, Rhonda Howe, Randy Howe’s mother, Linda Martin, Tommy Mikell, Della Brunson, Ann Ewing, Diane Jones, Terry Dickerson (nephew of Ruth Gufford), Betty Hitchcock, Mike Elledge, Shirley Kirby, Carolyn Canady (Rhonda’s Mom), James Harrison, Edward Brown (cancer building at Shands).

Please keep these loved ones in your prayers. Many of those who have chronic conditions suffer from day to day. Those that are confined need not only our prayers but visits, calls, cards or letters.

TO OUR VISITORS

It is our sincere desire to help all men and women understand what God’s will is for their life. Here at the Alachua Church of Christ, we stand ready and willing to help you with any needs you may have. Here are just a few of the services we offer: **Marriage Counseling, Family Counseling and Addiction Counseling**, free audiotapes of any lesson and In-home Bible Study. Feel free to make your request know. Ask any member of the congregation.

“GREASING THE SQUEAKY WHEEL”

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Meeting Times:
Sunday Morning
Bible Study: 9:30
Worship: 10:30

Sunday Evening
Worship: 5:30

Mid-Week Bible Study
Wednesday 6:30

- A. Most of us go through life greasing the squeaky wheel.
 - a. We normally do not ever notice the other three wheels that function quietly.
 - B. Life has a way of getting out of control.
 - a. Problems come out of no where.
 - b. Sometimes sickness comes at an inconvenient time.
 - C. The ones that we love demand our attention.
 - a. Children always want your attention.
 - b. Sometimes our loved ones become sick and need our attention.
 - D. Before we know it the day is gone, the week is gone and then the month is gone.
 - a. We see that our squeaky wheel has been greased but our goals ended up being pushed to the back burner.
1. **More Christians will be lost because they are sidetracked.**
 - i. _____ is an expert at causing people to leave the Lord or simply get off course.
 - ii. The devil seldom attacks our _____.
 - iii. In Matthew 26:14-16 we see that _____ was attacked where he was weak, by money.
 - iv. A body in _____ tends to stay in _____, so it is hard to stop it but easy to _____ it.
 - v. Most Christians who end up leaving the Lord do so without ever _____ to.
 - vi. We live in a world that is full of _____.
 2. **One must turn his back on the world if he is going to face Heaven.**
 - i. It is impossible for a person the face the North Pole and the South Pole at the same time.
 - ii. We must either choose to serve _____ or _____.
 - iii. Where is your mind? Is it on God or the things of the flesh?
 - iv. To walk after the flesh is to obey the things of the flesh.
 - v. To follow the law of the Spirit is to seek to _____ the fleshly desires and to follow the teaching and desires of the Spirit.
 - vi. The follow the law of the flesh will bring the mind and spirit into subjection to the law of sin that dwells in the flesh and will bring forth eternal death.
 - vii. Let us each turn our back to the sinful desires of this world and live for the Lord so that we are living according to the things that please God.

We're on the Web!
alachuachurchofchrist.org