

“THANK GOD FOR PAIN”

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THANKSGIVING SUNDAY

TEXT: ROMANS 5:3-5

SCRIPTURE: PSALM 30:1-5

I – THANKFUL:

Today we start the week of celebration of Thanksgiving. It’s the time of the year that we are supposed to stop rushing around like the turkey who just had it’s head chopped off and pause to thank God for all the things he’s done for us in our lives. It’s a time to count our blessings and give God praise and thanksgiving for all the good things in our lives. O dear God thank you for my family, for my spouse, my children, my grandchildren. You may be thanking God for having enough food on your table, for helping you buy your medication, for looking out for your family, for helping you through a tough time, for a new car, for health, and the list goes on and on.

What are some of the things you have to give God praise and thanksgiving for this year? (LET THE CONGREGATION SHARE)

Let me give you one other thing you should thank God for this year...Thank God for Pain. I know, you probably think I’ve finally slipped completely over the edge, or that my fine wire on life has finally been stretched too far and has obviously snapped, but I’m telling you this in all honesty and sincerity. You need to thank God for pain. It’s easy to give God thanks and praise for good things that have happened to you, for possessions that have come your way. But we need to remember to give God our praise and thanks for everything we have...even pain.

II – WHY PAIN?:

So the question you probably have right now is, “WHY PAIN?” Why would we want to thank God for something that hurts, makes us uncomfortable, and makes us cry? I think if you stop and think about it you’ll discover that pain is actually a gift from God. Pain serves an integral part of our lives and we would be in trouble without it. How did we learn not to touch a hot stove? Through pain, without it our hands would burn off because we wouldn’t know to pull them back. Isn’t it pain that tells us we have an infected tooth before the infection runs through our blood stream, or tells us we are close to having a heart attack, or that one of our bones is broken and needs attention? Doesn’t pain serve a purpose?

If we look at the Biblical disease of leprosy we can see how good pain can be. Dr. Paul Brand is a

world-renowned medical doctor and researcher when it comes to the disease of leprosy. It was him, who as a young doctor in India made the groundbreaking discovery that leprosy does its damage merely by destroying the body's nerve endings. He discovered that the terrible damages to a leper's face and fingers and toes which results in blindness and loss of limbs as well as grotesque disfigurement is caused by the lack of pain. The leper can't feel the splinter go into his foot or the cut to his hand, or the rubbing in the shoe because he can't feel pain. He has no idea when it gets red and sore and when infection sets in because there is no sensation of pain, so he takes no action to correct the problem or get medical attention until it's too late. Dr. Brand said "I thank God for pain" and spent his adult life trying to give pain to his patients.

When we look at pain this way we realize it isn't something God gave us to make us suffer, it was given to us as a gift to alert us to problems so we could take life correcting and lifesaving actions before it's too late. We need to add this to our list of blessings we give God thanks for.

III – TEXT:

I think this is the message that the Apostle Paul was giving to the early Christians in Rome when he wrote the letter to them containing the text I want to share with you this morning. He was telling them and us today that we should all thank God for pain because it's that pain, those trials and tribulations, that make us healthy Christians who are growing in our faith instead of numb religious people who become infected by the world we live in.

Romans 5:3 - 5 (NLT)

³We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure.

We can rejoice "too" means to rejoice "also." We aren't supposed to only rejoice over the good things, but over the bad things too. You'll note too that Paul says we should do this "when" we run into trouble, not "if." We will have problems; we will have trials and tribulations. They're a fact of life. You will not get through your human existence without them. But Paul says that Christians don't give into their troubles, don't give up and just live with the pain. He says we do something with it, we learn from it. We don't give up, we "endure" we outlast them and we learn to give God glory and thanks for them because they're leading us to a better place, making us better Christians as the next verse points out...

⁴And endurance develops strength of character in us, and character strengthens our confident expectation of salvation.

We grow as a result of pain. We get our character from what we go through in life. Character means our "tested value." It's easy to sing praises to God and give him thanks when everything is going

your way, when your life is perfect. It's faith that lets you do it when everything around you is falling to pieces. Having strong character means that regardless of what pain life throws at you, as a Christian we move forward through the pain and we let the world see our Christianity through the way we react. Like the early Christians praying and singing even as they were being torn apart by lions, or burned at the stake. How precious in God's sight is the Christian who's been tested through pain and remained a demonstration of God's power in their life. You can give God all kinds of thanks for your possessions, but when we stand before the throne on judgment day all of our material possessions will have been left behind, all that will remain is our spiritual characteristics. And we work through the pain because we know it's God's way of preparing us for eternal fellowship with him, of our Salvation.

⁵And this expectation will not disappoint us. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Paul says we will not be disappointed by this confident expectation of Salvation. Because we have endured, because we have given thanks in all things, even pain, we have the strong character needed to carry us to the presence of God when our pain in this body is done. We know this because God loves us so much he sent Jesus to die for us and insure us of this fact. To make sure we are confident God sends the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts so we can feel that love in this life, He sends the Holy Spirit so that we can have that extra needed peace and understanding that come only through the Spirit which enables us to not only endure the pain, but to shout hallelujah and rejoice in it. It's the Holy Spirit that enables us to go through the pain of life and still look to heaven and say, "Thank you God for the pain."

IV – OUT OF PAIN COMES LIFE:

Let me phrase all this another way..."OUT OF PAIN COMES LIFE." Each one of you came into this world through pain did you not? Mothers, did any of you give life to your children without some kind of pain? They don't call the process "labor comfort" do they; no they call it "labor pains." Yet out of this pain comes a bundle of joy, a child, someone to hold and to love, a gift from God. When it's all over you don't think of the pain, you think of the joy. It really turns out to be a labor of love doesn't it?

Was not your Salvation achieved through pain too? Did Jesus not go through labor pains so you could be "born again?" Don't you think he experienced emotional heartache and pain as the very people he came to save disowned him and called for his death, or when he was betrayed by one of his closest friends? Don't you think there was shame and embarrassment as they stripped him naked in front of those who were watching, his mother included? How about physical pain as they first slapped him around in front of the Jewish priests, then as the Romans beat him with a whip having sharp metal or bone ends? How about when they pushed thorns into his skull, or drove nails into his hands and feet? Do you think it was a vacation hanging on a cross and suffocating to death?

No! It was painful beyond what I can imagine or hope to experience myself. Yet he endured it, and that endurance brought us that “confident expectation of Salvation” that Paul spoke about.

I don’t know about you, but I certainly thank God for that pain. I’m ashamed that I helped cause it, but I’m eternally grateful that Jesus endured it. I know that if I follow the example my Savior set for us, if I endure the pain of this life, I will not be disappointed in the next. And even better, I know that once I make it there, I’ll never have to thank God for pain again, because there won’t be any. All suffering will be completed.

V – PSALM 30: 1 – 5:

Isn’t all of this what David was writing about in the Psalm you heard this morning?

Psalm 30:1 - 5 (NLT)

- ¹ I will praise you, LORD, for you have rescued me.
You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.
- ² O LORD my God, I cried out to you for help,
and you restored my health.
- ³ You brought me up from the grave, O LORD.
You kept me from falling into the pit of death.
- ⁴ Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones!
Praise his holy name.
- ⁵ His anger lasts for a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime!
Weeping may go on all night,
but joy comes with the morning.

David was saying that no matter what was going on, no matter what pain he was suffering, no matter his trials and tribulations, he would sing praises and give thanks to his God, because God would rescue him in the end. He may cry for a night, but when he remembers who his God is as a new day dawns, his joy returns.

I too have wept for a night because of pain. Sometimes my joy is returned because I pull the splinter out myself, sometimes my joy returns because I go to the doctor who figures out what’s wrong and gets rid of the pain, but my joy always and without fail returns when I turn to God and remember the pain he endured for me. I thank God for the pain, which focuses me, back on him.

My question for you today is...DO YOU?

AMEN