



The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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“Pain’s Prompting”

By

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Have you ever dropped a heavy object on your foot, smashed your finger with a hammer, stubbed your toe really hard on the corner of a piece of furniture, or ever committed one of a hundred possible painful blunders? I think it’s more than reasonable to assume that most people have at one time or another in their lives, and have likely done so on more than one occasion.

Recently, while trying to be helpful in the kitchen, I picked up the glass lid of a baking dish to put it in the sink, only to realize a fraction of a second too late that it had just come out of the hot oven. Feeling my fingertips sizzling in burning pain, I let out a loud “Yeoucchhh!!!”, and quickly set the lid down as carefully as I could without breaking it. After running my fingers under cold water and holding ice on them for several minutes with little relief, I realized I

should at least be thankful it was not much worse. I was thankful that it was only my fingertips that had been burned, not my entire hand. If just burning my fingertips inflicted that much pain, I imagined how painful it must be for burn victims who are seared over large parts of their body. I was thankful it was not Tammy or one of the children that had inadvertently picked the lid up or touched it. Those realizations and a sense of gratefulness seemed to soothe the searing pain in my burning fingers.

Such is so often the case with feelings of gratitude and thankfulness. They are the balm that soothes both our physical and emotional pain. Interestingly, scientific studies have even shown that gratitude may be the single, primary emotion most nourishing to one’s physical health and overall sense of well being. People exhibiting positive feelings of thankfulness and gratitude demonstrated a decrease in negative reactions to painful events. In contrast, those exhibiting emotions of anger, resentment, fear, guilt, loneliness, helplessness,

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Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

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and self-pity had an increase in negative reactions to painful events. Are these findings really that surprising to anyone?

Thankfully, God in His divine wisdom, created us to experience both physical and emotional pain for our spiritual instruction and preservation. If we don’t believe that then perhaps we should take a minute to

consider our lives without pain. At first thought life without pain sounds wonderful, but the truth of the matter is that it would really be quite detrimental. In my example, without physical pain I would have continued to hold on to the hot lid until it seared my fingers to the point of losing all feeling and probably even losing my fingers themselves.

Even more, think of what it would be like if we did not experience emotional pain over tragic life events and circumstances. Think of the consequences if we did not experience emotional pain over our sinful words, actions and behavior at times. Incivility, lawlessness, sinfulness, and total chaos would rule the day. It is incomprehensible to imagine the misery of life on earth without pain. Just think of the greater resulting harm that would occur if we did not experience occasional episodes of pain and respond accordingly.

The prophet Amos warned Israel that if they refused pain's prompting to return from their sinful ways, God would increase it until it became everlasting. *"I have given you cleanness of teeth and want of bread...yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have with-holden the rain from you...yet you have*

not returned to me...I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men I have slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord...prepare to meet your God, O Israel."(Amos 4:6-12)

God uses pain to prompt us to change; to repent. Pain is usually what causes us to respond accordingly. We should be thankful that he has given us pain as a teacher through which we can grow spiritually. If we allow ourselves to be exercised by it, pain pushes us away from self-destruction and turns us toward God. Thanks be to God that when we understand pain's purpose we gain a measure of freedom in this life to face affliction and tragedy with the steadfastness of a real, living faith. The Hebrew writer illustrates the benefit of pain in the spiritual discipline of our loving heavenly Father. *"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."* ⁷If you

endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."(Heb. 12:5-11)

Let us all endeavor to pause, listen, and respond to the very first twinge of pain as it speaks to us. Upon reflection, it is often God's way of getting our attention. It is often God's way of telling us that there is a different way to live than what we have chosen, and that something is wrong that needs correcting. Let us be thankful for the spiritual blessings that momentary pain can lead to. Don't waste it. After all, it is a teacher that can draw us nearer to God in this life and heaven in the next.