

PRAYER IN PAIN & SUFFERING (Part 1)

ROMANS 5:3-5

³ ...but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

If true, what are the implications of this? How should I pray?

Regarding endurance...

From *A Praying Life* by Paul E. Miller (My paraphrased notes):

- Life in the desert. What happens:
 - We come face-to face with our inability to:
 - Live
 - Have joy
 - To do anything with lasting worth
 - Life is crushing us
 - We slowly give up the fight
 - Our will is broken by the reality of the circumstances
 - The things that brought us life gradually die
 - Our idols die for lack of food
 - The still, dry air of the desert brings the sense of helplessness that is crucial to the spirit of prayer
 - Suffering burns away the false selves created by cynicism or pride
 - Stop caring about what people think of us
 - Things that used to be important no longer matter; after a while we notice our real thirsts
 - God finally gets our attention because He's the only game in town
 - A channel begins to open between God and us
 - When driving, we turn off the radio just to be with God
 - Without realizing it, we have learned to pray continuously
 - The best gift of the desert is God's presence

Regarding Character...

2 Deep Needs of all People:

Security:

A convinced awareness of being unconditionally and totally loved without needing to change in order to win love. Loved by a love which is freely given, which cannot be earned and therefore cannot be lost.

Significance:

A realization of being engaged in a responsibility or job that is truly important, whose results will not evaporate with time but will last through eternity, that fundamentally involves having a meaningful impact on another person; a job for which I am completely adequate.

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Regarding Hope...

Hope for a renewed life:

Job 23:10

**¹⁰ But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.**

The “GOLD” is not just relief from suffering. It’s a changed life.
(new endurance, new character, new hope)

Question is: which do we want?

A changed life —or the fix to our circumstances?

Principles

During your suffering, pray for a changed life (endurance, character and hope).

Look for the ways God is pouring His love into your heart.

Genesis 42:36-38

Jacob despondent over sons and life itself

³⁶And Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me.” ³⁷Then Reuben said to his father, “Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.” ³⁸But he said, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.”

Jacob's errors

Principles

Guard against cynicism. God is always weaving a story for your life—and it's not over.

God's hiddenness is not abandonment.

During suffering, don't assume you understand what God is doing. Stay in the story and pray by: waiting, watching, submitting, thanking, repenting.

Great Resources:

A Praying Life
When God Weeps
Walking with God Through Pain & Suffering
Deserted by God?
Hearing Jesus Speak into Your Sorrow
When Suffering Enters Your Door (Audio)

Paul E. Miller
Joni Eareckson Tada & Steven Estes
Timothy Keller
Sinclair Ferguson
Nancy Guthrie
Paul Tripp