



Berean Christian Fellowship

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Seeing the Crown in the Struggle

“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

I’m sure there were a lot of healthy, wealthy, and “wise” teachers that people were comparing to weak, distressed, and difficulty-prone Paul. There is a tendency in the Church for us to view Believers who are struggling through difficulties as “problem” Christians or weak Believers. And those who struggle cannot help but look at their difficulties as failings when faced with their “potential.” We can be made to feel inferior to Christians who seem to have their act together when we reflect on what we “could be” or “could have been,” or how we “derailed” God’s plan in our lives.

Many Christians seem to feel that a life without difficulty equates to spiritual maturity while a life with difficulties means they’ve “got problems.” Perhaps their spouse is not a Believer, perhaps they struggle with something (an addiction, a difficulty), or maybe they have a health issue. Maybe they just need help and it makes them feel like second-class citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is dangerously unhealthy as it pushes Believers to seek self-help, making no room for Sanctification—God’s process of molding and maturing us.

Just like Eliphaz, these Christians would join him in chiding Job that the innocent DO NOT suffer (Job 4), and they would have also shaken their heads at that Jesus from Nazareth who was obviously “*stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*” (Isaiah 53:4b). How dangerous this attitude is in the Church! In looking down on Believers who have struggles, they say “things would have been different if you only

had made different decisions.” We should understand that a LACK of difficulties, trials, or “weaknesses” in someone’s life is entirely due to God’s purpose and is through no effort of their own. Trials are for our good in Christ (1 Peter 1:7). As Paul explained, it is the very struggles we go through as Believers in life that give glory to God through His sanctifying power at work in us by His Holy Spirit, molding us into an image of His Son.

In the molding process, there is friction between the hands of the potter (God) and the clay (ourselves) - if there was no pressure, the clay would not be shaped. We are the work of His hands (Isaiah 64:8). No matter our original shape, God uses everything we are to make us a vessel fit for the purpose He has for us. We are not to continue in sin but to reflect that the difficulties and struggles we go through are for God’s glory to be manifest in us through His Holy Spirit: “*We have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh*” (2 Corinthians 4: 7-11). May we reflect that the very rewards and crowns Christ will give Believers are forged in the difficulties and trials we endure in life: “*It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we **endure**, we will also reign with Him*” (2 Timothy 2:11-12a). “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us*” (Romans 8:18). Amen.

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