

The Treasure in Sufferings and Death – 2 Cor 12:7-10, Psalm 116:15

The Treasure that is Your Life in Christ #13

Introduction – “The choicest saints are born to troubles, as the sparks fly upwards (Job 5:7). Many are the troubles of the righteous (Psalm 34:19)... God, who is infinite in wisdom, and matchless in goodness, hath ordered troubles, yea, many troubles to come crowding in upon us on every side. As our mercies, so our crosses seldom come single; they usually come treading one upon the heels of another; they are like April showers, no sooner is one over, but another comes.” – T Brooks.

Simply put – the hard providences, those trials in your life, are no surprise to God. He decreed them all for you (Acts 15:18, Amos 3:6, Isaiah 45:7, Ruth 1:21, Job 1:21-22). And of course you can’t handle them by yourself – that’s part of the point.

The Treasure of Grace (2 Cor 12:7-10) – Often we ask for release from a trial or affliction, and God does not take it away. That does not mean He has simply said “No”. Because of the heavenly visions God had granted Paul, God gave Him a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him from being exalted above measure (v7). Nevertheless, Paul pleads with the Lord repeatedly for its removal (v8).

Grace Sufficient (v9) – Grace is that mercy of God that will sustain you through the trial and accomplish great works in you because of the trial. Here, we see that in some fashion, Paul’s weakness is perfecting God’s strength in him. And so, on the one hand, Paul would love to have the thorn removed. But, on the other hand, he realizes and even delights that this answer is a better answer when he considers who he is and will be ‘in Christ’ (vv9-10).

Mercy Like Manna (Lam 3:19-26) – This is so important to remember when you are tempted to worry about tomorrow (Matt 6:34). Sufficient for the day is its own troubles. But sufficient for the day is today’s mercy as well. Tomorrow’s grace comes tomorrow, not today. God’s mercies are new every morning, so go get them each day – plenty for this day. In the same way, God only gives grace in apportionment to the particular trial you are facing today. Not tomorrow’s trials, not anyone else’s trials.

Wise Contentment – In order to receive the discipline with gratitude, we must grow in wisdom. We must first learn how to give thanks in everything – it should be our ongoing habit. And then...

1 Tim 6:8 – “*And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*” Honestly, some of us think we deserve so much more than we have received, and we think we can demand it of the Lord. And then we start thinking that ‘things’ bring contentment.

Phil 4:11 – “*I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.*” Contentment comes to those who study it, seek it, and apply it. Contentment comes to those who know how to be “conformed to His death” (Phil 3:10).

Jesus Christ: Wise and Content (Luke 22:41-44) – What a grand example of One who knew how to groan before the Lord and at the same time rest in His Father’s sovereign plan and purposes. He received grace and strength. He prayed until he bled. He refused to leave His trust anywhere but in His Father’s hand and will. And He was rewarded.

Precious Death in God’s Sight (Psalm 116:15) - To whom is this promise? “*He may be the greatest in the church, he may be the least: he may be the boldest confessor, he may be the most timid trembler; but if a saint, his death is precious in God’s sight*” – Spurgeon. And when is this death precious? Regardless of whether the saint is young or old, the Master Gardner picks both those in full bloom as well as the newly forming bud to place at His table, and they are all precious to Him. And whether the death occurs in a time of abundance or poverty, in isolation or with loved ones gathered, in an instant without warning, or over a long-endured affliction, the death of His saint is precious, each one, to God. Finally though, note this carefully: the text does not simply say that it is precious that the saint is brought into the presence of the Lord, but that the saint’s death itself is precious. Why?

Death is the Final Work of our Personal Sanctification (Phil 1:6, Rom 5:3-5, Heb 12:7-11) – God uses hardship and suffering to complete our sanctification. The wrath of God has been exhausted in Christ’s finished work. But God disciplines those He loves in order to bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

Death is Part of our Conformity to Christ (Matt 16:24) - God disciplines us because He loves us and because holiness is more important to Him than life itself. Suffering is not the worst thing in the world; neither is death. Sin is the worst thing in the world. This is why saints would rather die than sin (i.e. Moses, Heb 11:25, and OT saints, Heb 11:35b-38, Paul returning to Lystra after being stoned, the apostles refusing to cease preaching Christ, Acts 5:29-33). Death is horrific. Sin is worse.

Death Fits Us for our Final Glory (2 Cor 4:16-5:5) – Our sufferings produce an eternal weight of glory and when this “tent” is destroyed, we shall receive a dwelling which can carry the weight of that glory.

“Death by Living” (N.D. Wilson) – Not only is the passing into His eternal presence a precious thing to God; even your death, along with every “little death” you ever experience in this life, because of all His purposes in it, is precious in His sight. Are you in Christ? Then entrust your life and your death to Him Who has ordained your every day, including the day you will die. The goal is not to end your life having extended it as long as possible as though life was an idol. The goal is to die knowing at the end of your life that you lived it well, in the presence of God, for the glory and pleasure of God, because of the Treasure that is Your Life in Christ.