

The Benefits Of Suffering

*And because of my chains,
most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord
and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.
Philippians 1:14 (NIV)*

I recall, as a child, riding along a highway in the family car. Our 1930 Buick certainly did not have air conditioning and so we had the windows down to enjoy the summer air and keep cool.

Suddenly we had a bumblebee come in through an open window and it immediately tried to escape the car through the front windshield. As soon as my mother saw the bee she panicked. She did not wish to get a sting or have one of us stung by it.

My father tried to speak a calm word to my mom but she continued to be very upset. Then my dad gently put his hand over to where the bee was walking along the windshield and got the bee to climb up onto his finger. He then reached out the window and allowed the bee to escape.

I learned that day to try to act in a calm manner when something threatened me. I saw that being stable is better than panicking and

allows you to act in a constructive way.

In our verse today, Paul is making the point that his suffering – that resulted from preaching the Gospel – was of benefit to Christians not yet arrested and jailed for sharing the Good News. These people saw the grace of God in Paul's life as he endured imprisonment and they were persuaded God would also meet their needs if they too were punished for proclaiming Christ.

One good lesson to learn from suffering is that as you display the sustaining grace of God in your time of sorrow you are a real encouragement to others who suffer as well.

Many years ago I received a letter from a cancer patient. This woman had been a cancer patient for 20 years at the time she wrote to me shortly after my diagnosis with that disease. She said that she had her surgery and treatment and was now free of the disease for twenty years.

That testimony to the fact that some people beat this dreaded disease was wonderfully encouraging to me. I considered her suffering and victory over cancer and was encouraged that I too might be successful in this new battle. I benefitted from her pain.

If you are someone recently fallen into difficulty, you may receive benefit from consulting others who have already had some years on a similar journey. Or as someone experienced in suffering, you may come alongside someone frightened by a new and unwanted reality like yours. Whichever it is, connect today with someone either to bless them with your testimony or else get them to tell you how they have endured their sorrow. We have work to do so let's get busy doing it.

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