

From Pain to Praise

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

We all have days where it is hard to be thankful for life's circumstances. I once found myself in the home of a woman whose marriage was touched by infidelity. Even though her husband shed tears of remorse, she looked at me with searching eyes. She looked for direction, some kind of hope. She saw the cross necklace that was dangling from my neck and picked it up gently with her hand. At that moment, I invited her to church with me. This woman didn't grow up in the house of God; she didn't know his promises like I knew them—promises of unchanging certainty and grace. Even in such a devastating circumstance, I thanked God for his wisdom because he leads even the most broken-down and lost sinners to his grace.

Paul and Silas faced similar circumstances when they were thrown into prison during their missionary journey in Philippi. Although they were torn up and bleeding after having been flogged, Paul and Silas still found it fitting to pray and sing hymns to God. In their suffering, they saw the goodness of God and the beauty of his grace. How can this be? How can God's people find grace and mercy in the Lord when their lives so often reflect hardship and suffering? Just like the woman mentioned before, we look to the cross for the answer.

God does not leave us alone to suffer for our sins and the sins of others. Instead, he gives us the strength to bear with all the burdens of this world through Jesus Christ, his only Son. He saw the world as it was, sinful and needing a Savior. God sent his Son to die for the sins of the world, even the sins of today. We are forgiven in Christ because he took away all of our sins. Jesus took on the ultimate pain and suffering so that we may have God's grace and forgiveness. In our world of suffering, God does more for us than reassure us in our pain, he takes it all away. He promises that "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Paul and Silas knew God's grace for them because he gave them eternal life through Jesus. They did not fret over the struggles of this world because they knew God loved them. The same can be said for us. No matter what pain we experience in this life, we know that God has forgiven us and has given us the promise of eternal life in Jesus.

So whether we suffer from marital troubles, health problems, imprisonment, or day-to-day struggles, we can turn our pain to praise. We thank God in all circumstances because of what he did for us. He gave us life in Christ. We are forgiven. We will receive his eternal inheritance and live without pain. We will forever sing his praise in his courts. We are his and our hope is sure in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for giving us hope even in our times of suffering. Help us to praise you in all circumstances, just as you will for us in Christ Jesus. Help our praise for you reflect the confidence we have in your promises. And may our praise in turn lead others to your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

For Further Reading:

Acts 16: 16-40

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