

Must God Heal?

“Because of the extraordinary greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me.

And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (NASB)

Motives are interesting aspects of human behaviour. For example, when a couple have a child born into their family that has major long term medical needs, the mother of the child will almost always dedicate her life to serving the child’s special medical issues. However, research shows that husbands will desert the family sometimes.

What is the motive for a father who abandons his wife and child when his presence is so needed? Why does he leave in such an important time? There are lots of possible answers, but one that often comes up is that the father cannot cope with the idea he helped create a child with special needs and rather than stay and do his part to help the child, he leaves.

People often have different reasons for how they respond to the same situation. For example, I recall one person—whose life was filled with poor health—getting upset when a Christian friend told him they were praying for him to be healed of his illness. “Don’t you dare!!” he responded. He went on to say that he prayed for healing, but he did not get the answer he wanted. “So”, he said, “the Lord wants to teach me many lessons from this illness. My prayer life has never been richer. I know the Lord so much better than I did when well. Scripture has come

alive. I have been privileged to minister to others who suffer as never before. I now know, in small measure, how my Lord suffered for me. I long for heaven as never before. No,” he said, “I would never wish to be well again. I have gained so much and can say, ‘Thanks for the thorn.’ Like Paul I glory in my state as I experience the power of Christ in me.”

Why can we not see with Paul and the man I refer to that suffering can bless us so much? Why must we stay blind to the spiritual benefits of sorrow?

Elizabeth Prentiss was the godly wife of a Presbyterian minister. She suffered greatly and learned the benefits of sorrow early in life. She wrote the following poem to express her view of adversity.

Can you pray a similar prayer to hers? I would never belittle the pain in your life, nor would I discourage you from praying that it be removed. But when the Lord says, “No” as He did with Paul, I ask you to look at the other side of sorrow and learn how to cope, seeing there so many rich benefits to this side of pain. God does not have to heal. Sometimes He has something much better!

More love to Thee, O Christ,
More love to Thee!
Hear Thou the prayer I make
On bended knee;

This is my earnest plea:
More love, O Lord, to Thee,
More love to Thee,
More love to Thee!

Once earthly joy I craved,
Sought peace and rest;
Now Thee alone I seek,
Give what is best;
This all my prayer shall be:
More love, O Lord, to Thee,
More love to Thee,
More love to Thee!

Let sorrow do its work,
Send grief and pain;
Sweet are Thy messengers,
Sweet their refrain,
When they can sing with me,
More love, O Lord, to Thee,
More love to Thee,
More love to Thee!

Then shall my latest breath
Whisper Thy praise;
This be the parting cry
My heart shall raise;
This still its prayer shall be:
More love, O Lord, to Thee,
More love to Thee,
More love to Thee!

-E. Prentiss (1818-1878)

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