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Monday, December 19, 2016 Daily Devotional - Learning from Adversity

DECEMBER 19TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Monday, December 19, 2016 Daily Devotional - Learning from Adversity

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

What are we to do with our pain when, despite our pleading, God won't remove it? He knows we're hurting but does nothing. How can He be a God of love yet not come to our aid?

Today's passage gives us intimate insight into a very painful event in Paul's life. We don't know exactly what the "thorn in the flesh" was, but his account of what he learned through that experience is an amazing example of what God wants to teach us through adversity.

- *First of all, God is sovereign over the situation.* Ultimately, He is the one who allowed the thorn and the one with the power to remove it.
- *Second, God prioritizes the spiritual.* Paul wanted physical relief, but the Lord was working for his spiritual good. The thorn was a protection against pride, which would have seriously hindered Paul's ministry and corrupted his character. Whatever God allows to afflict believers is designed to protect them from sin, produce holiness, and equip them for faithful service to Christ.
- *Third, God's grace is sufficient.* The Lord didn't remove the pain but gave Paul both the grace to endure it and strength in his weakness. If God doesn't provide a way out, He will

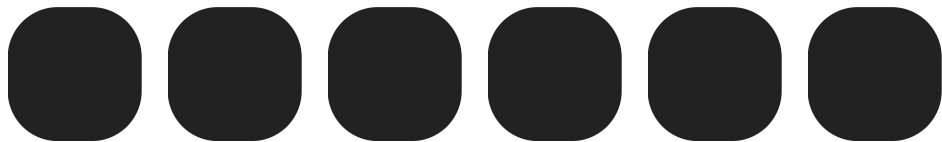
provide a way through.

Once we understand the Lord's sovereignty, priorities, and sufficiency, we can respond to our afflictions as Paul did—with gladness. When Christ's strength is perfected in us, we can be content in whatever difficulties God allows in our life. The Lord's unwillingness to give us relief is not neglect. Rather, it is evidence of His surpassing love, which seeks our eternal good.

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Thursday, December 15, 2016 Daily Devotional - Jesus Christ is Lord

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Romans 14:7-12

Followers of Jesus would agree that whether we live or die, we do so for Christ. But His sovereignty is not limited to those who claim Him as King. The entire world—the whole universe, in fact—is subject to His authority. At the final judgment, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess and praise God.

In the here and now, relatively few people recognize the Lord's rule and seek to remain in His will. Most refuse to see that all of our human constructs—such as government, culture, and society—thrive or falter in the palm of God's hand. Moreover, nonbelievers resist Christ's sovereignty in their own lives. People who won't surrender their will to the Lord's great purpose assume control of their own destiny. However, the Lord's supreme reign cannot be thwarted.

It's common for men and women today to believe that there are no consequences for rejecting the lordship of Jesus Christ. You may have heard people say things like, "That Christian stuff works for you, but it's not for me. I'll live on my own terms." Yet Jesus' parable of houses built on either solid rock or sand offers a different perspective ([Matt. 7:24-27](#)). Only those who make their abode in the Lord can withstand the upheavals of this world.

Kneeling before Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life is the wisest decision you can make. The sovereign Ruler of the universe loves you and desires to bless all of your days. Make your eternal home in the safety of His kingdom, and forever delight in Him.

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Wednesday, December 14, 2016 Daily Devotional - An Introduction to Christ

DECEMBER 14TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Revelation 1:4-8

John gives us a compact description of the Lord. Verse 5 in today's passage condenses the wondrous nature of Jesus Christ to the bare but beautiful essentials of who He is.

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. Jesus came to earth to more fully reveal the character and ways of the Father ([John 14:9](#)). The miracles He performed validated His claim to be the Son of God.

Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead. The Savior bore our sins and died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. His resurrection proved that eternal life is possible for us, too, which is what Jesus taught when He said, "He who believes in Me will live even if he dies" ([John 11:25](#)).

Jesus Christ is ruler over the kings of the earth. The Lord raises men to power, just as it is He who removes them ([John 19:11](#); see also [Rom. 13:1](#)). And believers have access to a higher authority than human leaders. In God's throne room, we can beseech Him on behalf of our land and lay claim to His promises.

Jesus Christ loves us and, by His blood, released us from our sins. Note the change of tense in [Revelation 1:5](#). The Lord's love is ever-present, but He *has freed* believers from their past (NIV). Both the penalty and power of sin have been broken by His sacrifice.

When people ask you about Jesus, introduce Him by guiding them through this mini biography. In just a few sentences, John describes Christ's character, divinity, and authority. The disciple was not timid about proclaiming the Lord to whomever he encountered. We shouldn't be shy, either, when we serve so great a Savior.

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Tuesday, December 13, 2016 Daily Devotional - A Pattern for Prayer

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[Matthew 6:7-15](#)

In Matthew 6:7, Jesus cautioned against meaningless repetition when talking to the Father. Just two verses later, He left a pattern to help us pray. However, in using this passage, which is known as the Lord's Prayer, we're often guilty of the very thing Jesus warned against: Instead of thoughtfully praying each line, we run through the words mindlessly. But if we take time to carefully examine Christ's words, we'll find the pattern that can transform our prayer life.

Adoration of the Father (Matt. 6:9). God the Father is the focus of all our prayers. We should never forget what a privilege it is to bend our knees on earth and reach almighty God in heaven.

Submission to His Will (Matt. 6:10). Prayer should reflect a desire to align ourselves with God's goals and purposes, not to get Him to follow our plans.

Petition God for our needs (Matt. 6:11). We are dependent upon the Lord, and He wants us to come to Him with our requests.

Confession of sins (Matt. 6:12). When we repent and forgive others, we maintain fellowship with God. But if we hold grudges, that fellowship is broken. God loves to answer our prayers when the lines of communication are not disrupted.

Deliverance from evil (Matt. 6:13). Our enemy is too strong for us, but Christ has already won the victory over him.

Jesus ended the prayer where He began—with praise to the Father for His kingdom, power, and glory (Matt. 6:13). Next time you say this prayer, concentrate on each verse. Then, following this pattern will result in a more dynamic and effective prayer life because it will be God-centered.

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Saturday, December 10, 2016 Daily Devotional - Relying on Something Other Than God

DECEMBER 10TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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[1 John 2:15-17](#)

The rich young man approached Jesus to learn how to secure his future in eternity. Out of loving concern, the Lord engaged him in a dialogue to reveal his wrong thinking and thereby identify a significant spiritual problem. (See Mark 10:17-31.)

First, the wealthy man erroneously believed that good deeds were the means of entering heaven. Eternal life is not “bought”; it is a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ. Nor is it something we can attain apart from God. Eternal life becomes ours at the moment of salvation, when the life of God comes to us in the person of His indwelling Holy Spirit ([John 4:14](#); [John 14:16-17](#)).

Second, the man’s identity was tied up in material things. Jesus addressed his spiritual problem by issuing a loving challenge: “Sell all you possess and give to the poor ... and come, follow Me” ([Mark 10:21](#)). The Lord was not saying that giving everything away was the path to salvation. He wanted this young man to realize his difficulty—that his possessions owned him. Jesus offered treasure in heaven, but the man turned away. His action revealed what Jesus already knew about him: Attachment to belongings superseded the offer of *true* riches. Jesus then explained that those who have wealth and position tend

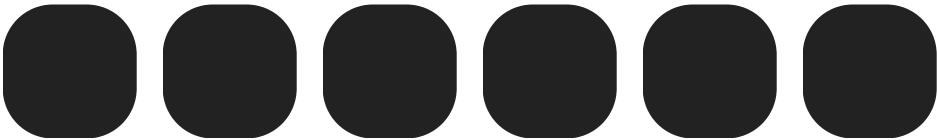
to trust in themselves and not in God.

In our culture, we have so much more than most people in the world—which means we’re at risk of falling into the same trap. We believe in Jesus for salvation but trust in ourselves for daily living. We depend on our intelligence, talents, material possessions, or family to help us, but God wants us to rely on Him alone. On whom or what do you depend?

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