

# Captive's Corner



*"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"*

*2 Corinthians 10:5*

*Jail Impact Ministries ECS Ministries P.O. Box 1028, Dubuque, Iowa 52004-1028 www.ecsministries.org*

## God's Grace Provision for Pain and Suffering

I have good news regarding your letter about God not answering your prayer about your suffering from injury to your body. Jesus will deliver every believer from sin's presence in and effect on the body. We learn of this deliverance in His Word. God has not been silent on the subject of suffering. However, we must believe and hold fast to what He says if we are to count it all joy when we encounter various trials (James 1:1-12). I say this because I noticed in your letter that your thinking regarding a few things is not consistent with God's thinking. Herein lays your confusion! This is why it is so important to understand what God says. If we know His thoughts, then we know when our thinking does not match His. When it does not, we need to take sides with God against our own flawed thinking. When we repent to God and put our faith in Christ, we receive new life from above and God's Spirit. We experience Christ, which is the new life we now possess, only to the extent to which our thoughts and ways come into conformity to His (1 John 2:3; 4:16; 2 Peter 3:18).

Now, more specifically to your "unanswered" prayer request regarding your physical infirmities: You said, "It (the Bible) says God does not want to see you hurt and in pain." I don't think the Bible says this, but it does not say that He wants you to be hurt or in pain either. Jesus wept over what sin had done to His friend Lazarus' body (John 11:35-36). He has made provision for us to have no more pain. This deliverance from a body that decays, gets sick, and

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suffers injury is guaranteed to all who believe on Jesus. This deliverance is realized by all believers when they receive a new and perfect body in the resurrection. This is the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 4:30). In the new heavens and earth, the believer's eternal dwelling place, there will be no more pain and suffering (Revelations 21:4-5). God chooses to temporarily heal some now but not all. If God determined that all believers on this side of eternity should live in a state of perfect health, you would never die and, therefore, never go to heaven. However, you say you are looking forward to heaven. I am too! Our Lord also desires us to be where He is (John 17:24). God did not want man to live forever in a sinful state on this cursed earth. We know because He said so. In Genesis 3:22-24 we see that God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden so that they would not eat of the Tree of Life and live forever with sin within and with the effects of sin on their body. (Amazing, back to Genesis again for the answers for life today!) Even those believers who are healed in this life have an appointment

with death so that they can enter into His presence and have mortality swallowed up by true, eternal, and incorruptible life (2 Corinthians 5:4, 8; Philippians 1:21; Hebrews 9:27). We shall then have a body likened to that of our Lord Jesus and also share in His moral purity (1 John 3:20; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). However, while we await the redemption of our body, we must be mindful that faith involves trust. You must simply resolve

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to trust God, especially when you do not understand (Proverbs 3:5-6). When you do, you will experience a wonderful freedom, a peace that passes all worldly understanding despite your pain, suffering, and any other difficulty in life. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows what is best for you, and He will do

it! His greatest desire for you is that you be transformed into the moral likeness of His Son, Jesus—that you become more Christ-like. God works all things, including pain and suffering, for this purpose of His (Romans 8:28-29). If you have entrusted yourself to Him, you need not fear any temptation or trial in this world (2 Timothy 1:7-13; 1 John 4:18). If you live dependent on His provision in the midst of them, they will only serve to increase the eternal weight of glory being stored up for you in heaven (2 Corinthians 4:10-18; Romans 8:18). You can read the Captive's Corners *God's Grace Provision for Temptation, Indwelling Sin, and Freedom From Sin's Bondage* for help specifically on the subject of God's provision for the believer to not sin when tempted.

It may help you to read Joseph's response to those who had sold him into slavery which later resulted in him being unfairly put in prison for a crime he did not commit (See Genesis 50:20). His response is one that trusts the Lord and seeks to glorify Him in all things, even at the great cost of his own physical adversity. Read Job 1:13-22, Daniel 3:8-18, and 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 for similar responses from other godly men of faith. Notice that none of these very godly men claimed definitively that God would physically deliver them from their trial of physical suffering in this life. Read their *words of faith*. Ultimately, Job's focus was on the resurrection (Job 19:25-27). The three young men in Daniel were content to let God decide to remove their trial or not. Either way, they would serve Him. Paul knew that He would manifest the Christ he served and proclaimed all the more if his thorn in the flesh would remain. Paul also looked forward to and spoke extensively about the resurrection as the believer's sure hope and ultimate answer to suffering (1 Corinthians 15:35-58). Paul's

focus was constantly on the spiritual things because he knew they were of far greater value than a body which is not suited for eternal life or material things which will pass away with this world. He confessed with his mouth that his body was wasting away, but his inner (spiritual) man was being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Paul also said, *"I will not boast, except in my infirmities"* and *"I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong,"* with God's strength of course (2 Corinthians 12:5, 9, 10). The pains, sufferings, and trials of life quickly bring us to the end of our own strength and understanding. Looking to God, yielding to His Spirit, brings the much needed strength and understanding. When we acknowledge God's ways, we see the trial has eternal value. We also, by God's Spirit, experience the much needed power/strength that comes from union with the resurrected Christ. This is the same power which sustained Christ through pains, sufferings, and other trials, even death on the cross. It is the same power at work in His resurrection. So what we need in order to be sustained through trials is to experience Christ. We can do this by not leaning on our own understanding but God's, yielding to His Spirit Who will manifest

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Christ in our mortal body. Read 2 Corinthians 4:11; Ephesians 1:18-20; 3:20; Philippians 4:12, 13, 19; Proverbs 3:5, 6. Eternal life is intimate union with God (John 17:3). Living the abundant life is the experiencing of His life through us (John 10:10b). The experiencing of God at work in us to perform His good pleasure is of such surpassing value that, as Paul did, we may count all things (including a life free from suffering) as nothing and let them go, even take our eyes off of them so that we might be freed up to gain more experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior (Philippians 3:7-14; 2 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 12:1-2). Joni Erekson Tada (who is paralyzed below the neck) said, "Pain and suffering drive us to a deeper relationship with God like a sheepdog nipping at the heels of the sheep, driving them to the shepherd."

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the "way out" God has provided is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. His grace (God's Spirit and Word working within you) is sufficient for you to resist any temptation, do what is pleasing in His sight, and to be sustained through any trial (even with the Lord's joy). This way is not to work but to rest in His work for you and within you. With God's provision, no temptation or trial in life is too much for you to bear. First Corinthians 10:13 also tells us that God limits temptation and trials. See the true story of Job. God put limits on what Satan was allowed to do to Job, which limited the temptation for his faith to fail in the midst of the adversity. *"This far you may come and no farther"* (Job 1:12; 2:6; 38:11). God loves you. *"God is good and does good"* (Psalm 119:68). He does not allow you to go through trials without already having provided for you to be sustained and glorify Him in them.

You also said in your letter, "Don't I deserve the same as the rest of the world?" Well, the answer is yes, we both do. The whole world deserves death and eternal separation from God in hell, BUT God Who is rich in mercy has saved us (Romans 3:23; 6:23; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:1-10). I and the whole world suffer the difficulties and tragedies of life (Job 5:7). Tragedy happens somewhere to someone every second of every day. This is the nature and norm of a world corrupted by sin which will be swept away and replaced with an earth without the effect of sin within by Jesus in the future. Much of the world lives with circumstances so bad that they will not live to see your current age. This is sad, but it is the effect of sin on the body and the world. God did not lie when He told Adam he would die if he ate the forbidden fruit. Now, the whole creation groans with us, looking forward to the day of the redemption of our bodies because the newly created earth, absent of the curse, will follow (Romans 8:18-25). Romans

5:12, Psalm 51:5, and Psalm 58:3 tell us that Adam's sin and its effects have been put to everyone's account and inherited by everyone at conception. This includes everyone who is conceived of a man and a woman (Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit). We clearly see this in that all sin and all die. But, God has provided for a new body in the future resurrection and a new heaven and earth not tainted by sin and, therefore, without sin's effects. Ultimately, the trials and pains of this life only serve God. They increase our hope of His future provision and deliverance. We are to long for His return. The pains and trials of this life certainly serve to accomplish this. Every believer will enjoy the new heaven and earth with Christ once He has put away every enemy into the Lake of Fire. Hallelujah what a Deliverer (Revelation 21-22)!

When we learn to trust God and let Him be our All in All, we realize that some unanswered prayer has been answered all along. We see that He has already provided His sufficient grace to make our joy full, despite the trials and temptations that accompany being temporarily in this body in this world. In John 16:33, although Jesus was talking about persecution because of the disciples' identification with Him in this world, what He says is true of all other adversity which results from being in this sin corrupted world. Jesus conquered sin, death, the world, and Satan. Therefore, He now offers abundant provision for us to live in Him and He in us, a life that is in a very real sense detached from this world while in this world because it is hid with Christ in God. Therefore, our thoughts, goals, desires, joy, and peace are all linked with and should flow from His Person and Work for us and in us, not our temporary worldly circumstances. After all, this world is passing away, our eternal home is closer than when we first believed, and our future glory is even increasing as we learn to be satisfied with Him through the trials of life (1 John 2:15-17; Colossians 3:1-4). The words of a popular hymn are: *"Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."*

You can further read in the Captive's Corner *"Why Believers Get Sick and Die."* It is specific to sickness, but I believe it will help you also. You are a dear brother in Christ, and Christ is your greatest friend. You are certainly right about that in your letter. I hope this response to your letter is helpful. Meditate on the things I have written to you. Look up the verses and meditate on them. Over time, the eternal, Godly perspective regarding your suffering will become clearer as you strive in and hold fast to God's Word. As you do, you have the assurance that the grace of God is striving within you. Always be comforted by knowing that if you have Christ, you not only possess eternal life but you can experience it now. God will surely complete the good work He has begun in you. This includes a resurrected body. You are His. You are the Lord's. In Him there is peace, safety, security, and hope (1 John 5:11-13; 2 Timothy 1:12).

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In conclusion, your and everyone's prayer for deliverance from sin's effects on our bodies have already been answered in at least one sure way in the resurrection. It will be very pleasant when we are all together with our Lord and all the saints in our resurrected bodies (Psalm 133). Until then, I encourage you with these words—His return is ever drawing nearer! Hallelujah what a Savior He is! Come Lord Jesus so that our bodies will be changed in the blink of an eye, and we will experience You to the full! Until then, let us comfort one another with the words of the Lord's return and our sure hope of the resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

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