

## "SEEING THE ELEPHANT"

### I. Romans 5:1-5 & James 1:2-4

**A. During the Civil War, the battle worn men used a term for new recruits who were seeing battle for the first time-it was called, "Seeing the elephant."**

- 1) It described the reaction of new young soldiers coming under fire for the first time and seeing comrades fall all around them. Brash & daring men minutes before, often froze, became violently ill, cried out for their mothers, misfired their rifles, and even ran from the battlefield... They were "seeing the elephant."
- 2) Men who'd endured pitched battles, who had fought gallantly, who became seasoned soldiers, were known as men who had "seen the elephant."
- 3) Many in this church family have most definitely seen the elephant...

**B. While many preachers declare that afflictions, trials, pain, and suffering are signs of anemic faith, the Bible teaches that these things are all part of the normal Christian life... Even stuff the enemy uses for bad, God uses for His good...**

- 1) Quotes by C. S. Lewis, Charles Spurgeon, & Vance Havner...

**C. Romans 5:1-5 is written to justified, reconciled, blood-bought believers...**

- 1) Once hostile enemies, we now have peace with God thru Jesus...
- 2) We have gained access to God's presence thru faith into this grace in which we now stand... *Are you standing with Him now or still against Him?*
- 3) Because of this standing, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God...  
(A dear friend of ours is receiving Hospice care but she has hope in the glory of God.)
- 4) Then Paul says, "We also rejoice in our sufferings..." *Oh my my my!*
- 5) We rejoice, why? Because it produces perseverance which produces character which produces hope. *Couldn't there be an easier way to achieve hope?!*
- 6) And then hope commingles with love poured out thru the Holy Spirit.

**D. James 1:2-4 says we should consider it all joy when we face many trials...**

- 1) Joy is not the first thing that comes to my mind when trials come!
- 2) It can't be a joy in the suffering itself but rather in the promised outcome, the *here-and-now* good God is after as well as the *better-later-on* glory...
- 3) James says that testing develops perseverance which in turn leads to maturity and completeness... *We are becoming "seen-the-ole-elephant" believers...*
- 4) I don't believe there can be a victorious Christian life without victories and how can there be victories without battles, trials, and difficulties?

**E. So we're seeing plenty of elephants, maybe too many, what do we do?**

- 1) Be careful how we walk and where we step... Avoid getting trampled and stepping in *stuff*. Rom. 5:1-2--we keep standing upon the Gospel! (Luther Quote)
- 2) We're careful not to make carnal comparisons... We let God be God in our trials and in the trials of others. We trust Him! (Quote by John Shea)
- 3) We wait and we endure and we press on as best we can...
- 4) We seek to sow seeds even when the tears are falling... Ps. 126:5-6...
- 5) And we don't set idly by when someone else is suffering... We don't pass by on the other side of the road. We don't shoot our wounded. We don't hoard our goods. We pray. We act. We visit. We listen. We clean wounds, we pour oil, we bandage. We write, we cook, we clean, we engage, exhort, & encourage. Instead of dispatching someone else, we dispatch ourselves... After that, we pray some more.

**F. Let's go home with a few more Scriptures...**

- 1) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11; James 1:12...
- 2) Quote by Henry Ward Beecher and Prayer...

### Scriptures & Videos

Christianity Is About Suffering, Not Prosperity--John Piper  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPEWWa2KaPo>

"Blessed Be Your Name" -Matt Redman & The London Community Gospel Choir  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8okACq1TowQ>

State of the Pulpit--Theology of Suffering by Mark Driscoll  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZvgNuGzvUc>

Matt Chandler on Suffering--Part One  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Tr9YbzPgS8>

Matt Chandler on Suffering--Part Two  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sct5ZE0ps4>

Matt Chandler on Suffering--Part Three  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwAo5lktVQo>

"It Is Well With My Soul" by Brian Doerksen  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQDvTqV5Dq0&playnext=1&list=PLRVhZHFTszqdtm9Ya8Zq\\_pGDRyalVfY4C&feature=results\\_main](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQDvTqV5Dq0&playnext=1&list=PLRVhZHFTszqdtm9Ya8Zq_pGDRyalVfY4C&feature=results_main)

If God Wants Me Happy, Why Do I Have So Much Suffering? by John Piper  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxU0C9qesp8>

Abortion and the Campaign for Immorality by John MacArthur  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONX29J6zj\\_A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONX29J6zj_A)

Babies On Roller Blades :- ) (Thanks Keith Stought!)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=341rybZ42vA>

#### Quote by C. S. Lewis

"The real problem is not why some pious, humble, believing people suffer, but why some do not."

#### Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"Would you like to be there [heaven] and see yourself pointed at as the one saint who never knew a sorrow? Oh, no! For you would be an alien in the midst of the sacred brotherhood."

#### Quote By Vance Havner

At the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

#### Romans 5:1-5 (NIV)

**1** Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; **4** perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

#### James 1:2-4 (NIV)

**2** Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. **4** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

#### James 1:2-4 (Amplified)

**2** Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations. **3** Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience. **4** But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.

#### Quote by Martin Luther

"If we consider the greatness and the glory of the life we shall have when we have risen from the dead, it would not be difficult at all for us to bear the concerns of this world. If I believe the Word, I shall on the Last Day, after the sentence has been pronounced, not only gladly have suffered ordinary temptations, insults, and imprisonment, but I shall also say: *"O, that I did not throw myself under the feet of all the godless for the sake of the great glory which I now see revealed and which has come to me through the merit of Christ!"*

### **Quote by John Shea**

*"In the drama of life the need to play the friends of Job is fueled by our fear of playing Job himself."*

### **Psalms 126:5-6 (NIV)**

**5** Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. **6** He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

### **2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)**

**16** Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. **17** For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. **18** So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 (NIV)**

**9** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. **10** He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

### **James 1:12 (NIV)**

**12** Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

### **Quote by Henry Ward Beecher**

*"God washes the eyes by tears until they can behold the invisible land where tears shall come no more."*

### **An Illiterate Janitor**

Somerset Maugham, the English writer, once wrote a story about a janitor at St. Peter's Church in London. One day a young vicar discovered that the janitor was illiterate and fired him. Jobless, the man invested his meager savings in a tiny tobacco shop, where he prospered, bought another, expanded, and ended up with a chain of tobacco stores worth several hundred thousand dollars. One day the man's banker said, "You've done well for an illiterate, but where would you be if you could read and write?" "Well," replied the man, "I'd be janitor of St. Peter's Church in Neville Square."

- Bits and Pieces, June 24, 1993, p. 23.

## **Bonus Stuff**

### **1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV)**

**3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

### **Quote by Paul Evans**

*"Adversity is God's university."*

### **Quote by Malcolm Muggeridge**

*"Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my 75 years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my experience, has been through affliction and not through happiness." - Malcolm Muggeridge, in *Homemade*, July, 1990.*

## **Things Birthed Out of Difficulties**

Most of the Psalms were born in difficulty. Most of the Epistles were written in prisons. Most of the greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers of all time had to pass through the fire. Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* from jail. Florence Nightingale, too ill to move from her bed, reorganized the hospitals of England. Semi-paralyzed and under the constant menace of apoplexy, Pasteur was tireless in his attack on disease. During the greater part of his life, American historian Francis Parkman suffered so acutely that he could not work for more than five minutes as a time.

His eyesight was so wretched that he could scrawl only a few gigantic words on a manuscript, yet he contrived to write twenty magnificent volumes of history. Sometimes it seems that when God is about to make preeminent use of a man, he puts him through the fire.

- Tim Hansel, You Gotta Keep Dancin', David C. Cook, 1985, p. 87.

**Poem by Rev. William Houghton**

This life of mine so strange it seems,  
So empty are its fairest dreams;  
And disappointments crowd so fast,  
Well, there's the next, but ne'er the last.  
Am I a pioneer in care?  
Has no one else but me been there?  
Ah, yes, indeed Christ knows this road;  
He trod it with a heavy load.  
So, as I walk with footsteps sore,  
It's great to know He's gone before.

- William Houghton, Moody Monthly, Sept. 1985, p75.