

In and Out
#15: In Pain, But Not of It
August 18-19, 2007

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. *2 Corinthians 1:3-7 TNIV*

Introduction: Perhaps the most pressing issue facing believers in our culture is how to live “in the world, but not of it.” This is especially true for a church like Columbia in a place like Metro DC. Physical and emotional pain is a common denominator of human experience, and it has become acceptable in our culture to “embrace our hurt,” which is a positive development. But what happens when we get lost in our pain and lose our ability to live victoriously? The Bible teaches us to live “in pain, but not of it.”

- I. The Experience of Pain
 - A. Types of physical pain (and emotional equivalents).
 - 1. Pain that is the temporary effect of an immediate, generally external pressure (“somatic pain”).
 - 2. Pain that is caused by internal pressure and is rooted deep in the body (“visceral pain”).
 - 3. Pain caused by injury to, or “encoded” in the nervous system (“neuropathic pain”).
 - B. Duration of physical pain (and equivalents).
 - 1. Acute pain is short-lived and easily observable, increasing in intensity over time (sub-acute) or occurring intermittently (episodic).
 - 2. Chronic pain is persistent or “breakthrough” pain that is ongoing (longer than three months) and difficult to observe and treat.

- II. The Universality of Pain
 - A. Everyone experiences pain and no one avoids it, though some experience it more than others.
 - B. Every person has a unique pain “threshold” and deals with pain uniquely, but there are similarities in the ways people encounter pain.
 - C. We are largely defined by the way we deal with pain.
- III. The “Purpose” of Pain
 - A. Pain makes us aware of our mortality and prevents our clinging too tightly to the world. (v.3b)
 - B. Pain forces us to look to “the God of all comfort” for help in times of trouble to receive solace. (v.4)
 - C. Pain allows us opportunity to identify Christ’s suffering, which has eternal consequence. (v.5a)
 - D. Pain allows us opportunity to overcome and emerge victorious with Christ, leading to salvation. (v.5b)
 - E. Pain allows us to become “wounded healers” (Nouwen) in the name of Jesus Christ, able to identify with the pain of others. (v.6a)
 - F. Pain produces “patient endurance” in the believer who experiences it and overcomes. (v.6b)
 - G. Pain binds us to one another as a family of faith. (v.7)
- IV. The Power Over Pain
 - A. Though we are guaranteed to experience pain, we are called to rise above it through hope. (v.7a)
 - B. Our pain is not unconsolable, and the believer becomes defined by God’s comfort, not by the pain that necessitates consolation. (v.7b)

Conclusion: In Christ, we become able to live “in pain, but not of it.” We neither deny our pain nor become defeated by it, rather our pain becomes an opportunity for triumph, witness, and ministry. The experience of pain is absolutely essential to our growth as believers living “in the world, but not of it.”

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