

“The Privileges of Pain” Romans 8:14-24

Good morning, welcome to CCJ, if this the first time here - we want to welcome you and tell you you are loved. My name is Justin Sullivan and I'll be standing in for Pastor Jeff today. So that means we are going to take a break from our vs. by vs.; chapter by chapter study of the book of Daniel. I do not stand up here on a regular basis (so if you're new here, please come back,...lol), but I do count it a real privilege to have this platform, and I take this as huge responsibility! So thank you Pastor Jeff for the chance to share from the word of God.

Today's venture is going to be more of a topical study. Not the norm but I promise that this will be equally challenging and not just because it's me up here giving the delivery, but because the Word of God is going to be exalted. CCJ LOVES the word of God, amen?

So- you will need your bibles - (Is there anybody who needs a bible? We want to put one in your hands) You all are about to be challenged today - If it doesn't challenge us then it doesn't change us, Right?! The WORD of God never returns void --- So prepare to be challenged!

(LET'S PRAY) God I ask that you teach us today by the power of your Holy Spirit, that you would awaken us to the seriousness of our condition without you, that we would draw closer to you because the hour is getting late, Judgement and Wrath is coming, so will you awaken us to a renewed passion to follow you and an urgency for sharing your Gospel. (AMEN)

Now that you have your bibles - open to Romans chapter 8

(The topic we're going to be discussing today) - is something that humanity runs from. As a whole, we tend to resist it. We medicate to escape from it, and we try to anesthetize it. (PAIN) that's today's topic.

When I told you it would be challenging today you had NOOOO Idea that it would be PAINFUL. Lol

Today I want us to take a closer look at (Pain) and perhaps discover some benefits that arise from having Pain.

You Say “Why Justin?”

I make no apologies for this; it is a topic that that I'm sure all of you are all too familiar with, as am I, and I'm positive there are some of you out there right now that are having a real struggle with having pain.

You see my “day job” for the last 20 years has been that of a Physical therapist assistant, and when Jeff asked me to share, this topic popped in my mind, because it's what I've been having to study on for continuing education.

For my line of work we have to stay up to date with the current research and understandings geared towards the best treatment strategies of the things we are facing. And right now the issue of CHRONIC PAIN is on the rise to epidemic proportions. It is estimated that one out of every 5 people are dealing with a chronic pain. Chronic Pain- is any pain that continues long after the initial cause is gone. Chronic pain takes a toll on you both the body and the mind.

I've been learning that pain is pretty complex, and there are many things that contribute to the experience of pain.

First off let me give you the scientific definition of pain:

The scientific definition of pain is as follows - PAIN is produced by the brain after a person's neural signature has been activated and concluded that the body is in danger and action is required (Moseley 2003; 2007)

Another definition of pain - It is a multiple system output, activated by the brain based on a perceived threat.

In other words: pain is produced by the brain and is has to do with perception and how big The brain determines the threat to be.

So let me illustrate this to you- lets say you're walking along and you're about to cross a street and when you step off the curb you roll your ankle, I mean bad! Does that hurt? How many have rolled their ankle - show of hands - Hurts. Right?!

So in that moment your tissue is damaged and it's telling your brain - "Ankle!!"... "Ow!!"

Now let's suppose while you're lying there you look and see a bus barreling down at you and you see that the driver has no idea that you're there, he doesn't see you in the street! How bad does that ankle hurt now? Suddenly your ankle doesn't have that much pain, right! Why?

Because your brain made a decision - that bus is a bigger threat, and I'm getting out of the way!

With the perception of a bigger threat the brain is able to block the pain you were just having, and move itself out of the way!

So one more time - pain is produced by the brain based on the level of perceived threat.

So in theory - No brain "no pain". Yeah you'd also be Dead! Let's be realistic, we can't get rid of our brains. We need that. Most of us do anyway...lol

Please don't miss understand the definition when it states that pain is produced by the brain, it is not saying that pain is made up or somehow just in your head. NO. This is not what it's saying at all!

But somehow the Brain is responsible for producing it, just like it produces the color red for us after our eyes relay the signals and the brain interprets - stop sign.

Now that we understand the definition, and most of us have experienced pain, and agree that its a very real and part of our existence. I thought it would help to look at the word of God and one thing has been illuminating from this study- not all pain is bad and not all hurt is harmful.

I'm here to tell you that the word of God teaches us that there are benefits from pain and we can consider them privileges.

So into the word with your bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 8 picking up in verse 14.. and let us give attention to the public reading of God's word.

[Rom 8:14-24 NKJV] 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him], that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected [it] in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only [that], but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

Let's stop right there.

If you're here and suffering from some sort of chronic pain there is hope offered and found in the word of God. (BIBLICAL HOPE) hope that doesn't disappoint like wishful thinking but it's the confident expectation of a guaranteed certainty! Pain is very real and very much a reality in the world we live in presently.

But consider this first- only by experiencing pain do we recognize the areas of our life that require healing.

CS Lewis wrote in his book title "The Problem with Pain", he said this ~ "We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

So from our passage here I want us to consider 4 benefits/privileges that come as a result of pain, and this list is by no means exhaustive so there may be more than four but if you're a note taker- the first thing I'd like you to consider as a "benefit" from pain is this: It lets us know that ALL is not well...something is very wrong!

So # 1, Pain reminds us that ALL is not well.

Is that a NEW FLASH for anyone here today? Seriously! I mean there is just something not right down here on planet earth. Pain confirms the word of God! Did you see it here in Romans 8? We learn that, even creation GROANS.

That it was subjected to futility - not willingly, and it has been in this bondage of corruption!

When was creation corrupted? (It was at the fall!)

I can say with confidence here from our text that creation was (Radically) altered from this event we call "the fall".

And I believe from our passage today and for reasons we'll discuss later, that in the beginning there was no pain, sufferings, or afflictions. For then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed [it was] very good...(Cancer is not good, disease is not good, death not good) But at one time Creation was Very Good, and the circumstances of human existence were WAY better,[[PERFECT]], but now it is radically different. Genesis chapter 3

[Gen 3:16-19 NKJV] 16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire [shall be] for your husband, And he shall rule over you." 17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed [is] the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat [of] it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you [are], And to dust you shall return."

Great ☹ Welcome to planet earth everybody! You sons and daughters of eve are going to hurt now!

But look - God has given us this ability to feel pain - TO FEEL PAIN to let us know that all is not well. Physical pain is a reminder that something is not right and that we need to attend to something/get help

There are some conditions that allow people not to feel pain - initially you may be inclined to think "that's awesome"- I did too, but listen, pain was given by God, to alarm us of a dangerous reality that all is not well. We are all in danger here on planet earth because of corruption and we all test positive with a very serious condition! (Has our brains perceived the threat level yet?)

Leprosy - One of the side effects from Leprosy is the body loses its ability to recognize pain. The person loses feeling in an extremity and may be afflicted by flames and not even be aware that there is any danger! In the Bible, Leprosy is a picture type of what? (Sin). Folks we ought naught be messing around with sin - it's dangerous! Unfortunately its contagious/ congenital and WE ARE ALL AFFLICTED WITH SIN! We all test sin positive! You feeling me?

Pain reminds us of the CURSE! We're all subject to this CURSE, for the CURSE brings pain.

And Calvary brought PAIN to our Savior, SO THAT WE CAN BE SET FREE FROM FROM THE CURSE!

We are not to somehow diminish what Jesus did on the cross as something easy for him to do because He was fully God, and that somehow made it easier for him to endure, that's bad theology!

Jesus was a man and had the same Neurons that you and I share when we process pain, because he had flesh and blood!

It's also bad theology to teach someone that because they have pain or afflictions; that somehow they've done something wrong and God is angry with them, and that's why they hurting and won't be healed! That's ridiculous!

Listen - The sinless Son of God, Jesus, had PAIN! He was in agony while praying in the Garden, to the point of hematohidrosis (sweat became drops of blood usually caused by tremendous emotional stress); and while on that cross, He AGONIZED physically for his last breath, as He cried out "it is finished".

The scriptures gives us this "Sinless depiction of pain" found in Psalms 22,

[Psa 22:14-17 NKJV] 14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. 16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; 17 I can count all My bones. They look [and] stare at Me.

Psalms 22 is a prophetic depiction of roman crucifixion, and the physical, emotional, and psychological trauma that our savior JESUS endured!!!!

Are you guys familiar with the Pain scale? Usually encounter the pain scale at the doctor's office or therapy. I have to ask people all the time when I'm treating them - What's your pain on a number scale between 1-10? Occasionally I'll get the person who tells me that the pain is a 15, probably frustrated with the question, I get it, but the number 10 is supposed to be the worst pain imaginal.

I like to use the word Excruciating, you want to know why? Because that word means "from out of the CROSS" We just caught a glimpse of Roman crucifixion: the worst, most feared torturous form of punishment to death that was meant to make a statement to the viewers that says - "don't mess with ROME!" Cause they ain't playing...

So a 10/10 pain is Excruciating PAIN.

Guys, Jesus agonized on the cross, and he was without sin, He did this willingly to! Why?! To set free from the consequences of the CURSE, to deliver us from death<>LIFE!

So even though ALL IS NOT WELL, we have a great Healer and deliverer in the Person of Jesus our savior. AMEN

So the first benefit/privilege we're considering that comes from pain is that it awakens us to the reality that all is not well.

The second thing I'd like us to consider from our text concerning the benefit/privilege to having pain is-

Pain can be used as a tool in the hand of God.

So #2 Pain can be used as a tool in the hands of God <> As a potters hand shapes the clay on the potter's wheel, pain can be used as a tool.

God is Sovereign. That means He does as He pleases and is in absolute complete control of everything! We can trust that our sovereign God has our eternal good and purpose in mind as He allows us to face pains and afflictions.

He is the potter we are the clay...we are His earthen vessels...

[2Co 4:7-9 NKJV] 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 [We are] hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--

A little further down in (our) Romans chapter 8, is a oft quoted passage - Romans 8:28

[Rom 8:28 NKJV] 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to [His] purpose.

What's the eternal purpose in mind, you say? Look at verse 29 of Romans 8

[Rom 8:29 NKJV] 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The eternal purpose --- that we'd be more like Jesus. Set free from sin!

[Rom 8:17-18 NKJV] 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him], that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Sufferings??!!

Again I'm going to draw from my profession - our physical bodies have a unique ability to adapt to adversities.

As I spoke earlier not all hurts are harmful. Exercise hurts but what does it do to the body? I know, It makes you sore. But that soreness is safe. What does that soreness produce? (Endurance, flexibility, strength, the ability to reduce body inflammations) Our physical bodies respond to adversity.

Are we to think that this is any different in the realm of the spirit?

Remember the pain scale- how it's a spectrum between the numbers 1-10. Well I want you to think of an adversity spectrum - (on one end of the spectrum it's the classic "no pain no gain" mantra- pushing the limits of human performance; on the other end of the spectrum is vacation, rest and relaxation, "if it hurts I'm not going to do it") (it's a spectrum between LABOR<<>>REST) physical change is going to take place based on the adversities we face.

Which end of the spectrum do you think we gravitate towards in the flesh? Do we like comfort or what?

It's a natural tendency to want rest. We need to rest. But WE NEED TO WORK. WORK IS A HOLY THING, it was given to us before the fall - Adam was charged with tending the Garden. So Work is good.

We are given the biblical model for REST in the creation account. [Exo 20:9 NKJV] 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work... Sabbath means REST right? Our bodies need rest to

restore, regenerate and renew. All too often I think we adopt a mindset that is completely opposite of the biblical model - one day of work and 6 days of rest.

Why? It's because our thinking has been corrupted. The our flesh is corrupted.

One of the sayings in the fitness world that I've adopted is this: "embrace the suck". Romans 8:28 doesn't say all things ARE good - no - all things are not GOOD, but it is good in that God uses it for our good.

You may be in the "suck" right now but don't lose heart. God is sovereign and has your eternal good and His eternal glory in mind.

For we know we are not called as Christians to a life of ease. Christians WILL have TRIBULATIONS...

[Rom 5:3-4 NKJV] 3 And not only [that], but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

God isn't concerned about our comfort or happiness so much as He is our Character and our HOLINESS! He is conforming us into the image of His son.

So pain can be used as a tool in the hand of God.

#3

The third benefit / privilege we're going to examine is this- Pain provides a platform for God's Grace to be on display.

Pain provides an opportunity to prove the Grace of God! How many times have we observed someone go through something and wonder: HOW? We've all witness this one way or another. Working in my profession I've seen tremendous displays of GOD'S Grace through afflictions, sufferings, and pains!

Here in Romans 8 we read- (15,16,17)

15 we've been adopted and can call God (daddy) ABBA

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Heirs to what? [[[GRACE]]] you ever learned that acronym for grace before? Grace is: (G-Gods, R-riches, A-at, C-Christ's, E-expense)

(The Holy Spirit) Himself bears witness - Jesus died a very agonizing, substitutionary death so HE CAN SEND us the HOLY SPIRIT!!!

When He was facing the affliction of the cross he told his disciples - **[Jhn 16:7 NKJV] 7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.**

The Greek word for The Holy Spirit (Gr. paracletos")

It means properly "one who is summoned to the side of another" to help him in a court of justice by defending him, "one who is summoned to plead a cause."

It also speaks more to Strengthening; God gives us STRENGTH for our trials! If we are suffering, WE ARE NOT ALONE, Jesus's Holy spirit indwells us and at times comes upon us to sustain us in our sufferings. We can turn to (the Comforter, Helper, Advocate) the paracletos for He is Always with us. It is He who makes intercession for us according to the will of God as we read further down in chapter 8 here:26-27 NKJV

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Pain awakens us to our need, our dependence on God (Our Father/Daddy). We must remember that we are His children and have access to all that is the King's (grace)! This is exactly what Jesus did when He was facing weakness and afflictions:

[Heb 4:14-16 NKJV] 14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all [points] tempted as [we are, yet] without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Pain helps us to enlarge our prayers. Praying and Learning to trust in God's "no" is learning to trust God's sovereign plan.

You remember The apostle Paul was being humbled by some measure of affliction, so much so that he prayed to God to be relieved from his pain.

[2Co 12:7-10 NKJV] 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore 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.

A thorn in the flesh got Paul's attention and through his prayer life with his daddy we learn when the King's strength is made perfect.

Ladies and gentlemen pain Increases HIS POWER IN US. "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Listen to that grace filled response to pain vs. 10 - (therefore I take pleasure) that is "embracing the suck" right there - GRACE on display!

God gives REAL TIME GRACE for our afflictions and Pain produces that platform for the Grace of God to be on display. So when the Devil reminds you of your weaknesses remind him of your riches in Christ. G.R.A.C.E

So a quick recap - the three things so we've considered - #1 Pain lets us know that - All is not well. #2 Pains can be a tool in the hand of a sovereign God. #3 Pain provides a platform for the grace of God to be on display.

#4

So the fourth benefit of pain and our final one we'll be considering today is— Pain produces in us a longing for heaven and our eternal home.

[Rom 8:18 NKJV] 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

HEAVEN is for REAL and the afflictions we face in the fallen state of creation pale in comparison to the ETERNITY that awaits us.

And it just so happens that PAIN produces in us a longing for heaven and our eternal home...we tend to loosen our grip on this life and look forward to our heavenly home.

[2Co 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, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

I picture this huge scale - on one hand of the scale is all the pain affliction and trouble you've faced during your brief stint on planet earth - and on the other hand of the scale ETERNAL GLORY. Stepping into eternity - I see the pain afflictions and troubles just go flying never to be seen again...lol

Eternity is the real longing twice born, THERE SHALL BE NO MORE PAIN.

[Rev 21:4 NKJV] 4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

This is of course a promise only for the twice born.

If you've not been born again, (perceived the level of threat and danger that you're in because of your sins) and not turned to the Savior for forgiveness and mercy, then an eternal Hell awaits. A place of eternal torments; meant for the devil, demons, and death itself. It is a place of outer darkness and separation from light. It is the very quarantine for evil itself and you will no longer have access to anything good, lovely, and peaceable EVER AGAIN

The choice is yours. I have your attention, Please examine yourself today, let your heart communicate to with your brain - [Remember] - Pain is produced by the brain based on the level of perceived threat.... - Ask yourself what is the biggest threat here?

Is it....

Submitting yourself to the mercies of a loving God who has done everything on your behalf for a complete pardon from death row that you might have life, and life more abundant (eternal life);

or pridefully going your own way, trusting your own works for justification only to find that it'll never be enough, for your righteousness is as filthy rags to a GOOD, HOLY, and JUST God.

God [will] grant you the desires of your heart, and if your heart is saying "NO GOD" then that's exactly what you'll find in HELL- no God!

The fool has said in his heart "[there is] NO GOD" They are corrupt, have done abominable works, there is none who does good.

You may of heard this statement before - (If you're a Christian today then this is as close to Hell that you'll ever get. [think about that for a second] But if you are NOT then this is as close to Heaven as you'll ever be)

The perceived level of threat should be going off the charts right now! . Heaven is a place without pain, and Hell is a place of eternal torment.

The choice is yours. Stay in your sinful condition or move towards Christ.

And as we get ready to close today, and this has somehow alarmed you, remember it is only by experiencing pain that we are reminded of the things that we need to take care of. And if you don't know Jesus as your Savior then you need to take care of that immediately, don't wait! Let's take care of that today! After we dismiss there will be some men and women down here at the front who are willing to lead you to YOUR savior.

Jesus paid it all for you; right up to his last, agonizing, breath- "IT IS FINISHED"! And His heart aches till the last person receives their adoption papers, maybe that's you?! Please stay after if that is.

So let's stand....Conclusion-

In this moment, this present painful age and fallen world we're living in, your pain is not being wasted, it may even be beneficial, a real privilege.

Remember it is a mechanism that reminds us that all is not well, for some of us points to areas of our lives that we need to give attention to today.

Remember that pain can be a tool in the hand of our sovereign God, for He has your eternal good and His eternal glory in mind. Not so much concerned about our comfort and happiness as He is our character and holiness.

And Pain provides a platform for God's GRACE to be displayed, God's riches at Christ's expense- and even though you may be "in the suck", remember the weight of glory that awaits you,

Because pain makes us long for our heavenly home. Amen! (That first breath in eternity, for the twice born, will blow our minds.)

Let's Pray.... ABBA Father May we be inspired to action, give us grace to face adversities, even persecutions for the sake of the gospel, and alarm us to rescue those who still have time to repent and trust in the one who delivers us from pain. AMEN