

Finding Inner Peace

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Preface

Illus: Some things really annoy me about modern technology. I don't know about you but it drives me nuts to have to talk to a computer. Just this week I called a company. After choosing to speak in English, the computer asked me for my account number. After it found my account, it proceeded to try to converse with me about what I needed. Eventually I was able to speak with a live person. Guess what the first thing they asked me - "Can I have your account number please.

Since my graduation from high school, all sorts of technologies have been introduced: ATMs, Pay at the Pump, Cell Phones, CDs, DVDs, PDAs, & even Computers.

All of these are marketed to help us be more productive and squeeze more out of our time. But change is not always good. As senior adults, it is stressful living in a world where you are an account number.

Dealing with change is not easy and it's not fun. It is especially difficult when you see it taking its toll on our country, families and our way of life. Many are also experiencing health changes.

So where do we find inner peace in a hectic world?

One national magazine offered the answer, "Talk to your pet." I've tried that and it doesn't work.

The answers to finding inner peace are found in the word of God.

Scripture

⁷ *To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.* ⁸ *Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.* ⁹ *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.* ¹⁰ *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 NIV

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Introduction

Paul was a busy missionary. He made tents to support himself, had letters to write, sermons to prepare and preach and churches to visit in multiple countries.

It is no wonder that three times he prayed asking God to remove his physical affliction. Paul speaks of a nagging physical ailment in his life which he describes as a thorn in his flesh.

What was this great physical thorn in Paul's side? Ugly, epilepsy, blind - we don't know. Paul never tells us - so everyone in one way or another can identify with him and his struggle.

Everyone has a battle to fight, a cross to bear if you will. But look at what Paul says about his struggle.

¹⁰ *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Wow, can you say that? Paul reaches the point that he delights in his struggles. He finds strength in his weakness. Let's look at some keys to overcoming our struggles and finding inner peace.

Content

1. Recognize your struggles are no accident

¹³ *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.* Hebrews 4:13 NIV

God recognizes our struggles and he understands what we are going through. But he also wants to use everything about you for His glory. God gives us thorns to fashion and mold us.

Illus: The great preacher, Charles Spurgeon at 35 suffered from gout and kidney disease yet wrote sermons that are still inspiring today. His sermons reflect that the pain knitted his heart so closely to that of Jesus Christ.

Don't get hung up on whether or not you deserved your struggles.

You must recognize purpose in your pain in order to grow from it and put it to work for the Lord.

Accept your hardship as a gift from God and allow God to accomplish His purpose in your life.

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2. Look for opportunity in your struggles

Paul says, "I delight in my weakness."

He doesn't say, "What if I didn't have this in my life. What a wonderful life I could have." He looks for the opportunity.

Nobody gets to live life on their own terms. You may think you do for a season but you will come to realize that you don't.

Nobody gets a perfect set of circumstances. Those who find peace are the folks who look at their circumstances and see opportunity rather than dwelling on their problems.

Illus: There was a famous violinist named Ole Bull. His most renowned concert was one where he actually broke a string and had to transpose the notes and finish on three strings.

The most thrilling moments in life are when we finish strongly on just three strings.

Parker Trio: When you see a valley, He sees a mountain. When you see a cross, He sees a crown. Stop making excuses and let God do his work in your life.

Look past your cross and see the crown. Ask God what opportunity is open for you to use your weakness for His glory.

3. Stop window-shopping and enjoy your own inventory

Paul makes no bones about it. He asked God to take away the thorn in his flesh. But God said no.

Paul could have thought, "Well, that's not fair. Timothy has good health and Silas doesn't have any major problems. Why me?"

To this, God would say, "stop window shopping and be happy with what I have given you."

God gives each of us a special plot to till. If the soil is thin, the rocks more numerous and the prospects smaller, then so be it. That's how life is. We must stop looking over the fence and day dreaming about what we could do with somebody else's field.

The real test is not what you could do with somebody else's life or circumstances or health, but what you are doing with what you have been given.

In Jesus Christ we have every opportunity for abundant life with what God has already given us.

4. Find strength in God's grace which is always sufficient

Though Paul asks God three times to remove his affliction, God said no. But then God gives him a promise.

God said, I'll give you something better than that, "My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in your weakness."

We can't live by explanations, we must live by promises. This is your promise, God's grace is sufficient.

God's grace is sufficient for all of the thorns, handicaps, troubles and problems in your life. When you are weak, when you need it, it will always be there.

God's grace is not given just that we might endure. **His grace is given to enable us to rise above our circumstances and do great things for Him.** His power is displayed through us and through our weakness.

Paul was asking for substitution - sickness to health. But Paul got transformation instead. His weakness transformed into strength.

Conclusion

Illus: Years ago a man found himself on a train between two ladies.

- And unfortunately for him the two ladies were arguing constantly about whether the window should be open or shut.
- The lady farthest from the window argued that she would die of heat stroke if it wasn't opened.
- The other said she would certainly catch pneumonia if it didn't stay closed.
- When the ticket taker arrived the ladies begged to him to come up with a solution.
- But unfortunately he didn't have a solution.
- Finally the man spoke up. "First open the window. That will kill the one.
- Then close it. That will kill the other. Then we will have peace."

"I have learned that financial success, academic achievement, and social or political status open no doors to peace of mind or inner security. We are all wanderers, like sheep, on this planet." Ann Landers

Real peace can only be found in trusting and serving Jesus Christ.