

Daily Devotional, April 22, 2021 Our Suffering Brings Strength

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 1Peter 5:10 (NIV)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

As I look around me and see the flowers and trees in bloom, it's hard to understand the strange situation we're living in right now. This virus appears to be everywhere and yet, seems eerily nowhere when I walk outside and see the sun shining, hear the birds singing, and feel the wind lightly blowing a steadily warming breeze. It's hard to understand how we could be entering this season of new life and new beginnings, this spring season that generally yields such vibrant color and hope, when so many among us are yet suffering and uncertain.

We suffer from the worry that comes with learning of a friend or relative who may have fallen ill with this virus. We suffer from the stress of keeping ourselves, our children, our parents and grandparents, our immediate and extended family healthy and safe from its wrath. We suffer from job changes, job losses, and job uncertainty. We suffer from having to pause our daily routines to stay home and to stop the spread. This period of pause has us feeling anxious and uncertain, sometimes ill-tempered and disengaged as we seek to navigate this seemingly endless change in "normal life."

And yet we find in both 1 Peter 5:10 and Jeremiah 29:11, the simple reminders that God has greater plans for us than what we are experiencing today. We may suffer for a time, but only so that God may enable us to grow stronger in body and spirit. I remember hearing that we'd never really appreciate the sunshine without any rain. Usually this was in response to a hard day I'd had at school--maybe an assignment on which I'd received a poor grade, maybe a tiff I'd gotten into with a friend, or maybe a missed opportunity that left me disappointed.

Those trials were all just part of growing up, part of the growing pains a kid feels as they learn life's lessons in sometimes hidden ways. Today's pain isn't disguised quite like those rough days at school. It's not just me that's feeling the strain. We are all weathering this storm together. With this shower raining down on us, there is sure to be a sunnier path on the other end.

Let us find the good in this time to grow closer to those we love, to reach out to those from whom we may have grown distant, to embrace the quieter and slower pace. My wife and I talk to my kids often about how beautiful nature is and that God created this incredible world around us. Now is about as good of a time as I can think to seek solace in the beauty of our surroundings and the new beginnings and growth that it brings. Just as we read in Jeremiah, God has plans to give us hope and a future. God will give us brighter days ahead.

Prayer: Almighty God, give us the strength and the hope to endure. Let us see through to a spring of new beginnings, so that we may find health and abundance in your everlasting grace. In Christ we pray, Amen.