

hang on to it. We are not called to understand, suffering but to handle it in a way that will honor God, help others and bring us peace

THREE QUESTIONS

Why me? / Why not me? / What now?

When something really bad happens, almost all of us think, "Why me?" We must move from this to a second question, "Why not me?". Billy Graham had Parkinson's. William Booth founder of the Salvation Army went blind. A young man named Stephen preached the message God wanted him to, and the congregation killed him. (Acts 8-9)

If pain ripped their lives apart why not us. And most of all we need to remember that Jesus lived by the prayer "Thy will be done" (Matt. 26) and he ended up on a cross. If God's son suffered, why not me?

Then we need to move to a third question, "What now?" We need to ask God to help us use our pain in a way that will honor him and help others. One of the hardest plays in college football is to cut across the middle to catch a pass because when you reach up for the ball, you will get hit by two men coming at you from two different directions. Coaches tell players you're going to pay the price so you might as well catch the ball. When suffering makes us bitter and not better, we pay the price but do not buy anything.

THREE BLESSINGS

CLOSER TO GOD

When we handle pain properly it can draw us closer to God. Few of us pray with intensity and urgency until we are hurting and instinctively turn to God. Some turn to shake their fist; some to pour out an ocean of tears and some for comfort – but we all turn. When a bad storm hit the ship Jonah was on, the Bible said, **"The sailors cried out – each to their own god."** Many of us never look up until life knocks us on our backs.

CLOSER TO OUR BEST SELVES

"Suffering produces endurance; endurance produces character and character produces hope." (Romans 5)

One farmer visited another farmer and he saw him chasing a rabbit down the road. He yelled, I hope you catch it" and the other farmer answered, "Hope? I have to catch it. This is supper." Christians are like tea, our strength does not come out until we find ourselves in hot water.

When I was a boy, World War II broke out and boys fresh out of high school we're jerked off the streets; trained for a few weeks and sent to Europe. They fought their way through the hell of D Day and months of hand-to-hand combat and brought Germany to his knees. I have seen people display extraordinary strength in terrible times and it not only surprised me it surprised them.

CLOSER TO OTHERS

"God / comforts us in all our troubles so we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (2 Cor. 1)

It's amazing how selfish we are. We cling to our clan, our family, our friends, our church. Looking at a street person, a wheelchair, a blind person, etc. we are uncomfortable and shy away. We wish them well but do nothing to help them. It is only until life throws us into some great hurt that we join them. Our clan changes, it grows larger. We see life through their eyes. When God helps us we want to pass it on to them. Adam Walsh's son is murdered, and he gives his life to capturing criminals and helping parents like himself. Hurts are turned into helping hands.

O strengthen me, that, while I stand
Firm on the rock, and strong in thee
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea