

## **AN OBSERVATION AMONGST THE SUFFERING**

I shared a few weeks ago how my mother recently fractured her wrist after having fallen. Last week we returned to the fracture clinic for a follow-up visit. When we checked in the first thing they had us do was go to the x-ray department. After we finished there, we returned to the fracture clinic and waited to see the doctor. Our appointment that morning was scheduled for 9:30. The waiting room was already full of people waiting for their scheduled appointments too. As I quickly glanced around the waiting room, I saw young, middle-aged, and older people who had suffered fractures and broken bones. A young mother sitting across from us had recently broken two of her toes. Several people were walking on crutches or were being pushed in wheelchairs after having suffered a broken ankle or leg. One lady seemed to be recovering from some broken vertebrae in her neck.

Despite the suffering that each of these people was going through, I noticed so many positive behaviors on display while I waited. Even though it seemed like patients were entering the waiting room quicker than people were being seen, everybody was showing patience that day. It was great to see so much kindness and courtesy on display as well. A lady with crutches who was sitting beside my mother could see somebody standing who was worse off than she was. She got up from the chair and offered it to that person. I could also overhear conversations breaking out between complete strangers as they waited. These conversations seemed to be very polite and cordial, centering around how they injured themselves. After one couple was finally able to see the doctor, they came back out to the waiting room to share the good news report they had just received with the person they had been seated beside for the past hour. They not only shared their good news but also offered words of encouragement to the other couple. We waited 90 minutes in order to see my mother's doctor that morning. Despite the suffering and trauma everyone there had experienced recently, I saw wonderful attributes and attitudes on display by the people waiting in that clinic.

The experience reminded me how we often see some of the best qualities on display by people in times of suffering. A good example of this was when one person I know brought over some food for my mother that could easily be heated up. When I ministered at one time in a very small community whenever anybody experienced a death in their family, they would have meal after meal brought to them by their neighbours. We see these same expressions of kindness and generosity on display whenever a great humanitarian crisis

arises and there is a desperate need to care for those suffering as a result. It is so wonderful and uplifting to see people display such admirable qualities in the midst of suffering. When we see these wonderful gestures of goodwill and kindness, we wish they were a consistent part of day-to-day living.

Unfortunately, we also see selfishness, greed, indifference, anger, rage, or violence can be part of people's behavior too. We may not always see the wonderful attributes often on display in the midst of suffering, but as believers these positive qualities should be consistently displayed on our part.

First-century Christians experienced suffering pretty consistently rather than on occasion like we do. Paul tried to help these believers not to focus as much on their suffering but rather on the blessed qualities that were being developed within them despite their unpleasant circumstances.

**We can rejoice too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. (Romans 5:3-4)**

Paul wanted these believers to see how, despite their suffering, they could develop a more Christ-like character by becoming more patient and having endurance and by deepening their trust and faith in the Father both now and for the future. These believers lived during a period of time when suffering was the constant and norm rather than the exception. Hopefully for us suffering is the exception rather than our constant like those early believers had to endure. Regardless of whether we are experiencing a time of suffering or stability in our lives, let's make sure as believers that we consistently show patience and endurance, Christ-like character and attitudes, and a strong faith and hope in our salvation found in a relationship with the Father through Christ. This is a consistent pattern that we want to see in others, others want to see in us, and most importantly our Father wants to see displayed as well.

We return to the fracture clinic in three weeks. It would not surprise me to see the same positive attributes on display as I saw last week. I just hope we do not have to wait as long as we did the last time. If I have to wait a while, do not be surprised if another mid-week message arises from that experience.

**Keep safe and God bless**

**Pastor Dean**