

## Scriptures and Doctrine :: A Young Man's Testimony to Suffering and the Sovereignty of God

### A Young Man's Testimony to Suffering and the Sovereignty of God - posted by Giggles (), on: 2010/1/27 11:54

This story blessed my heart. If you know people with physical disabilities I encourage you to prayerfully pass this on to them. The article itself is taken from a blog John Knight, a father of an autistic child who also suffers from blindness and cognitive impairments.

A Young Man's Testimony to Suffering and the Sovereignty of God  
November 7, 2009 by John Knight

I have read dozens of books, articles and web sites on disability, suffering and the Bible. What you will see below may be the finest piece on disability and the sovereignty of God I have ever read.

It was written by Joe Eaton and is particularly powerful because Joe lives with the permanently disabling condition of spina bifida. Please join me in praising God for the insight and wisdom God has granted Joe, who is just completing his first semester of college.

The Sovereignty of God in Suffering, by Joe Eaton (first posted on Facebook and used with his permission here)

A friend and I were talking a while ago about the sovereignty of God. She asked me how I thought the sovereignty of God related to disability. More specifically, how does believing the doctrine of the sovereignty of God affect my own experience with disability? At the time, my thoughts on the subject I weren't very well-prepared or well-organized. But I have also been meaning to write some thoughts about this since I started this blog! So, finally, I've written some of my thoughts on this subject. I pray that these musings are Bible-saturated and helpful...

An understanding of the sovereignty of God has to start with an understanding of the glory of God. Romans 11:36 says, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen." In other words, every detail of life is orchestrated for the glory of God. When I say that God is sovereign, I mean that "For those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)." In other words, God has ordained that no matter what happens to those of us who are elect, Christ would get the glory and we would get the joy. When we talk about the sovereignty of God, we have to start there. To believe in the sovereignty of God is to trust Him, that His promises are true and that His purposes are good all the time, whether we understand what He's doing or not, because He's always working for His good and our joy.

Well, you might say, it's great to talk generally about how everything is going to turn out all right for believers, but what will look differently in our lives if we really believe that God is sovereign in our suffering? How does this truth sustain suffering souls? How do hard situations serve to bring us closer to God? Let me tell you that the sovereignty of God is a sustaining and sanctifying reality. I want to put a Biblical body around this idea, and then give you a few practical examples from my own life.

The reason we can have hope in suffering is not because it's necessarily going to get better when we think it should get better. The reason we can have hope in suffering is because we have the hope of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit inside of us! The apostle Paul continually exhorts us, his readers, to have an eternal perspective; namely, to rejoice in our assurance of heaven rather than this earth that is not our home. For example:

Hebrews 13.14 ~ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

2 Corinthians 4.17-18 ~ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Colossians 3.1-3 ~ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

2 Corinthians 12.10 ~ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and

calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The common thread through each of these passages is this: we hope in the gospel, not in our circumstances. We hope in Jesus, not people. The end of our hope is not that our suffering is going away in this life necessarily (although it might); the end of our hope is being with Jesus in heaven. We ought to rejoice even in the suffering that God brings into our lives because we know that it will all work for our benefit by bringing us closer to Him!

These truths have changed my life. I'm not saying that I feel like I suffer very much, especially relatively speaking. I'm saying that no matter where we are in life, no matter what challenges God has brought or will bring us through, you and I need an eternal perspective. Both pain and pleasure are meant to point us to the same reality; namely, that Jesus Christ is infinitely beautiful and so much more than enough for our every need. Living for Him, even suffering for Him, is worth every moment of affliction! Why? Because Jesus shows you such beauty in pain, because He is there and He is carrying us through. C.S. Lewis said, "God whispers in our pleasure and screams in our pain." That is so true.

Further, these verses remind me to hope in the purpose that God has in whatever I'm going through. He has brought so many amazing opportunities into my life that I never would have had if He hadn't blessed me with a disability. He allowed me to play wheelchair basketball for 11 years, through which I gained many amazing friends! He also blessed me with opportunities to encourage teammates and other athletes with the truth and example of what it means to be transformed by the gospel. I didn't do it perfectly by any means, but I trust that God worked through me during my time in wheelchair basketball. God has also given me many opportunities to speak at different events about my thoughts on disability and how God has blessed me through it. God has taught me patience in the times when my disability has made life more challenging. He has sanctified me through my disability and I've definitely learned to trust Him more!

God has used all of these things to shape my eternal perspective. The sovereignty of God gives my disability a purpose. If God were not sovereign, disability and suffering would be pointless. So I cling to the hope that the God who spoke the universe into existence spoke these "slight, momentary afflictions" into my life for my good.

Disability and suffering and I exist for the glory of God. I pray that in times of suffering and times of pleasure, my life would magnify the One who "died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Corinthians 5:15)."

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