

A long-time active supporter of Pro-life, Pastor Harry Bicknell of Summit Drive Baptist Church, spoke on "Redemption Through Suffering" at our 2017 dinner. Because he was so well received by our guests, we are printing excerpts from his presentation for your review. You can find the full text on our website.

Redemption Through Suffering

First of all, I think you all know something about the redemptive side of suffering whether it be physical or emotional suffering. Can you not all say that pain, whether physical or emotional, has had a positive effect on you? At the very least, can you not say, "I have known someone who has suffered greatly yet has come through suffering a better, a deeper, and a more profound person?"

I think many of you know Bishop Monroe who grew even deeper in his faith through what he suffered at the hands of a disturbed man. His response may have been the greatest sermon he ever preached.

Personally, I have not suffered a lot of physical pain but I do know something about emotional pain. For example, I think that I am speaking for a dozen or so priests and pastors when I say that 99.9% of their congregations are absolutely delightful. However the 0.1% can be very difficult – they cause you to lose sleep, they cause you to be upset, their words hurt you, their critical spirit may cause you to think, 'Lord, can I do something else for my career.' But, but, but, the point 0.1% also cause us to pray, to forgive, to confess our sins, to listen, and to truly love. Yes, they can be used of God to make you into the person God has called you to be.

Furthermore, many of you would say that the Bible makes it very clear that suffering can have a very positive effect on our lives. As we read in Romans 5: 3-4: "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (W)e can (glory in our sufferings) because, as the apostle Paul says, suffering produces perseverance, "the ability to keep going in difficult times." Furthermore,character leads to hope. "Yes the confidence that God will see us through."

In our congregation we have a wonderful young lady...around 30 years of age, who is confined to a wheelchair. She is very fragile. It is very difficult for her to communicate. Life for her has been so very difficult. However, if you spend any time getting to know her, you sense that you are in the presence of a very special person. One thing for sure, you never sense that she is unhappy with her life. She has completed two university degrees. She has written two books and one of those books is a book of poems, which reads much like that Old Testament book of Psalms. When speaking with her you experience a warm, beautiful smile and you leave

thinking that this young lady has a relationship with God that is deep and oh so intimate. Is there a redemptive side to suffering? I would believe that this lady would say there is.

This past winter, a man who had been abusive to his wife sought her out to apologize to her. It had taken him 25 years to get him to the place where he would apologize. How did he come to that place? In part, if not in whole, it was because of a recreational skiing accident that left him in significant pain. Oh yes, people have been praying for him for years and he is now in his mid-sixties when we tend to be more reflective about our lives. But I really do believe it was ongoing physical pain that humbled this man to turn to God and, yes, apologize for his abusive behaviour. Is there a redemptive side to suffering? I do believe so.

...I will close with a quote from C.S. Lewis:
“God whispers to us in our pleasures. Speaks to us in our conscience. And shouts to us in our pain. Yes pain is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (The Problem of Pain, 1940)

And so I pray, Lord give us ears to hear you in our pleasures. And yes allow pain and suffering to accomplish your perfect work in our hearts. In the name of Jesus, who suffered for us so that we may experience the redemptive side of his sufferings, Amen.