



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

I'd Give My Right Leg... (Part 2 - James 1:2, 3)

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In part 1 of this study, I shared my experience of having my right leg amputated below the knee earlier this year. Through all of the uncertainty and questions, the one constant that has never wavered has been God's loving presence. I'm hopeful that my story will help others to see suffering as a path to joy and not bitterness, of drawing closer to God and not anger.

The first three points we looked at last time were 1) The Perspective is Backwards ("Count it all joy"), 2) The People Are Believers ("my brothers") and 3) The Pain Is Bound to Happen ("when you meet trials of various kinds"). Let's look at the other phrases in this text.

James 1:2, 3 - Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

IV. THE PREPARATION IS BUILDING ("FOR YOU KNOW")

Many people think they've got it figured out and know how to look at life. Sometimes their worldview leaves God out completely. Sometimes they include God, but live and think as if they don't. This verse says "for you know". **Where** do we go to find out what we should know? And **what** do we need to know? Once we figure out what we should know, what difference should it make?

When you are receiving God's Word, you are preparing for your suffering in the future. When you read and meditate from your Bible each day, your preparation is building. When you hear a sermon or attend a prayer meeting or a small group or any exposure to Scripture— you are preparing to suffer later.

I thought about this a lot over the past few months. I don't remember every word of every sermon I ever heard, but I know that all the years of choosing to let God's Word wash over my mind and change the way I think impacted how I responded to losing my leg.

Let me encourage you to keep preparing. The Word of God gets us ready to suffer well when the time comes.

V. THE PICTURE IS BIG ("THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH")

These trials are not a testing of our will, our fortitude or our tolerance of pain. Our faith is tested. How you look at God will come out when your faith is tested. How you consider other people will come out. Where you turn for help and comfort will come out.

When we suffer, we have to see the big picture. Our tendency is to focus on the little picture. We focus on us – our pain, our situation, our finances, our inconvenience, our struggle. There are things that we need to give attention to in our trials to take care of ourselves, but if we are too engrossed in ourselves, that's a small picture.

We saw my illness as an opportunity to reflect Christ to people we never would have met any other way. When a nurse told us, with tears, that her husband had lost his job, we cried with her. That had a huge impact on her and she wants to bring her family to our church. When a doctor said that the infection in my foot was the worst he had ever seen and he couldn't understand why it stayed confined to the foot and didn't spread through my body, we could tell him that we knew why – we had hundreds of people praying for healing and God was answering those prayers.

Staying focused on our problems creates a small picture. When our faith gets tested by trials, see the big picture and point others to Christ.

VI. THE PURPOSE IS BLESSING ("PRODUCES STEADFASTNESS")

Have you ever wanted to ask God why? Here's why. It's right here in black and white. God wants to bless us and mature us. Yes it hurts. Yes it's hard. No, we wouldn't choose it. But our Father wants to make us like Him – steadfast, patient, longsuffering.

The word "blessing" has been said so much in our home since April. God is teaching us patience and steadfastness. I want to walk, but not yet. I want to drive, but not yet. I want to get off so many pills, but not yet. But our patience is growing and that's a blessing.

I can honestly say today that I have not asked God "why" during any of this, to His glory. There have been too many blessings to get frustrated or bitter or angry or confused, again to His glory.

The suffering that I'm facing will get better – there have been amazing advances in prosthetics and I will be able to do a lot more in the coming months. I'll be able to get back to Annapolis eventually and serve the political community again, walking those halls – I can't wait. But I know some people are suffering in ways that won't get better. I feel blessed that I will improve.

You all have been a big part of that blessing. Several from the capitol community prayed, sent cards and emails and let others know about my situation. We have been overwhelmed with our church stepping up meet the needs of a member of the body who was hurting. Love

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was shown in so many ways: ramps built on our deck, meals, mowing, and taking care of our daughter. The thoughtfulness of the church has blessed us. God's purpose in suffering is blessing.

Through this whole process I have sung a lot of songs to myself that mean so much more to me now than before. One of these is an old Swedish hymn titled "Day by Day".¹

¹ Words by Lina Sandell (translated by A. L. Skoog)

Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find, to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear.
He Whose heart is kind beyond all measure
Gives unto each day what He deems best—
Lovingly, it's part of pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

Every day, the Lord Himself is near me
With a special mercy for each hour;
All my cares He fain would bear, and cheer me,
He Whose Name is Counselor and Power;
The protection of His child and treasure
Is a charge that on Himself He laid;
"As thy days, thy strength shall be in measure,"
This the pledge to me He made.

Help me then in every tribulation
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,
That I lose not faith's sweet consolation
Offered me within Thy holy Word.
Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting,
E'er to take, as from a father's hand,
One by one, the days, the moments fleeting,
Till I reach the promised land.

Life has changed drastically for my family and me, but what an opportunity we have ahead! We will see God in new ways and learn new lessons we didn't learn before. Our suffering will serve us. It will be a means to drawing closer to our loving Lord Who will make all things perfect someday. To be blessed like this, I'd give my right leg.