



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

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THE PROBLEM OF PAIN AND ITS MANAGEMENT - A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Origin of Pain

Pain and suffering is part and parcel of human existence. There are only two periods recorded in the Bible when there is no pain on earth. The first was at the time of creation, in the Garden of Eden when all was bliss and beautiful. It lasted until Adam fell. The second period is when God ushers in the new heaven and new earth when **"neither shall there be any more pain"** (**Revelation 21:4**). In both these two periods there was and will be no death, and when there is no death there is no pain.

Pain is part of the dying process. Death is the consequence of sin. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 15:55**, **"The sting of death is sin..."** With sin, death is painful (it stings). God's judgement on our sin of disobedience, starting with Adam, is not just spiritual death and separation, but also physical death - **"for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"** (**Genesis 3:19**). Sickness and the slow decay of our bodies, whether it be arthritis, heart disease or senility is the sure evidence of this dying process and in its wake, pain.

All of us are familiar with physical pain. But not many of us are familiar with spiritual pain - the pain of sinning against a holy God and the subsequent separation from Him. We can understand a little of it in our Lord's experience on the cross. There was total darkness in the last three hours as our Lord hung on the cross, and for once and only once, He was separated from His Father as He bore the brunt of God's fierce wrath on the sins of man. That momentary separation caused the Son to cry out, **"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"** (**Mark 15:33-34**). When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, we too can sense the pain and deep contrition in his confession (**Psalms 51**). The grief of our sinful self and the sins that we commit day after day strikes at the core of our inner being as we recognise our total depravity and need for forgiveness and mercy from our Heavenly Father.

The apostle Paul elaborated further when he said in **Romans 8:22, 23**,

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"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the...

adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Pain is synonymous with suffering, sorrow or anguish. Paul used the word 'travaileth' which is commonly used to describe childbirth. The mother groans in pain but when the baby is born the sorrow is turned to joy. So also now we suffer in pain in the flesh, waiting for that joyful moment when our earthly body will be redeemed. As Christians we suffer together with all mankind the pain and suffering of this earthly existence. But a day awaits us when pain will vanish as our perishable body put on the imperishable and the mortal put on immortality.

What is the Purpose of Pain?

Does pain serve any purpose? Pain is a signal that something has gone wrong. Without pain someone with a slipped disc may continue to carry heavy loads and further aggravate his condition. Pain is useful, and we should heed its warning. A lady with a constant headache may indicate stress at her working place and should probably take a vacation. Similarly a child with abdominal pain may signal acute appendicitis and not go to school but see a doctor. Whatever the cause, symptoms of pain cause us to slow down, seek medical advice and adjust our lifestyle accordingly. Sometimes we may be driving on the fast lane for too long and have not got time to sit down to pause and ponder. Pain is one way to stop us on our track. CS Lewis used to say, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Shall we ask God to remove the pain?

If the pain is indicative of a medical condition, our first reaction is to seek medical advice. Once the condition is treated the pain should go away. If there is no detectable cause and the pain persists, and medicine did not really help, what should we do? Do we ask God to remove that 'useless' pain? Paul faced the same problem with his 'thorn in the flesh.' We are not certain what it really was but it bothered him and he prayed thrice that God will remove it. But God did not. Instead God told him ***"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"*** (2 Corinthians 12:9). Someone also rightly said 'do not ask for easy task, but ask for strength to equal the task.' In the same way, we ask God for strength and grace to endure the pain that comes our way. You may ask, "If God is good and all powerful, why does He allow His creatures to suffer pain?" Can pain be simply answered by the Fall of man? For centuries Christians have been perplexed by this problem. Even...

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now there is no solution to this difficult problem.

Example of Job

The book of Job is a classic example of pain and suffering. Through Satan's instigation, God allowed him to suffer loss of his possessions, his family and finally his health. Not once did he get angry with God although he suffered much. Let's hear what he said,

".... the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1: 21)

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him..." (Job 13: 15).

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

Job taught us one important lesson - that despite pain and suffering we can continue to remain faithful to God. Even when God allows Satan to away everything, including the very thing that we hold dear - our loved ones, our own health, we can still remain true to Him. Our faith in God rest not and should not be dependant on His blessings alone. Even if He takes away all His blessings from our lives, we can remain steadfast and immovable. Job passed the test and proved Satan wrong. However, his wife did not do so well. She could not take the loss, and in her anger she asked his husband to curse God and die. She typifies those who associate God with only the good things in life. ***"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2: 10).***

Yet pain is not all evil. It becomes evil when man device the most hideous ways to inflict pain and suffering upon his fellowmen as we see in torture.

Understanding Pain

All of us go through some form of pain in life. But pain is more than just physical. Man experience what we call 'total pain' - every aspect of his being can be affected by any traumatic event. A mother who losses her child in an accident will be overwhelmed with emotional and psychological pain. The outpouring of grief, denial and guilt can be worse than physical pain. A man with advanced HIV faces a grim future of loneliness and rejection by family members and friends. This psychological pain may lead on to despair, depression and suicide.

Pain is a very complex subject because it is a very subjective and personal experience. No one can really feel the pain of another person since pain embodies not just the physical component but as we have seen, also the emotional, mental and even the spiritual component. For the same insult,...

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two different persons may exhibit different responses. Many factors can influence a person's perception and reaction to pain. Fear, depression, previous experience, race and culture can all colour his response to a painful insult. We have seen many fretful children screaming in pain following an injection, whilst on the other hand many a brave kid of the same age have endured the same procedure with courage and great fortitude.

Pain is now monitored as closely as the temperature, pulse or blood pressure. A pain scoring system is used with the person in pain assessing his own pain score. With this method, doctors and nurses know whether he is in pain and when to treat it. At the same time they know whether the treatment given is effective. This is a very simple way of managing physical pain.

Management of Pain

Broadly, pain can be divided into acute or chronic.

Acute Pain

Acute pain is common and we associate it with trauma or accidents, surgery or conditions like heart attack, appendicitis and even childbirth. The pain does not last very long although the sufferer likes to think that it is never-ending. Generally it will gradually subside as the condition improves or the wound heals. If the pain is not too severe, any common pain-killer like paracetamol is effective. (This drug must be used with caution because overdose can lead to liver failure). If the pain is severe much stronger drugs like morphine may have to be used. People tend to be afraid of this drug because of the fear of addiction. If it is used for a short period, this problem should not arise. The disadvantage of such strong drugs is the side effects which can be quite troublesome. Interestingly, some people would rather have the pain than the side effects.

Chronic Pain

A small percentage of people with acute pain continue to have pain that lingers on for a long time although the condition causing the initial pain has recovered. It has developed into what we call chronic pain. Treatment is more difficult, and may need to go on for a long time, sometimes for years. Common chronic pain conditions include low backache, cervical spondylosis causing neck and shoulder pain, osteoarthritis of the knees, chronic abdominal or pelvic pain and migraine. As they may have to live with the pain for the rest of their lives some of them develop depression, insomnia and even suicidal thoughts. Treatment therefore of chronic pain needs to take into consideration these issues. It makes treatment a lot more difficult but at the same time more challenging.

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Pain that disturbs sleep must be treated as prolonged sleep deprivation can give rise to a whole new set of problems. Those with chronic pain are encouraged to remain active and functional, to prevent them from sliding into a state of despondency and depression. The support and understanding of both the medical team and family members is very important in the care of this special group of people. A wide range of drugs has been used to treat chronic pain, and in recent years pain specialists are resorting to interventional procedures to complement drug therapy.

Cancer Pain

Cancer can also cause pain. Since those with cancer now live longer because of better drugs, more of them are also experiencing pain. The pain from cancer can be the result of the spread or from the treatment itself. The severity of the pain varies. Doctors tend to be more aggressive treating cancer pain than non-cancer pain because the pain do intensify. Another reason is that doctors want to make their remaining days more comfortable. Those with advanced stage are usually given morphine. Those with intractable pain are treated with special techniques that destroy the nerves or high dose radiotherapy to shrink the tumour. Cancer victims now need not die in pain but with dignity.

Treatment of pain would be incomplete without the help of support groups like the nurses, physiotherapist, medical social worker, occupational or vocational therapist and in the case of the Christian, his pastor and members of the church. All do play their roles in helping him along the journey of pain. For those with cancer pain so much is needed to offer strength, courage, hope and comfort in the final days of his life on earth. We are reminded that as we do it to the least of these our brethren, we do it unto the Lord Jesus (Matthew 25:34-40).

Conclusion

There is no intellectual solution to the complex pain problem. God remains sovereign even as the whole world reels in pain, either through sickness, wars, calamities or man's cruelty to one another. For those who suffer silently in pain, there is a Great Resource of strength, comfort and hope Who will help us weather through the storm of pain with patience, courage, sufficient grace and comfort. One day there will be no more pain in heaven where we will ever be with the Lord (Revelation 21:4).

*Dr Low Tut Choon, Maranatha B-P Church, S'pore
(adapted from Maranatha Messenger 17 February 2008)*

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON
CHURCH THEME: WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR
AND TREMBLING. (Philippians 2:12)

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 24/02/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 02/03/2008</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day.
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	Jonathan Kim	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Pr Gervase Charmley	Pr Mark Chen	
<i>Message:</i>	Looking Unto Jesus	The Prize You Should Seek	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Text:</i>	Hebrews 12:1-2	Luke 12:29-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome: We would like to welcome Pr Gervase Charmley, our speaker for this Lord's Day. • Eld Jack Ford: Eld Ford sends his warmest regards to the congregation. He is currently recuperating at a residential home in Woking. If you would like to contact him, please see Jonathan to obtain the home's contact details. • No Sunday School: Please note that there will be no Sunday School next Lord's Day, 2 Mar. • Memory Verse Exercise: The 2007 memory verse review exercise is due this week. For those who have completed the exercise, please e-mail them to Pr Mok. • Church Easter Camp – 21 to 24 Mar: The speaker will be Ps Jeff O'Neil. More details will be made available later. If you would like to assist with the logistics of the camp, please inform Anthony. Registration forms are now available. Please register by 16 Mar. • Journey Mercies: Pray for those who are away on travel. Also, continue to pray Pr Mok and Carol who are away in S'pore. Pr Mok will be speaking at Evangel B-P Church, M'sia this Lord's Day.
<i>Organist:</i>	Grace	Anthony	
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	Pr Mark Chen	John Poh	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Pr Gervase Charmley	Pr Mark Chen	
<i>Message:</i>	Idols and the True God	Backsliding Well	
<i>Text:</i>	Isaiah 46:1-4	Psalms 119:176	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Sophia	Joy	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 24/02/2008</i>	<i>Next Week: 02/03/2008</i>	
<i>Ushers</i>	Josiah/Sharon	Wah Soon/Evelyn	
<i>Sunday Sch:</i>	Esmeralda	No Class	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Constance	Constance	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	DHW Class	DHW Class	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 29 Feb	7:00pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Led by Pr Mark Chen	
Sat 1 Mar	4.00 pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Jonathan Kim	
Last Week's Worship Service Collections			
Offering:	£522.35	Book Sales: £2.00	
		Lunch: £31.45	
Memory Verse			
<i>Last Week (Feb 08 Wk 3): Psalm 1:5</i>			
Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.			
<i>This Week (Feb 08 Wk 4): Psalm 1:6</i>			
For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.			