

YOUR PAIN CAN BE YOUR VICTORY!



Part II

There is a strange but predictable thing that happens in the human mind during challenging times. It is something of a spiritual calculus that seeks to measure the ratio of divine love to human anguish.

By all human calculation, the greater my comfort with life, the greater my certainty that God knows and loves me; the greater

my pain and struggle, the less confidence I have that He is concerned with my welfare.

But that's so wrong! Human circumstances have never been a reliable index either to a person's spiritual status in God's eyes or to their value to God.

For more than a dozen years, Joseph was either a slave or a prisoner in a country where he had no civil rights and no legal protection. By the calculus of our time and place, anything beyond a few days or couple weeks of suffering would be taken as solid proof that God had abandoned Joseph.

Job lost his fortune, his health and his friends. By the rule of inverse ratio of divine love to human comfort, God had forgotten that good man. A faith-filled prayer should have healed him. That it didn't could be taken as incontrovertible evidence for God's failure in Job's life – perhaps even his nonexistence.

Tamar was raped. Samson was betrayed by a woman he was determined to trust. Ruth's husband 'died' and she had to fend for herself in a male-dominated culture. The unnamed man in John 9 was born blind. Prophets and martyrs of the church were put in dungeons, thrown to wild animals and forced to watch their children be murdered.

If the relationship between divine concern and human comfort really holds, not one person in the paragraph above was the object of God's love.

For that matter, what would you think of a child born before his parents had been married nine months, shuttled from pillar to post during infancy and forced to grow up under circumstances that would be with Him for His entire life? Then suppose He died young – the victim of an unjust legal system?

If the alignment of God's love and our good fortune are necessary to faith, the paragraph above means that Jesus should have renounced the whole spiritual enterprise.

There is absolutely no correlation between your circumstance today and God's faithful love. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, your situation may be only a period of discipline

prior to entering the Promised Land. Like Paul's thorn in the flesh, it may be your invitation to experience God's grace at a deeper level. It's important to be clear on something this basic, for what you think about His attitude toward you will dictate yours toward God.

There are pains of all kinds. Physical trauma, broken relationships, failed ventures, consequences of wrongs done – all are different and yet all the same. And each of us has to decide about quitting, playing to the pain, or working through.

As you're deciding what to do with yours, think about this-true courage isn't just outlasting difficulty but turning it into triumph.