

Will You Receive This Splinter From My Cross? & When is Prayer Fervent??

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Good evening, YouTube family.

It's good to be back with you. In my last video, *When God is Quiet and It's Not Your Fault* we touched on two concepts that I feel the Holy Spirit wants me to go deeper with.

The first one is the meaning of the Lord's instruction to those who would follow him - deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me. Here, He was referring to the Roman manner of execution. Obviously, He was not talking about a literal death, but more of a daily death to self, a new way of thinking - not thinking of ourselves, but thinking of others.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. Matthew 16:25

This points to a whole new way of living. After giving our lives to the Lord, He is now in charge of everything that happens to us and we're no longer living just for ourselves, but for Him and His mission. His entire heart is to see the lost, saved - and the saved, sanctified in holiness of life. When He told us to pick up our cross and follow him, He was extending an invitation: join Me in the work of redemption. Some would argue that all of that is already accomplished and has no need of our help.

But Paul wrote, I am glad when I suffer for you in my body, for I am participating in the sufferings of Christ that continue for His body, the church. Colossians 1:24

So, it's obvious that there's an ongoing suffering for not only the Lord, but for the believer who's carrying a cross. So, when we gave our lives to the Lord, we embraced it, took up our cross and in carrying it, we receive a share of sufferings on behalf of His Body, the Church. We've learned that when we agree to pray for someone, there's some kind of burden added to our cross. We are to follow the example of the Lord, who gave His life for us on the Cross. He could have done it all for all time, but His great desire for His creation is to see the love in each of us - the love that we have for Him and for our brother and our willingness to help in His work, even to the point of losing our life, that His work might be completed through us.

In the twenty-two years we've been married, we've seen this dynamic over and over again. One of us will be sailing along with the wind at our backs and the other, through unavoidable circumstances, will be trudging up a slippery mountain of mud, struggling every single step of the way. Then the roles will reverse. Even as I'm speaking this tonight, Ezekiel is suffering with a health issue that would not remove itself, even after I prayed for him. Now, many times he's instantly healed when I pray, but when the Lord is adding a burden to our cross, prayer has little or no effect other than to strengthen us to persevere.

The Lord gave us a foreshadowing of this dynamic when His cross became too much to bear and the Roman soldiers met a man from Cyrene named Simon and they forced him to carry the Cross.

Matthew 27:32

I used to think carrying my cross had to do with my daily duties, inconveniences, unexpected illnesses and all the trials that come with life and raising four children. But now my understanding has been expanded and I see that I'm participating in the work of the Cross with Jesus in my own life daily. He's allowing me to demonstrate my love for Him by relieving burdens of those I'm praying for or even mystically for world conditions. There are times when a tremendous heaviness overshadows both Ezekiel and I. It may go on for days. It may lay us down flat on our backs, almost unable to move but we know it's the Lord's pain for what's taking place in the world. He has shared with us just a sliver from His Cross. Whether it be the neighbor who's just gone for an abortion after all of our prayers for her or the poor in a third world country where women and children were brutally murdered.

For in Him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28

Well, He may not enlighten our understanding as to the reasons for these burdens, lest we swell with pride. Nonetheless, He's sharing with us another sliver of His Cross. It even seems to me that the mother of Jesus was suffering terribly when He was in the garden. And I would not be at all surprised to learn that the cup of liquid given Him by the angel to strengthen Him were the tears of Mary, for surely she laid her life on the altar alongside her son's. She consented. She supported because she knew what His mission was. I'm sure that it cost her dearly. And this ties into my second point.

Prayer does not have to be well-formed sentences or even words to be fervent. Fervent is defined as passionate, intense, vehement, ardent, sincere and heartfelt. For years I beat myself up for not having long, emotional prayers even though the prayers were many times answered and it is written that,

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:16

These prayers escaping our hearts and mouths without even a word formed are nothing less than flames of brotherly love rising up to the altar of heaven and supplication begging mercy.

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. Romans 8:26

Although here, Scriptures referring to the utterances of the Holy Spirit from within us, who is to say that these groans for those in dire need are not linked to the sentiments of our Holy Spirit? There are those who would argue that Jesus doesn't suffer anymore. But knowing my Lord as I do, I have seen Him cry and I know He suffers with every human being, every animal and creature on this Earth that He created. If they suffer, He suffers. He's not some cosmic force, some non-human, distant and detached as some religions depict him. No, we're made in His image and He is far more compassionate and tender than we can possibly comprehend. His ways are higher than the heavens. Our's crawl along blindly in the dust to a spinning ball. There's simply no comparison to His sufferings over human tragedy every single hour of the day. How can anyone say that He no longer suffers when an unborn child is cut piece by piece out of its mother's womb?

So, when we see suffering and our spirit recoils in pain, our prayer has already ascended to Heaven. The very sigh of consternation is itself a complete statement and a petition for the Lord to arise and relieve that suffering. So, no longer do I condemn myself for not praying eloquently for others or shedding tears and travailing. Simple truth is that ache in my heart is a loud cry to Heaven for the Lord to come and deliver that soul. We can be bound by legalisms now to what constitutes prayer, what we witnessed in mature prayer group leaders, and impose those standards on ourselves. But the simple truth, is a

fervent prayer of the righteous is a cry to Heaven that moves upon the heart of a tender God and very often nothing further needs to embellish that cry.

I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't travail in prayer, or be more specific, or persevere till we feel a release. Each situation is different and there are times for travail and times for perseverance as well. I'm only saying that prayer escapes our hearts without even our intentional consent. And when that happens, I believe the Lord graciously gives us a burden to carry for that soul. It could be a toothache, a flat tire, an accident, a feeling of exhaustion, an unexpected bill that causes concern. It can take any form at all, as long as it is for us a suffering. This again ties into carrying our daily cross.

So, my point is simply, don't be surprised if you become aware of a situation that grieves your heart and simultaneously you find yourself in the midst of unexpected problems. It could very well be the Lord permitting you to carry a burden on your cross for your brother or sister, and I'm not the least bit surprised if inconveniences just spring up out of the ground for no reason at all. I recognize them as splinters of the Lord's cross that He's graciously sharing with me. As He is seeing my response in cooperation to carry this new burden of love for Him and my brother, His heart is moved to greater and greater compassion and soon the soul is relieved of their trial through the mercy of God and our Lord is deeply edified that we would give up our life for a complete stranger. By these acts, we resemble Him more and more. And when the Lord comes for His Bride who will He be looking for? The very ones who carried the splinters from His Cross, for they will resemble him.

God bless you, Youtube family and thank you for listening.