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No Pain no Gain: The Value of Redemptive Suffering through Christ

A Commentary by Jason Curry



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No one likes pain. Aside from masochists who enjoy experiencing pain, individuals even companies in America spend a lot of time and money developing products designed to help people cope with or avoid pain. When we develop headaches or backaches, we may take aspirin to avoid physical pain. If we expect to interact with difficult people, we may seek to distance ourselves from them in order to avoid emotional or psychological pain. Recently, a colleague told me that his goal in life was to be happy; therefore, he stated that we should necessarily avoid people, places and things that may cause us to be uncomfortable or in pain. His argument for pursuing opportunities that only provide us with pleasure was somewhat compelling, but I knew that it didn't completely square with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Indeed, we should definitely pursue the fruits of the spirit like "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

(Galatians 5:22-23)," but the bible also tells us that there is also value in long-suffering (1 Corinthians 13:4), enduring hardship like a good soldier (2 Timothy 2:3), bearing one's cross (Luke 14:27), persevering (Romans 15:4), sacrificing for a friend (Luke 5:17-20) and loving one's enemies (Matthew 5:44). In order to help those in need and to gain a closer walk with Jesus, Christians will have to voluntarily suffer from time to time. However, Paul states: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17)." In other words, without experiencing any pain, there is no way to gain a closer walk with God.

Aries Merritt proved that he was one of the best hurdlers in the world when he won the 110 meter hurdles at the 2012 Olympics in London. In his interview following the race, Mr. Merritt said that had to overcome a "multitude" of injuries in his career. He persevered through his

suffering, and he eventually won a gold medal. As followers of the Suffering Servant (Jesus Christ), we must be willing to suffer to fulfill the mission of the church (The Great Commission - Matthew 28:19-20), and to become more Christ-like in our walk (1 John 1:7) and talk (James 3:1-18). Our suffering may be associated with finding the strength to fast, the faith to tithe, the time to pray or the desire to help others. However, our suffering for the teaching, preaching, spreading and living of the gospel will always have meaning or redemptive value because it will help us to gain a closer relationship with God. We give thanks for the temporary pain that helps us to gain a closer walk with God.