

Dancing Into Suffering

As He was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples questioned Him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man sinned nor his parents," Jesus answered. "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him."
– John 9:1-3 HCSB

There were once two great scholars. One, Eli, was a renowned biblical scholar, who was famous for his grasp of textual criticism and ancient languages. However, he rarely attended church and did not submit his life to the teachings he so assiduously studied.

The other, Simon, was known for his ability to apply the Scriptures. He had acquired and surpassed knowledge, understanding, discernment and finally achieved true wisdom.

Eli spent most of his life surrounded by dusty books and had little to do with people. Simon, who understood that the point of the Scriptures was to reconcile humanity to the One, surrounded himself with people. Because of this, he became greatly loved.

One day, Eli came across Simon who was (as usual) surrounded by a great throng of people. Eli asked him, "Why are you adoringly surrounded, while I remain almost completely ignored? My knowledge of the Word is just as great as yours."

Simon answered, "If the Lord of Hosts asks you to suffer, you respond 'What? Suffer? Why me?' Jehovah must drag you kicking and screaming to your test. But when the Master asks me to suffer, I respond 'Lord what would you have me learn by this lesson?' Because I know that everything comes from His loving hand and that even suffering has its own unique lessons, I can, if needed, go into the greatest pits of pain and evil dancing and singing with delight. That joy of the Lord attracts others to God."

Suffering is a valuable tool. James teaches, *Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.*¹

Many will tell you that if only you will follow them, you will achieve health, wealth and success – "Your Best Life Now!" But our Master suffered. Are we wiser than He? The apostle Paul suffered and was told to rely on God's grace. Even the Psalmist said we would be led through the valley of the shadow of death and have to eat in the presence of our enemies.² If Christianity is all about getting rich, having stuff, and never getting sick, what was the cost of discipleship that Christ kept warning us about?³ Sometimes God teaches us through success. Sometimes He teaches through failure. Either way, we need to gratefully accept His Way and dance forward into whatever lies ahead.

¹ James 1:2-4 HCSB

² Psalm 23

³ Matthew 4:20; 8:20; 16:24; Mark 1:16-17; 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; John 1:40-46 cp Matthew 28:19