

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, July 2, 2016

For some time now I've been dealing with pain. The sharp pain shooting down my right leg has been excruciating at times. It's amazing how a slight narrowing in the discs in the lumbar region can cause so much discomfort. Pain comes in many packages and in each form it can easily cause debilitation and distraction. It certainly has slowed me down these past few weeks, but I've been able to accomplish quite a bit with the help of a few ibuprofen tablets each day. So, let's talk about dealing with pain.

Pain is prevalent in all of our lives. There's the pain associated with childbirth. One of my dear friends has been through eight knee surgeries. Frankly, I should let him contribute to this discussion, since he's certainly been through more than his share of pain in recent years. Pain is not only physical, but oftentimes it can take the form of mental anguish. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) fits the bill. So do the variety of addictions under the sun. Depression can be dismal and leave a person with feelings of hopelessness. Fortunately, there's one way to deal with pain that I know can help us get a handle with whatever comes into our life!

Unfortunately, I've seen personal friends and others I've known take things into their own hands. Some people just don't feel capable of dealing with their pain and simply give up on life. They may not end it all by jumping off a bridge as I experienced with one dear gentleman years ago, but they often secretly determine their personal way out. Such actions don't solve anything and all it does is leave more pain behind for others to experience. In my opinion, nothing warrants such drastic action and I know God is not pleased when we give up on our precious lives.

For me, it always starts with prayer and realizing that God has a purpose in whatever I'm going through. I don't need to know what His purpose might be. I simply need to realize that He's in control and continues to work on making me more in the image of His Son. "No pain, no gain!" cannot be found in scripture, but there is much truth found in that short phrase. Put differently, I believe with the pains of life we can and will find much to gain. I truly believe that God allows us to go through certain circumstances in order to help us mature spiritually and draw closer to Him. That's been my experience and I imagine you may well relate to similar observations in your personal journey.

As we deal with pain, our natural tendency is to plea that it would subside, but it seldom does quickly. Perhaps it would pass faster if we'd learn from it more quickly. Then again, Paul asked the Lord to take a certain thorn from his side only to have the Lord tell him that His grace was sufficient and it appears that Paul lived with this particular affliction the remainder of his time on the earth. (II Corinthians 12:7-10) Therefore, as Christians we can easily make a case to simply accept our condition and go on with the hardships that come our way knowing that His grace truly is sufficient and we need nothing else. I consider this as I'm now learning to deal with my latest affliction from a totally new perspective. "Yes Lord, I humbly admit that Your grace is sufficient for this follower of Christ," and I trust that His grace will be sufficient for you as well!

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Job 42:1-6; Job 42:10; II Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 1:20; James 4:5-7

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Job 42:1-6 New International Version (NIV)

42 Then Job replied to the LORD:

2 "I know that you can do all things;

no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?'

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.

4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak;

I will question you,
and you shall answer me.'

5 My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.

6 Therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes."

Job 42:10 New International Version (NIV)

10 After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 New International Version (NIV)

7 or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. **8** Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. **9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. **10** That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Philippians 1:20 New International Version (NIV)

20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

James 4:5-7 New International Version (NIV)

5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? **6** But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.