

WARM UP |

There's so much suffering, pain and heartache in the world today that one could easily be tempted to follow the herd instinct and cynically ask the question, "If God is a God of love, how can He sit in heaven and allow innocent people to suffer such pain and die horrible deaths?"

This side of the grave, we may not have an adequate answer to such questions. But this one thing I do know, and Chuck Swindoll put it well when he said, "**Pain plants the flag of reality in every rebel heart.**"

BACKGROUND |

Satan inflicts pain and suffering to bring about discouragement and depression, but God allows him to do it and turns a **curse into a blessing.**

If we keep focussing on the pain or affliction, and what we **haven't got**, our vision will soon become blurred and we'll fail to appreciate what we **have got**. God is sovereign and sees a far broader picture than our immediate pain. He has a well thought out blueprint for our lives, and often uses afflictions to implement His plan.



READ | Romans 5:3-4

QUESTIONS |

- 1 In view of this scripture in Romans 5:3-4 discuss how you feel sufferings turned out to be God's greatest evangelical tool. Give personal experiences of how this has happened in your own life.



A BF (Typical) AD

- 2 At one time Paul was flogged 39 times, he was chained and thrown into jail for his faith, but even as he writes the Epistle of Philippians from a prison cell, he makes a profound statement. What is it? Reflect on Paul's attitude towards his sufferings in Philippians 1:12-14. Discuss why he said that instead of complaining, he would rather boast of his sufferings and weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

- 3 In Acts 12:1-5 observe how James and Peter's sufferings motivated the church even more. What happened in verse 24 of this chapter?

MY RESPONSE AS A PROMISE KEEPER |

What do I need to apply from what I have learned from this study?

IT'S TIME FOR PRAYER |

CONSIDER THIS |

In July 1967, at the age of 17, Joni Eareckson broke her neck, leaving her a quadriplegic. She has had to rely on caregivers to feed her, wash her body and even blow her nose. She tried to commit suicide many times, but could not even do that by herself. But Joni has said that if it wasn't for that diving accident and the struggles she has had to endure, she doubts whether she would even be a Christian today. What the devil used for evil in her life, God turned around and used for good. When Joni cried out to God in frustration and desperation, "Lord, if I can't die, show me how to live!" that's when things started to change. Today this remarkable woman has her own radio program to encourage the disabled, and heads up a worldwide ministry called Joni and Friends. Often God uses suffering as His greatest evangelical tool!

WRAP UP | Joni

Eareckson spoke on the Larry King Live TV program and said, "The weaker I became, the harder I had to lean on Him, and the harder I leaned on Him, the stronger I discovered Him to be." If you come to that place in your suffering, your tragedy will give birth to your greatest blessing!