

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



St. Paul's Mission, NE Washington

Striving Street - Suffering Boulevard

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As we adventure along Tribulation Trail, we have the gift of being able to blame other people for our situation. However, our accompaniment along Striving Street and Suffering Boulevard our usually limited to God and or the devil. Once you realize that God allows, or filters our encounters with Satan, it is easy to blame God for our troubles.

Now if the love of God is “higher than the highest mountain and deeper than the deepest sea,” then if we are content to only be the shallow person as we were born, we shall not taste the joy and wonder God has for us, individually and communally. This is a broadening of the concept in Matthew Chapter 7 to include Chapter 6 and the whole context of the Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7).

Come to think of it, I believe those higher and deeper lyrics are from a secular love song, but the shallow application still applies, perhaps more so.

I'm not very good at suffering, but I have noticed something over my years. It seems, at least in my own perspective, that God allows us to suffer in areas, we are good at. In areas where we have very little tolerance, God keeps it short and in control.

Two areas of a short suffering threshold which stick out in my life are sickness and automobiles. I've heard it is said by women, that men have a very low tolerance for sickness. You get no argument from me. A little sniffle and a slight fever and I become a pathetic mess. Consequently, I am seldom sick. I also have a very low tolerance for cars that don't work, and the same thing seems to apply, God has generally given me vehicles to drive that, as a rule, work quite well.

It seems in areas where I have more tolerance, or desire to overcome obstacles, I have to struggle much more. A general rule seems to apply, if the struggle will make me a deeper person, God allows me to struggle more. If my shallow temperament is not susceptible to positive change, there I remain. I

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really hate being sick, and I hate vehicles that demand attention. I absolutely have no desire to even begin to understand any depth building, that I might benefit from undergoing these struggles.

Not only do striving and suffering begin with "S," they are resident in the self of the individual personality. Even with the help of friends, this is an individual road to a fuller understanding of personal depth. Suffering and striving are also linked in that we strive to overcome our suffering. In this limited context, that is a good thing and is really the mechanism that God uses to grow our personal depth. That is what makes the NIV translation of Psalm 46:10 so frightening. "Cease striving and know I am God." The New King James and others translate it "Be still." But the concept to know God, without our utmost effort to overcome our circumstances, is truly a scary proposition. The whole of Psalm 46 does give us some understanding of that struggle however.

I think the concept of living only in today, is the most frightening aspect of Christian discipleship. It is one thing to give our testimony of what God has done in our lives. It is also easy to say that the Lord will come soon and rapture us to heaven. What is really, really, difficult is just to turn those times over to God and live today in this world so full of contradictions.

I had the opportunity to share with a United Airlines pilot Sunday, that one of the gifts God gave to me many years ago was the opportunity to get rid of my "Day Timer." The thought of losing one's well paying present life-style, especially with a family to support is a gift, that the Lord only provides, when we are able to realize, that God promises never to leave us in the present, or the future. Only when that is tested, and walked through, do we add the depth of Goldly, and Godly wisdom. I first tried to type Godly, but it came out Goldly, then with much difficulty adding Godly wisdom. That goldly depth is the refined gold of Revelation 3:18.

Frustrate is a transitive verb that keeps us from achieving our purpose, goal, or desire. Actually, by its very definition, frustrate is an intransitive verb, just not in the sense of English grammar. We do everything we can think of to change the daily circumstance and nothing seems to change.

Popular in the church is the saying "Let go, and let God." A more worldly take on this same term is "Go with the flow." However, both sayings seem to indicate that movement is taking place. Frustration is the striving and the suffering that takes place when nothing seems to change. No matter how you slice or dice these sayings there is a futility about them. What will be, will be, is the translation of a famous French proverb.

Fate leaves out both the personality of man, and more importantly the personality of God. Personality requires the option of choice in some context. The horse and the bridle metaphor comes to mind. God is the rider and we are the horse.

But man is not a horse, nor is he a sheep, even though certain aspects of those metaphors may sometimes be applicable. Men and women are created in the image of God and separated from horses, sheep, and old goats, by the nature of God's sovereign choice, to make us different from even monkeys and apes.

With God's choice, comes our choice, and the choices we make either lead to freedom or bondage. The complexity of personality however, means that the obvious free choice, leads to further bondage, and the choice that is perceived as bondage, leads to greater freedom.

How can that be? It makes no sense. Absolutely. That is why it is a learned behavior, learned by making many wrong choices, and only a few good ones. The gospel is one of those good choices that fits that paradigm. The ultimate eternal paradigm. But we for some reason seem to think that the mystery of the gospel is the only unique choice in our life. It is of course the choice that leads from death to life, from bondage to freedom. But having said that and received that, we for some reason believe that the rest of our decisions should remain true to the worldly understanding we were born with.

This past week has been a very frustrating time for me. From my perspective the only redeeming things seem to be that Wazzu beat UCLA to go to the Rose Bowl, and the Husky women's basketball team won another tournament in icy North Carolina. Those are my perceptions, and I had very little to do with either.

But the eternal choices I tried to make don't seem to amount to much right now, for they are not so much what I did, but what I didn't do. I did a number of things, but I left the results with God, until such time as He asks me to make some other decision along this path, if necessary. This is quite different from the striving nature that I still strongly possess. And I might add, to me much more difficult than just going full speed ahead.

So we are left with the concept of the choice of waiting on God. I have just written a couple of pages to get us to the point of a naturally unrealistic concept to wait on God, for Him to many times overcome my Striving Street, or my Suffering Boulevard. As best as I can explain it or have apprehended it at this time, is that waiting on God in time, gives us our only vision of an eternity where time is infinite. The growth of that waiting today, is required at least to give us a first glimpse of a deathless and free eternity. Nothing trains us to make the correct choice except trying to stand still in God's promises, which strangely is also known as walking in obedient faith, or walking with God.

From Wonder Springs

I emailed on Monday the local company that does small ship cruises and that I believe has the small ship I wanted to look at last spring. At this time I have not heard anything. Part of my frustration is that I have absolutely no concept of how this might work at all, other than a miracle. My goal is to strive for success, not wait on the LORD to do, and to win the battle. And even if the battle is won, I still have no concept of how to get a team in place to make it work. Please intercede for this request and the ability to understand and live in God's timing.