# Growing Through Pain

***SCRIPTURES***: 1 John 4:8, Romans 5:12, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4,Isaiah 53:3

Wednesday, October 2nd, 2002 started out pretty much like any other day for young Carlos Ramos, who was a seven year old boy at the time. Like any typical seven year old, he usually had two bookends to his days. The first was when he woke up in the morning and he got that first loving hug from his mom before he left for school. The second was very closely related; at the end of the day when he got a hug from his mom as he came home at the end of the school day.

Well, that day started out like pretty much every other one for Carlos, but the rest of the day would be different. As a matter of fact, the rest of his ***life*** would be different. You see, some time in between leaving his house that morning and when he would have returned home in the afternoon, Carlos’ mom was gunned down in cold blood by a single sniper’s bullet.

Sarah Ramos didn’t come home that day and she never will. She was the fourth victim of the DC area sniper, John Allen Muhammad, and his accomplice, who was a minor at the time, Lee Boyd Malvo; Together, they killed ten people and left three others critically injured in various locations throughout the Washington DC-Metropolitan Area and along Interstate 95 in Virginia.

You know I wonder what a seven year old boy whose mom never ever comes again thinks about when they hear people talk about a God that loves them and has great plans for them. [***PAUSE***]

More than one third of the world went to bed hungry last night. I wonder what ***they*** think about when they hear people talk about a God that has only good things for them.

In some corners of the world, peace is only defined by those brief moments when the neighbors stop to reload. I wonder what parents, *who can’t even get enough of a break in the mortar-fire for their kids to sleep*, think of when they hear people talk about a God Who is loving and all-powerful? [***PAUSE***]

You know, we don’t even have to go half-way around the world to wrestle with these questions, do we? We don’t even have to leave this community. [***PAUSE***]

I wonder what some of ***you*** think about when I’m up here talking about a God that’s good and a God that’s powerful and a God that has these awesome plans for our lives.

[*slightly sarcastic tone*]

*“Yeah, Tim. Tell me that again about this God – He’s all loving and He’s all powerful – but yet He* ***still*** *lets this kind of stuff happen? I mean, something doesn’t add up here, does it?”*

You’re right – it doesn’t add up, at least not to *our* way of thinking, anyway.

But, see, I think a lot of it comes down to our failure to understand – or the struggle we have with understanding – how ***much*** God values goodness that’s ***freely*** chosen, how much God values having this world where everyone isn’t absolutely ***forced*** in some robotic-like trance to **only** do good things. You see, we fail to grasp how ***much*** God values goodness and love that’s *freely* chosen. It’s what I would call the “divine dilemma”.

In light of this, today we’re going to take a look at the idea that pain can actually be a tool for growth in our Christian lives. But before we do that we’ve got to get honest about this “divine dilemma”, don’t we?

I mean, let’s recalibrate here. Let’s think about the things we’ve been learning about God. What we’re talking about here is that we know that not only is God all encompassing of love, but ***also*** that all love comes from God. Like it says in 1 John 4:8, which probably has the most succinct definition of God that I know of, “God is love.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

***Every single bit*** of love or goodness **anybody** finds **anywhere** in creation originates ***from*** God. God encompasses ***all*** love.

And what else do we know about God? You know, this summer as we took a look at the big picture of how Jesus personified God in His various attributes (such as The Bread of Life, The Good Shepherd, etc.), we learned that God, by definition, ***is*** all powerful. So we have this God that is all powerful and all loving. And the question becomes, “What do you get for the guy who has everything?” If ***you*** were God and ***you*** were all powerful and all loving, what’s the ***one thing*** **you** would desire to experience?

Here’s how I think we can think about this. Imagine that you’re this ruler who is all powerful and all loving. You are a ruler who possesses all things that are possibly within your survey. You can have *anything* you want.

Now, you’re also an incredibly loving ruler. As a matter of fact, you’re the most perfect picture of love that has ever existed. So you’re this person who is this combination of, oh, kind of like the Snuggle fabric softener bear, Mother Theresa and, oh, maybe me, ok? [**laughter?**]

Anyhow, so you’re all powerful and all loving ruler. Well, that’s exactly the picture that we have of God in the Bible.

So here’s what we have: Let’s say this is God [*make hand gesture of shaping a square with your hands on your right*]. This is like God’s house here. So imagine a little door here [*draw with your hands again*]. Ok - God is here and what is behind this door is ***everything*** that is God, ***everything*** that is loving and good. There’s ***nothing*** behind this door that *isn’t* love or isn’t goodness. And there’s no love or goodness that exists ***anywhere*** that doesn’t come from, doesn’t originate from, *this* door. This ***is*** God and what we know of him. We’ll call this door number one.

Now, the thing is, God creates all things in completion. That means there is utterly ***nothing*** that we could ever possibly need that’s ***not*** behind door number one. Everything that we need is right here.

Now, God wanted to create a world where He’s experiencing the freely chosen goodness and love of people who are themselves experiencing goodness and love that’s freely chosen. But, here’s the problem: we can’t *only* have the option of opening door number one because if ***this*** is the **only** option, then there ***is*** ***no*** option. There’d be no choice involved whatsoever. If this were so, people could *only* choose goodness and love. What needs to happen, then? Well, that’s the “divine dilemma” I mentioned before.

SO, how does God solve this? God says, “OK – in order for people to freely choose to experience My goodness and love with one another and with Me, then they have to be able to choose something other than that goodness and love; which also means being able to choose something other than Me; to make it a real, honest choice.” So in order to do that there ***has*** to be a door number two.

And so, over here, we see this option [*sketch another square shape with your hands on your left and again make a “door” in it*] and this is nothing other than being able to choose something ***other*** than God, being able to exercise our free will, by being having the ability of choosing some things that are “other” then God. We’ll call that door number two.

Now, the thing is: What can ***possibly*** be behind this door? If God is all loving, if every bit of love and goodness that *ever* existed comes from here [right hand door], what can possibly be behind here [left hand door]? Only things that aren’t God can be here, because if there’s anything that *is* of God behind this door – then we’re back to having **no** choice again. If our only choice is goodness, if I can’t choose to pick up a brick and hit somebody in the head with it - if I want to - if I can only choose to do good things with that brick then I’m back to having no choice at all. So what can be behind here? Only things that aren’t God, only things that aren’t goodness and love.

And so what we have here is this divine dilemma, this divine risk God has taken, that people are going to choose things that aren’t good and loving. Instead, people are going to be free to choose things that are damaging and hurtful to themselves and others. And because God creates all things in completion – we know this door is only necessary so we can have a real choice that’s other than God.

So what happens through this divine risk? Well, throughout time, from Adam and Eve down to you and I we have been opening this door. Some of us have cracked it open just a little bit and barely peeked in. Some of us, if we’ll be honest, we’ve swung it wide-open, jumped in and even pulled a few friends in with us, haven’t we?

And what’s happened throughout the history of the time that’s been defined by the toxic contents of door number two spilling out into our heart? The Bible talks about this when Paul in the New Testament is writing to the new church at Rome in Romans 5:12. It says, “***Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned***...”[[2]](#footnote-2)

All of us have flirted with door number two, to one degree or another. There is not even one of us who has ever not chosen to open that second door, even for just the briefest moment – no one that is, except Jesus Christ. He never opened that door, and that is why He and He alone could be the Perfect Sacrificial Lamb Who was able to take our sins upon His sinless Self and suffer the consequences of our sins on our behalf.

So, because we have the possibility of people doing bad things, the possibility of pain is now inherent in a world in which these choices are played out. And regardless of how much this door’s been opened, regardless of *who* has opened it and when *they’ve* opened it and when *we’ve* opened it, it’s toxic contents are spilling out and like even just one drop of cyanide in an entire well will poison it, humanity’s “water supply” is now tainted. There’s poison in creations’ well and it’s all leaked out of door number two, ***not*** door number one.

Sometimes the results are obvious that there’s a direct connection between our flirtations with door number two and what happens as a result. For instance, somebody who drinks a fifth of brandy every day for thirty years shouldn’t be surprised if they develop cirrhosis of the liver. A nation that developed, cultured and cultivated an institutionalized evil such as slavery shouldn’t have been surprised when they wound up with the carnage of the Civil War and the ramifications of racial discrimination that plays out in our neighborhoods to this very day. We’re dumping our own toxic contents in and then later on we go back and we take a drink of that water and we get poisoned.

Sometimes there’s a direct correlation, but you know what? Sometimes there’s not. Sometimes there’s just the general result of there being poison in the well. We all have to go to the communal well and we all have to drink from that poisoned water. When something bad happens and we look around and go, “But I didn’t do anything!” you may be right – it isn’t because of anything ***you*** did or didn’t do. No, it’s just because generally there’s poison in the well. When we can’t directly correlate our pain to our own poison in what we drink, it’s because there’s ***always*** poison in the well.

You know, I can’t explain the Holocaust. I do know God didn’t fire the ovens at Auschwitz. I just know there was poison in the well and it poisoned millions upon millions to death. I can’t totally figure out all the environmental problems, but I know that God doesn’t desire the depletion of the ozone layer, extinct species, pollution of air and water and earth and all that kind of stuff. I just know that there’s poison in the well and ***everything***, **EVERYTHING** in the whole of creation has been poisoned by it.

I can’t explain disturbed fingers on the triggers of assault rifles or those who choose to strap a bomb on their chest. I just know there’s poison in the well. And the long term impact of these toxic contents is our world unraveling to the place that it is at today.

Because of God’s value of goodness that’s freely chosen, He ***allowed*** the possibility of badness. He did not create pain, but He allowed for the possibility ***so that we could freely choose***!!

And, you know, for the most part – we ***like*** being relatively free creatures in whatever way we can play that out in this world, don’t we? Of course we do. The thing is, we just don’t like the back half of that equation. We like being able to choose between door number one and door number two, but we don’t like suffering the consequences that door number two being chosen over and over again, in small ways and large, throughout time, brings.

See, pain is the result of the divine risk of goodness that’s freely chosen. At some point we need to face it, we need to stand in front of door number two and face it and say, “Yes, I’ve chosen this. I’ve looked at my Creator and I’ve thumbed my nose at Him and said, ‘Yeah, I know You have these plans for the art of growth in my life, but ***I*** think ***I*** can do better!’”

At some point we need to have the courage to stand and look at this door and say, “Yes, I opened it and I’m going to deal with the consequences.” Our pain is real, absolutely. And God feels it and He cares for us. But at some point, we need to take our finger off of God’s chest and admit that these are the consequences of door number two being opened by ourselves and others throughout all time, all the way back to Eden.

More often than we care to admit, the pain that we end up with, the results in our life, what we end up feeling is simply a result of us or somebody else playing with that poison behind door number two.

But, this isn’t about us knowing some tight intellectual answers to these things. That’s part of it, but that’s not the full picture. You see its one thing to know ***how*** pain can exist in this world and how choices can play out even if they’re not directly related to ones we ourselves make. But it’s entirely something else to be hit with those very things, and that’s when our tightly woven arguments fall apart - when pain comes into our own life.

Years ago, before the Tyson and Spinks fight, a reporter was talking to Mike Tyson. He said, “Hey, Mike. You know, Spinks, he’s got a plan for how he’s going to fight you.”

Tyson responded, “Yeah, they all got a plan – until they get hit.”

And you know what? That’s so true. In our life, sometimes we can have this really nice plan for understanding how pain is – but then, when we actually get hit with it - we’re left reeling and we don’t know what to do with or about it. And part of it is that we haven’t acknowledged that pain is going to be inevitable in this life because of the way this world plays out.

Our lives can become defined by pain prevention when, if we look around us and at all the generations before us and realize that pain is inevitable. We need to be thinking very clearly, now, about growing in and through God through our pain because it’s going to come. We simply can’t avoid it, because the whole well is poisoned – and we have to live with that.

Because so much of our lives are about pain prevention, when it does come we are often just left in shock and all we can think about is “How can I make this go away and make it never come back again?” Instead, we should really ask ourselves: “How can I use this as a tool to get to another place?”

So, I want to take a look here at three ways of looking at this pain that God did not thrust on us, God did not wish on us, but recognized would happen to us. God can take it and redeem it for our growth and we can actually use it as a tool in our life as part of this art of growth.

First we need to understand the difference between symptoms and sickness. See, I think a lot of times our pain is ***not*** the problem. Let me say that again - our pain is often not the ***problem***. It’s actually a helpful warning signal that should be pointing us to the problem. What happens when we feel physical pain? We reach for the Tylenol. We want to mask the symptom. We think the problem ***is*** the symptom.

It would be like if someone broke their leg. They’re lying there, in horrible pain, maybe even bleeding, and instead of dealing with the problem – the broken leg – they only take some pain-killers for the pain – and don’t’ do anything about the broken leg.

But, just like any good triage team at a disaster scene does, the first thing that somebody does who is trying to master the art of growth in Christ, is to do everything they can to look past the symptom for the underlying sickness ‘cause these pains that we so want to wish away, whether they be physical, emotional, or relational, often are the very thing that can help take us to a more healthy place. The actual pain is, terrible as it might be, is just the symptom for the sickness.

But, most of us, instead of dealing with it in that way – we just want to mask it. We want to mask the symptom and get on with our life. The fact is, as often as not, pain can be as much a gift as it is a curse.

Now, I want to illustrate this here. I want to try something a little different here, to illustrate this. So, just to warn you, this is the time when I read people’s minds, tell them names of former lovers and then I do some card tricks. So that’s what we’re going to try here. [**pause**]

No, no, no, no...

No, we’re going to try something, though. [NAME OF PERSON]could you stand up, please? Ok, good. Phew, all right, good, ok.

Ok, [NAME OF PERSON], I want to show you something here. Let me see your arm. No, no, wait. You’re supposed to react when I do something, not yet. [**pause**] [**poke person hard on inner arm**] OK, now’s when you say “Ow.”

[NAME OF PERSON]: Ow.

Yes, yes, ow. Does that hurt? Does it or should I.. nah. Thanks, thank you, you can sit down now.

Ok, now, what was the problem [NAME OF PERSON] had just now? What was the problem right now?

Was the problem the pain that [NAME OF PERSON] was feeling? Was the problem that [NAME OF PERSON] has these nerve receptors for pain in their arm that [NAME OF PERSON] needs to go get rid of?

No. I think we realize the problem came from here – from me, to be exact, inflicting pain on [NAME OF PERSON]. The problem wasn’t the pain itself or even the pain sensors in [NAME OF PERSON]’s arm. The pain was only a symptom that was pointing to something that was really the problem –namely, me poking that arm.

You know, doctors have spent a lot of time devoted to trying to alleviate pain. But the fact is, they have found that when people have defective pain receptors – that there’s some diseases, like diabetes and leprosy, that lead to that – they have actually needed to invent ways to inflict pain for people to be able to have healthy lives.

In a rather remote parts of many Third World countries are leper colonies. And, you know, leprosy is still thought to be this awful contagious thing, so much so that what you do in these places if somebody has leprosy is just send them away. They send anyone that has leprosy to these leper colonies, away from everyone else. And that’s where they have to live and die.

At these leper colonies you would see a lot of people missing fingers or toes, or maybe entire limbs. For a long time everybody thought that that was a direct result of the leprosy – and was, in fact, one of the reasons people would be forced into these colonies. They thought that when leprosy happens your limbs slowly fall off. And that is because, for most of civilization’s history, people have looked only at that symptom of losing limbs and they didn’t bother to look deeper and find out if there was another problem that might be there.

And you know what they found out? They found out that leprosy doesn’t lead to your limbs falling off. What doctors found was that leprosy leads to a defective pain system; lepers gradually can’t feel any pain in some parts of their body. So, they could burn their hand, not know it and then not do anything about it. As a result, they would continue to injure themselves, break bones and get infections and wounds that would get very bad because the person just didn’t feel the pain and do something. Over time this might cause them to lose a limb.

It wasn’t until researchers found out the limb loss is actually due to a defective pain system that, even in this country, anyone with leprosy was quarantined away from others for fear of contaminating other people with this supposed limb-rotting disease. But, this symptom is simply due to not having the gift of pain in their life. And now that doctors have found this out, they’ve worked for a long time now on behalf of people with different diseases that have defective pain systems, trying to develop artificial early warning symptoms for them. For example, somebody would burn their hand on a stove and not know it. Researchers developed a sensor device that, if a person put their hand on, say, a stovetop, it would cause a blinking red light to go off and/or that would be hooked up to a hearing aid in their ear and it would cause it to buzz and they would know to take their hand off the stove.

You know what they found? They found that even very smart, very committed people often would ignore the signal. They would see the red light going off and hear the buzzing of the hearing aid, but would keep doing whatever thing they were doing at the time. What doctors found they had to do, was they had to find a part in the person’s body where they ***did*** still feel pain and they had to hook up an electric current to that part and actually ***cause*** the person pain. They had to actually *feel* pain before they would stop the unhealthy behavior.

And they even found that the on/off switch for that device had to be put in a place where the person couldn’t reach it or they would turn it off, too!

As the doctors found, we human beings in general, we don’t stop when we see the light or hear the buzz warning us of danger. We only stop when we feel some kind of pain. When we don’t have the gift of pain in our life we end up going down a lot of bad roads and hurting ourselves and others very badly in the process.

You know, the fact is, we need to get to the place where when we’re encountering pain we look past the symptom for the sickness underlying it. We need to stop and ask ourselves the honest question: “Have I been here before? Is this a theme in my life?” And then we need to actively say, “I’m going to find that sickness and I am going to take that sickness to God and ask Him to heal the sickness and thank Him for the symptom of pain that led to my discovery of that sickness. Regardless of what’s happened in the past, I’m going to choose the door of growth in my Christian life. That means I’m going to have to choose pain sometimes and I’m actually going to choose pain because of where that it’s going to eventually take me.”

So we need to ask ourselves when we find ourselves in this awful cycle of relationships that just totally trash us, and behaviors that wreck our health, our minds and our emotions – “Is that the symptom or is that the sickness?” And just maybe it’s not about this string of relationships that’s trashed me, but it’s about I’m going out and getting my self-worth in other people and maybe, just maybe, there’s some stuff from my childhood I need to go dig through and deal with. And maybe in the meantime I may need to choose some pain. I need to choose not to date, or I need to choose to not associate with that person until I get to a healthier place.

Maybe this financial stress that we’re feeling, maybe if we look past the symptom to the sickness we’ll realize overall there’s a trend of a lack of financial discipline in our lives. And we need to put ourselves in a place where we submit to some controls in our life instead of just taking out another personal loan or maxing out one credit card to pay off another one.

Sometimes our sickness results from somebody else’s toxic waste spilling into our life. Then we need to look past the symptom for the sickness and say, “Why do I keep making myself vulnerable to unhealthy people?”

We can use our pain as one of the tools for growth in our Christian life if we try to look past the symptom for the sickness underneath.

The second thing is related to the fact that when we’re in pain, we need to learn to open ourselves up to those around us. God primarily chooses other human beings as His vehicle for delivering comfort to our lives. One of the most comforting Scriptures in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, where it says that God is “***the God of all comfort***,”[[3]](#footnote-3) and that He, “***comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can [in return] comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God***.”[[4]](#footnote-4) See, there’s this chain of grace from God to us and then to others that plays out in our lives even and especially if – ***if*** – we lean into the relationships we have with others when we are in pain.

If we move beyond this kind of “Lone Ranger” attitude and say, “You know what? It’s primarily the relationships that God puts in my life that are going to make the difference between me being on the backside of my pain, either bitter and broken, or seasoned and having a little bit clearer picture of the life that God has in mind for me. It’s going to be the relationships He’s put in my life I can learn to lean into – because when I come out the other side, I’ll be able to be that for someone else who might be going through something similar – and I’ll be able to share the grace God gave me with them.”

About eight years or so ago, Heidi and I found out she was pregnant. And, almost as soon as we knew we were expecting, we lost the baby in a miscarriage. And, you know, that’s not an easy thing. I know from our own experience and from talking to other folks that have experienced this kind of pain that it’s a weird, undefined kind of pain to deal with. It’s one that very few people want to talk about.

Some of the greatest sources of comfort for us wern’t some books that Heidi and I could read, or some DVD that somebody gave us, not some message at some church that we could go and hear. The greatest tool for our comfort and growth at that time in our life was just our friends. It was the friends in our life that surrounded us and said, “You know what? It’s ok to share this with us, even though we don’t have any answers. Yeah, this really, really hurts ***bad***, but we’re here with you and we’re sharing your pain.” It was just their being there. We needed to learn to lean into our relationships in our pain and we learned we now need share the pain of others when they have it.

Now, there’s one more way that pain can be a tool for growth in our life. And this is more along the idea of not so much as knowing something, but knowing Someone.

You know, when my six year old grandaughter, Destini, will be outside on the sidewalk and she’ll be running and once in a while, she’ll fall down and skin her knee. Now, when I go over to her, at that moment she’s ***not*** looking for me to give some eloquent explanation of gravity, how it all plays out and how that’s going to benefit her later in life. She’s not looking for me to come up and carefully explain to her how she can avoid falling in the future. She’s ***not*** looking for *answers* at that point. She’s looking for someone to be the comforter of her hurt and fear, usually at the top of her lungs!

See, one of the important things to remember is that pain can be a primary tool for growth because it can be a time like no other where we can learn more about God’s character. We get to know the Comforter in clearer ways than ever before, instead of just all these tight little answers.

Pain actually helps us grow in understanding God. We talk of prayer being a tool for growth and learning. We talk about how the Bible can be a tool for growth and learning. We talk about how being in community with our fellow believers is a tool for growth and learning. Pain is also a tool that can help us in growing to understand more about God as well.

One thing we often forget – God is not only aware of our pain – and He certainly is, but He actually *feels* it right along with us!

There’s a part in the Old Testament of the Bible, in the book of Isaiah, where it’s predicting Jesus’ coming and how He’ll be tortured and killed. Isaiah 53:3 foreshadows Jesus’ life and it says that, “He [would be] despised and rejected by men, [He would be] a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

You know the fact is, one of the things that can draw us closer to understanding God through our pain is to realize: We are drawing closer to the life that Christ Himself lived. We need to understand that God ***has*** been there. You know, one author said that there’s no pain we can ever encounter that hasn’t ***first*** passed through the heart of God.

When we grow through pain we become more like Jesus than if we haven’t had *any* pain or suffering. It’s these things together along with realizing that this is the kind of God that’s there for us; that He’s not some kind of disinterested observer casually observing our agony, but that He’s right there and He’s been there before Himself and there’s no pain that we can ***ever*** experience that He hasn’t already; then we realize we can grow closer to the picture that God has of us.

And, it is only that kind of God, a God that has suffered, that can give us this power to say, “Throughout all of this…I don’t know where this is going end up, but I know I have these tools and I know I can grow through this. I know that it’s God that gives me the power and the ability to overcome these things, with Him.”

For us folks here, our pain isn’t some kind of theoretical discussion.

Some of us have had a person we counted on to be there for us just walk out the door of our life, never to return.

Some of us have poured all our resources into a dream only to see it all go south and lost everything that was poured into trying to realize that dream.

Some of us have seen their bodies turn on them and they can’t remember the last time they got good news from a doctor.

We’ve lost loved ones in ways that make us shake our fist and scream in anger at God “WHY?!?!”

We need to know that God does ***not*** take any of this lightly! He’s been there! He’s God of hurt but He’s also God of healing and hope. And through all of this pain, however it came to be, through all of it; He has a much higher calling for you than being just this rough thumbnail sketch.

You need to remember - ***You are a masterpiece in the works***, because your life with God is all about growth – through Him and in Him and becoming more like Him – for His glory.

Would you please bow your heads with me? [**pause**]

Now, before we end this talk with prayer, with heads bowed and eyes closed, I want to share something with you...

[**pause again, and then speak in a slow, soft voice**]

People in pain often stop praying. Do you know why? Because they are uncomfortable with what they are feeling and struggling with. That’s a huge mistake, and part of the problem is that we have this mentality that we have to pray perfectly, be in control, and come to God with everything already cleaned up. Listen! God ***knows*** you’re a mess! He ***knows*** what’s going on in your soul. He’s heard ***every*** thought and He’s felt ***everything*** you’ve ever felt and He knows ***everything*** you’ve ever done or failed to do and He ***STILL*** loves you and wants you to come to Him with your heart! Tell Him you’re hurting. Tell Him that you’re frustrated. Tell Him that you’re scared. It’s okay to bring Him your brokenness, your pain, your sorrow, your junk – because He’s the God of brokenness Who takes what’s broken and remolds and reshapes it and makes all things new...

Who takes our pain .......... and turns it into joy.

[**Normal voice again**]

So, now, let’s take our brokenness and pain ***and*** our joy ***and*** our praise to the Throne of our Almighty Father and bowing before His glory, love, mercy and grace, as we pray....

“Father God, thank You for giving us the choice to love You and serve You freely. Thank You for making it possible that,

even though we may choose wrongly at times,

You have made it possible for us to return to You

to partake once more of the goodness and love that You alone offer.

We pray that You would show us Your love

that You would share with us Your truth

and what it means through You, to grow through our pain,

what it means – through You and in You and by Your mercy, love and grace – to overcome all things, in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

*In case anyone asks...*

***Additional Info ON DC-Metro Sniper Attacks:***

*In September 2003, John Allen Muhammad was sentenced to death. One month later, Lee Boyd Malvo was sentenced to six consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole. On November 10, 2009, Muhammad was executed by lethal injection.*

1. 1 John 4:8[All Scripture references are taken from the New International Version of the Bible]. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Romans 5:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 2 Corinthians 1:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 2 Corinthians 1:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Isaiah 53:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)