



# REFLECTIONS

July 5, 2015

**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever  
you face trials of many kinds,**

*James 1:2*

## Lift High the Cross

The victory won; trophy held high in celebration. Champaign flows and confetti showers the room. Sprained ankles, pulled muscles, sore shoulders, long days, and short nights defined the long season. But victory quieted the pains.

It's a common scene to witness season ending celebrations when winners are declared. A trophy is lifted high followed by a few predictable remarks from the champions; it is passed among team members, caressed, and kissed as if it were the return of a long lost loved one. The joy of victory soothes the pain endured in its pursuit. But resolve to overcome pain and suffering was essential for the victory. And surely, the grandeur of the triumph had been accented by perseverance of the trials along the way.

Champions are celebrated for their accomplishments. But those celebrated most are the ones who overcome extraordinary hardships in the course of victory. We can recall the Olympic gymnast landing a gold medal vault on a ligament-torn ankle. We marvel at the golfer, nearing unconsciousness from heat exhaustion, as he staggered onto the final green to claim a national championship. We honor valiant performances to achieve victory, but more impactful are those resolute efforts that withstand harsh and painful circumstances in pursuit of a cause. Jesus did that.

It was within God's power for Jesus to die a pain free death and still have been resurrected from it. But then, would anyone have really noticed? And even if they did, would his victory still be celebrated centuries later? Rather, Jesus endured the excruciating pain of sin induced Hell to give us the victory. Yet his victory does not ensure us a pain free life here on earth. Indeed, true discipleship calls for it.

Jesus said, "*And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*" (Luke 14:27) To be his disciples we are called to suffer through pain ourselves. Sometimes the pain is physical, sometimes it comes through some form of impairment; and sometimes the pain is emotional. But withstanding the challenges life brings while standing strong for Jesus and his sacrifice *is* itself the victory.

So consider it pure joy when pain consumes and perseverance challenges. Praise God for the opportunity to bring glory to his name. Then in celebration, lift high the cross and give thanks to God! *He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:57)

And victory quiets the pain.

*You are the light of the world,*

*Richard +*

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