**The Profit of Pain**

**Chreia Class Mrs. Weitz Friday 11:00-12:15**

**Thomas Shields**

**Chreia Class 17 Writing Project – Chreia of Your Choice**

**The Profit of Pain**

*C.S Lewis said “Pain plants the flag of truth within a rebel fortress”*

Even those who despise the Christian faith cannot help but realize the genius of this man, C.S Lewis. From his intellect in childhood, such as reading the great books at ages of 7 and 8, to his scholarly aptitude for convincing the stubborn with his profound reasoning skills as an adult, Lewis is a man of wisdom. And yet he is humble. He does not equate himself with even the most unknown theologians of his day, and we know then that it is with humility that he applied himself to this wise maxim.

At first glance, this is quite a confusing statement – pain is feeling, we may say, how can it *do* anything? And what do rebels and castles have to do with truth? In order to understand Lewis’s statement, then, we must define his terms. Lewis defines pain as any sort of circumstance or sensation which is unpleasant. What he is trying to put across is that pain – be it suffering, evil, or sorrow – plants truth in us. We are rebels. We rebel against God in our sin, and we have boarded up our heart as a ‘rebel fortress.’ God is Truth. What Lewis is saying, then is that when God causes pain to come into our lives, he is using it as a means of planting himself as the flag of our hearts. Pain causes us to stop what we are doing, drop all idols, and focus on God. Only by pain can God tear away everything else we have and give us himself. God cannot enter our castle peacefully – we are rebels. God must fight a battle with us – tear down our idol flags – and fly his own banner.

Lewis stresses this because people all around him struggled with the two ideas of pain and God together. Lewis presses his point with an entire book: *The Problem of Pain*. Once again, we cannot fail to see his great wisdom and care for his people in using God given knowledge to educate and enlighten the hearts of fallen souls. If we heed his wisdom we will not need God to batter down the doors of our heart; we will open them readily. By accepting pain as a means of God’s grace, it will be made easier to bear. If we know that pain is only temporary; that God will raise us to unfathomable heights of glory in the end, we will not fall under the constant rain of misfortune.

If we, however, do not heed Lewis’s wisdom and choose to ignore it, we will be left alone. God will not come knocking at the door of your heart; he will not come into your heart at all – he will pick up your castle with one finger and cast it into Hell. If he does come, however, he will come forcefully. He will tear down your flags and he will put up his own – but not before you are sorely injured. Lewis recognizes the severity of this statement – and as a wise man who knows his people, he talks of the positive aspect of things firstly, instead of pounding his readers with dooming messages.

The truth of this statement is so great almost any analogy may be applied. Just as we must work hard before we can arrive at pleasure, so God must plague us with trials before he may crown us in glory. A parent striving to teach his child does not lavish riches on the child from an early age – he must discipline, scold, and strictly teach the child. In the same way we, who are sinners, must be disciplined, scolded, and taught by God before we receive eternal life with God in heaven.

Lewis himself provides an excellent illustration of this – deaths of good army comrades helped his friend Tolkien to convince him of Christianity. Think also of Paul, the apostle. God brought many, many trials, temptations, and sufferings into his life, and yet look at his character! Perhaps the greatest man besides Christ who walked the earth, penning close to the entire New Testament, encouraging, witnessing, preaching, and praying for his people, Paul accepted the trials God gave him and received the crown of life. May we accept suffering as Paul did.

James, in his epistle, writes “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life.” If we do not accept these sufferings as part of God’s sovereign plan, then we fail the test. Only by standing firm will we be molded to truly fit God’s purpose, and only once we are molded to fit God’s purpose can we receive the crown of life. Once again, we see that Lewis does not boast of his own wisdom, but humbly draws from God’s own word.

Because of his humility, indeed, because of his genius, we cannot help but admire this wise scholar, and continue to scour his works as ranked among the greatest of all time.

