

Discussion of "Present Suffering, Future Glory"

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[0 : 00] This morning's sermon text was John 11 verses 1-16.

! Jesus finds out about Lazarus and later on we'll go to raise him from the dead.! I'm going to read that text again.

If you want to follow along with me and then we'll go over our application questions. Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary, and her sister Martha.

It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sister sent to him saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill.

But when Jesus heard it, he said, this illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, so when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

[1 : 11] Then after this, he said to his disciples, let us go to Judea again. The disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again? Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours in the day?

If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him. After saying these things, he said to them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.

The disciples said to him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover. Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest and sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died, and for your sake, I am glad that I was not there so that you may believe, but let us go to him.

So Thomas called the twins, said to his fellow disciples, let us also go that we may die with him. If you remember, the main idea for this morning's sermon, the sermon talking about suffering, is that through suffering, God is glorified, and we are strengthened by the hope of a future resurrection. Through suffering, God is glorified, and we are strengthened by a hope of future resurrection. And so, in this passage, we learn through suffering, there are some things that we need to remember.

[2 : 35] Remember that the Lord knows what you're enduring. Remember that the Lord loves you. Remember that the Lord is in control. And remember that ultimately the Lord will be glorified through it.

So, for our discussion questions tonight, the first one is, what should a Christian's theology of suffering look like?

How does what the Bible says about suffering... Well, let's... We'll tackle that second part in a minute. But first of all, what should a Christian's theology of suffering look like?

And we're talking about a theology of suffering. We're talking about theology and knowledge of God. So, we know that God has been revealed. He has revealed Himself to us through His Word. And so, through His Word, Genesis to Revelation, the Bible says a lot about suffering. What does the Bible say about suffering? And what should a Christian's theology, then, of suffering look like?

[3 : 33] And we have microphones right here. If anyone wants to stand up and be the first one, I'm prepared to talk a lot more tonight because I know that you may not feel comfortable doing that.

But I encourage you to do it. Same thing. You're just not sitting down. You're just standing up. All right. Sorry, Mike. Wes. I did just a slight little bit. We can raise that up for you, too.

Okay. I can do this, too. I did a little bit of research, and it was 100 Bible verses about suffering. Wow. So, some of them were duplicates, but there were so many of them talking about... You're going to read all 100 to us?

Number one. Anyway, I wanted to pick at least one good one. So, how about John 7-7? The world cannot hate you because it hated me. I testify about it, that its works are evil.

So, all through these, it's talking about the world's going to hate you because it hated me first. And things about... One of them about... I think it was James talking about it being indemnity.

[4 : 34] If you love the world, you're in indemnity with God. So, the world's going to hate you. You know, you've got to choose. If you love God, the world's going to hate you. And that's just... It was all over the place.

So, I had a tiny little print. But anyway, I thought it was pretty good. As far as the theology goes, it's pretty populated in Scripture about you're going to suffer.

There's going to be suffering involved. And I've got a whole list of people on that next question.

Yeah. Okay, good. So, yes. Our theology of suffering, according to Scripture, is that the Bible says that there will be suffering for Christians.

It's suffering that comes as a result of following Christ, that the world will hate us as it hated him for what we believe and for what we teach and what we proclaim. So, we should expect that as a follower of Christ, there should be suffering.

And again, going back to what Jesus talked about, the cost of discipleship. Whoever should follow me, whoever will follow me or would follow me, must take up their cross, which is an instrument of death, denying yourself and following me.

[5 : 39] So, there's suffering involved in the Christian life that comes through or is a result of following Christ. Good. Mike? I think one of my favorite Scriptures, but I always have to remember to remind myself what it actually says is count it all joy when you suffer.

But it doesn't end there. It says when you suffer for the sake of the Lord. We oftentimes suffer because we're, speaking personally, we're not very smart sometimes, make bad choices.

And that's not the suffering we're talking about. We're talking about the suffering where you stand for the Lord, you make it clear where you stand, and you suffer because of that. That is joy in suffering there.

Good. Good insight. They're suffering from following Christ, and when we suffer for following Christ, we should be joyful. We should rejoice to be counted as one of His, belonging to Him, He who suffered for us, being like Christ in that way.

Very good. And you hit on something else that is also important that we can't figure out. What does the Bible say about suffering? I hope I don't take this away from you, Cameron. But there's another kind of suffering, right, as a result of living in a world cursed by sin.

[7 : 02] Go ahead. That's maybe exactly where I was heading. Okay, good. Elaborate. Because you quoted Romans 8.28 this morning, but right before that, in verse 18, Paul says, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

And it talks about creation after that, and being anxious in the suffering. And so I think our theology, a lot like the rest of our theology, our theology around suffering should be eternally focused.

Instead of earthly focused. Good. So we've got, okay, Kendra, and I love people coming up with their Bibles. That's good. Even if you came up with your phone or you just had it in your mind, it's all good.

You're just more technologically savvy than the rest of us, you know, yet. All right, go ahead, Kendra. 1 Peter 1.6. 1 Peter 1.6.

For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. So the idea that this suffering and being tested refines us to a greater image of the Lord and a greater understanding of who he is.

[8 : 50] Good. Yeah, sometimes that suffering, if you've been there, which I'm sure you all have been, it makes you want Jesus more and heaven more and this world less.

and through suffering, Jesus strengthens us, sharpens our faith. Our faith, not our face, our faith. It's not as bad as the mess up I had a couple of weeks ago, you know.

But good, there's a purpose in it, a great purpose in it, making us more like Christ. Michael? 2 Timothy 1.8 says, Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

We're not alone. We share in the suffering together. It's not just on us. We all share in it together and can share that burden together. Good. Good.

Doylene? I look at it in two ways. How does that look like in my life, my theology? And when I'm going through maybe a trial instead of suffering, but I'm going through a hard time, the first thing I try to do is, Lord, what am I supposed to learn from this?

[10:08] So I don't have to make the trip around the mountain again like the Jews did in Exodus. You know, he kept sitting around Mount Sinai until they got it right.

And I don't want to take 40 years to figure it out. So my first thought when I go into something, no matter what it is, Lord, I want to learn it. What if you're showing me in my life that I need to change or adapt or learn or grow?

I want to learn it the first time. I don't want this repeated trip. I like Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. Yeah, it's my favorite verse. And when I've gone through suffering emotionally, intimately, through my parents' death and stuff, and how long it took sometimes for that to come, what it looked like, you know, it's always wonderful that the Bible says we can just give him everything.

So I could cry, I could scream, I could moan, I could nag, I could complain to him how things were going. But then, I'm glad he listened, but I always would end those prayers, and I try to always remember to end those prayers, the Lord, your will, not mine, and may you be glorified.

So that's how it looks in my life right now. Amen. Yeah, that's a lot like the Psalms. A lot of the Psalms are, you know, the psalmist crying out to the Lord, feeling like they're forsaken.

[11:41] Why are my enemies prospering? Why am I suffering? But then at the end, it always, but yet, God, I will hope in you. God, I will trust in you. You are God, and I love you, and I know that you know me, and you love me.

Very good. All good. Ben? Ben? I'm glad you came prepared tonight because we have nothing to say. So 1 Peter 2, verse 21 says, For this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow his step.

So the question, what should Christian theology of suffering look like? Simply, it should look like Jesus. He set the example. He's the one that suffered well. He didn't, you know, neglect that suffering for his own comfort.

He said, Father, your will be done, not my will, but your will. And he gave us an example in that suffering to say, God, if I must suffer, your will be done in that.

So. Amen. Good. Man, I'm impressed. Good answers. Good answers. So from all that we've heard, and all that we've heard from Scripture, we see that, one, suffering is a result of a world under the curse of sin.

[13:05] Suffering is a part of this sin-cursed world. Two, suffering, as a Christian, should be expected. Expected because we know that the world hates us, but suffering also, we understand, has a purpose.

A purpose to make us like Christ. And when we go through it, I think Ben said it well there at the end, you know, who are we looking to? Well, it does direct our focus on Christ, and remember, his sufferings for us.

And so when a Christian suffers, you know, I think it's good to look at two things. One, to know that just naturally in this world, there will be suffering.

There will be physical suffering. Our bodies age and die as a result of the curse of sin. And yesterday, we were out at Jack's game, and when they're out in the field, I like to squat down in front of the dugout.

And I do that a lot. And I also warm up our pitchers, and I'm squatting down when I do that. And on Saturday, I mean, it was really hard to get up after that last squat down that I did.

[14:19] I mean, my knees, it just came up real slow. And one of our other assistant coaches, he's like, are you all right? It's getting hard, isn't it? And I was like, yeah, you know, it used to not be a problem for me to squat. But now it is getting harder.

So there's just that kind of natural suffering as a result of the curse of sin. And there's Christian suffering. That when we suffer, we shouldn't act as if, why is this happening to me, right?

Now, in the moment, let's not pretend to be superhuman. We have that sin nature still, and there are times in that moment, man, it's hard to suffer.

And there are those moments, especially when you're going through something really hard where you think, why God? And again, I think we're echoing the psalmist in some of those cases. Yet at the end, because we know that we've been saved, because we know that through that suffering, again, oftentimes the Lord has a way to use that to direct our attention squarely upon him.

And we're reminded of the fact of what he suffered for us. We're reminded of his word and what it says about suffering. And we want this world less. We want Christ more.

[15:32] We long more for his kingdom and for his righteousness. There's a purpose behind it. And so the second part of that question is, how does everything that we've said, how does what the Bible says about suffering, our theology of suffering, conflict with the message of the prosperity gospel?

How does it conflict with the message of the prosperity gospel? I listed Matthew 16, 24.

Then Jesus told his disciples, Let's keep reading. So, read that this morning.

What does the Bible say? And how does it conflict with the message of the prosperity gospel? What does the prosperity gospel say about suffering? Come over to the microphone, Josiah.

Everyone goes to heaven. Everyone goes to heaven. Everyone goes to heaven. Okay. It does.

[17:10] Pretty much. Exactly. We're not going to talk about hell. Right? Living your best life now doesn't really matter. Whatever. Everyone goes to heaven. But what else does it say about suffering?

Here comes Danny. Talks about it mainly being a punishment.

I think there's a lot of denial for any type of sufferings that you're going through because it means you don't have enough faith. Yeah. Excellent. The prosperity gospel says you shouldn't suffer.

You shouldn't suffer. And if you're suffering, it's because you don't have enough faith. You're not trusting in God enough. Suffering is not a part of God's will is what the prosperity gospel says.

Wes? And it also talks about how being prosperous from it. So if you believe hard enough and everything else, you're going to come out of it by being a Christian. You're going to get the only reason you don't have a Mercedes is because you don't believe enough to look at me.

[18:15] I've got one. And so the guys at the top that have all the good stuff, it's true, Mike. In your garage somewhere? Yeah. You guys see my truck, right?

So just that if you believe hard enough, all this good stuff is going to come to you. And just look at Kenneth Copeland. I mean, he really believes. And look, he's got an airport on his property.

And Joel Osteen, the stuff that he's got. And, you know, it's pretty sad. And Creflo Dollar. I mean, it's amazing he's got that name. But anyway, you believe hard enough and you're going to have all this good stuff.

And so it makes Christianity look really appealing for people who want stuff. You know, and I guess I understand in Africa that a lot of the prosperity gospel is kind of spoiling it for people.

They're, you know, if you had a vision, if you give me \$1,313.13, you're going to get blessed like crazy. And they give all this money and then nothing happens.

[19:09] And then the Christians are hucksters, you know, or hucksters, I guess it is. Yeah. Good. Good. Yeah. It's prosperity gospel says that suffering is not a part of God's will.

That suffering happens to you when you lack the faith to believe in whatever you're trying to name and claim or blab and grab. Yeah. We had, there's a great funeral service for Pam Daniel's mom last week.

And the man who gave the eulogy, if you were here, he did excellent. Stephen Griffith, he's a pastor at New Beginnings down the road. And one thing he said, I can't remember exactly at what point in time he said it.

But he was like, you know, talking about praying to God and he's like, you know, praying isn't Jesus. My name is Jimmy and I'll take all you want to give me. Okay.

Go ahead, Evan. Sufferings, bad, and it seems inconsistent with the apostles' response after they were arrested and freed. In Acts chapter 5, starting in verse 40, it says, And when they called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak the name of Jesus and let them go.

[20:23] Then they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. Good. Yeah, that prosperity teacher would say, well, that would just be a text that they would just avoid completely, right?

As they do many others because it doesn't fit their gospel because their gospel isn't the gospel. So things to be aware of, right?

We know, we've seen, we've heard, we've heard, read to us from Scripture that suffering is a part of God's will. It's a part of God's plan. That there is good that he intends through it, making us more like Christ, preparing us for our eternal home.

When we suffer because of our faith in Christ, we should not act as if, well, this is, why is this happening to me?

Jesus said it very clearly there in Matthew 16. Whoever would follow me must take up their cross and deny themselves. And so, again, it's interesting to me, too, if you think about when, you know, people were wanting to follow Jesus.

[21 : 33] I mean, he made it clear what it would mean to follow him. I don't have a home, you know. Animals do. I don't. People were busy wanting to do different things, and Jesus said, you know, leave that be, and it's all commitment right now, all the way.

And we're so different from that, aren't we? So often, I think, in our gospel presentations, we sort of leave that part out. And certainly in the prosperity gospel, they do.

And so we've got to make sure that we don't leave that out because the Bible says a lot about suffering. Wes said there's 100 verses. So there you go.

That's a big part of the Christian life. Let's move on to question number two. What other biblical examples can you think of where God used suffering to glorify himself?

What other biblical examples can you think of where God used suffering to glorify himself? Just want you to see I brought two Bibles up here with me.

[22 : 39] You have it on more than just your phone? I kind of, just off the top of my head, I was thinking some of them. I don't want to steal everybody's thunder, but probably will. So Jesus, for one, Job, Joseph, Isaac, when he was there filling in all his wells, definitely Jeremiah, Jonah, Stephen, when he was stoned, the Apostle Paul with all the stuff he had to go through, the blind man from birth.

I mean, that was all about glorifying God. I mean, that's the whole reason Jesus even said he was even born, so that God could be glorified by giving him his eyesight back. The bleeding woman that was bleeding for 12 years just touching his robe, I mean, that glorified him, just the fact that she believes so strongly.

Touch his robe and she's healed. The lame man that they handed down through the roof, you know, he had never walked, I think was his.

But anyway, it was all about glorifying God when that happened. And then I had Peter and John when they were in prison. They were happy when they were leaving. It was like, hey, we're counted worthy. That's a pretty cool thing to think.

Yeah. Good. I covered a lot of them. And someone can come go into detail about one of them if they want to. What other biblical examples can you think of where God used suffering to glorify himself?

[24 : 02] I hear people whispering in the right if I hear the names because I think I heard somebody say Joseph. Or maybe I'm just hearing things. Okay. Yeah, you did.

But again, Joseph, great example. Lots of suffering in Joseph's life. Always trying to do the right thing. Yeah, he's a little bit of an annoying brother.

Oh, but I'm still having a moment. bragging about, you know, his new coat. His brothers definitely took their anger to an extreme that was obviously very wrong, and yet he continued to suffer. He would go to Potiphar's house, did right, was lied about, gets thrown in jail, goes into jail, works hard, interprets dreams, is forgotten about. But God knows. God loves him. God is in control. God uses him to glorify himself because ultimately he ascends to a powerful position where he's able to bless God's people. And if you remember, Joseph says to his brothers, what? You meant it for evil, but God used it for good. Jack?

Colossal Paul. The Apostle Paul? Good. Anything specifically? When he had scales on his eyes? Yes. Yeah.

And then God tells Ananias to go to him, how much he must suffer for my sake. And he did. But again, Paul, how much he talked about. And we've read the scriptures, the suffering that he went through and counted it all joy to go through that for his Savior. Monty?

[25 : 44] Pastor, I looked at Philippians 3 when I think about suffering, and I hear the Apostle Paul saying that he wants to know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings. The word fellowship there, of course, is koinonia, which is more than just having a fellowship after church. It's about really coming to the point where you understand it, you know what it's about, that your fellowship is with him, knowing that he suffered. And I think about his suffering. And when I first read that, I think, you mean you've got to jump back up on the cross and get crucified? No, that's not what he means at all. He means the whole thing of the way that Jesus

suffered. Jesus suffered in more ways than just physical. He suffered emotionally. He suffered mentally. He suffered in every way we do. But the object of his suffering was the redemption of everyone that would, by faith, well, the chosen, of course, but those who, his intent was that everyone would be saved. That's what God wants. I don't want to get into that discussion. Anyway.

Yeah. What I really see, though, is there's a new book out that says you worship what you gaze upon. Hmm. And I think so many times we gaze upon things that are not worthy of our worship or worthy of anything that that we have in our life. What we really gaze upon mostly is our phones. Yes. And so don't kid me. Don't say to me, you're not worshiping your phone, when all I got to do is take it away from you and you go absolutely bonkers. Yes. And I'm guilty as anybody with that, but we've been brain-wrossed in that regard.

But what I'm saying to you, I think what I'm saying is you don't want to just say, hey, I want to go out and suffer just so I can be more like Christ or that I can know him better. Let me just go and invent some suffering so that I can feel better about it.

Sometimes some religions do that. Some faiths do that. But I don't think that that has to be conjured up. I think it's going to come naturally. And when we look at this, we glorify God when we say, God, I want to identify with what Jesus did for me, how he suffered for me. And so if you gaze upon Jesus, that's who you're going to worship.

[28 : 10] That's that's the way you're going to worship. You're going to look at him and say, oh, I just want to know him better. And so I'll know the fellowship of his sufferings. Yeah, I want the power of his resurrection because I don't want to die.

You know, I don't go to hell. But just to know him, you know, and to know his suffering and to fellowship with that and so identify with that, that that's the way you get to know him better. I think all of us in this room are going to suffer one way or the other. We're going to have these sufferings because of things are just going to happen. Like you say, we're going to get sick and die. You know, you said you have trouble squatting. A lot of us have trouble laying down on the floor and getting back up.

It only gets worse. Yeah, that's. But but I think the level of suffering he's talking about here is much deeper than just what's happening naturally. I think it's a suffering that comes from knowing God, knowing Christ, knowing him more, knowing God, knowing Christ, knowing him more.

And I just to long for this fellowship of his suffering is totally different. We don't like that word. You know, one of my one of my values is comfort, just like everybody else.

[29 : 22] That's why we have air conditioning on tonight. And so that's all about about that. We don't want to suffer. If it's too hot, we complain. If it's too cold, we complain. Because we're really gazing upon ourselves instead of gazing upon Christ.

So I think if we turn our attention to the Lord, I don't want to preach. But I think we turn our attention upon the Lord and understand what he really did for us and identify with that suffering.

It's amazing what will happen to our lives and understand that, hey, these various things come along, count it all joy as, you know, all the passages. But I just think it's so good for me to understand that the Apostle Paul wanted that kind of fellowship with the sufferings of the Lord.

Yeah, very good, Monty. Yeah, go ahead, Kendra. To hit on what you said, too, and I think we'll get to that in question three, I think we can all agree.

We, like Monty said, we're not beating ourselves up. We're not hating ourselves. Like, I want to suffer. I'm going to make myself suffer. We're not a bunch of monks. We're not going to go retreat and shave the top of our heads and, you know, beat ourselves up all the day long because we think that's what suffering means.

[30 : 33] It's not. And we don't want to suffer. I mean, I know, like personally speaking, I don't ever get down on my knees and say, and maybe you do, I don't.

Lord, I really want to suffer. I don't feel like I've suffered enough recently. And so we don't want to suffer.

And especially we love our comfort. We see that in the church, especially today. It's very much about being a consumer, what's in it for me, not what can I give, what can I suffer for my church, but what can they give to me, which is really frustrating because it's so unlike Christ.

Yet, I think we would all say, too, when you've suffered in this world for Christ, like Monty had pointed out, there is a deepening in your faith and your love in God that wouldn't be otherwise.

And so I think all of us can say we can all think of a time where we've suffered and praise God for it because as a result of that, we learned a lot about him. We learned a lot about ourselves.

[31 : 54] And there was a deep fellowship gained through that suffering as a result. And we can look back on that and say and praise God and say to God, thank you.

It was hard. But thank you that I went through that because I know you better. Good. Kendra? Just thinking about how the suffering he used to glorify himself, I was thinking about Acts 6, where at the end of it it says that, so the word of God spread, the number of the disciples of Jerusalem increased rapidly, and the number of priests became obedient to the faith.

And then we have Stephen's story. And then directly after Stephen's story, it says that in chapter 8, on that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him, but Saul began to destroy the church.

Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. And so we see what might have looked like the snuffing out of a flame really was expansion of the church.

And how much did that glorify God? You know, again, someone had said what men intended for evil, God meant for good. He was able to multiply his church exponentially by moving people out from being gathered.

[33 : 26] Good. Yeah. Suffering is like an accelerant. For the gospel. Isn't it? It's like pouring gasoline on a flame.

Suffering does not snuff out those who truly belong to the Lord. It intensifies their love. It intensifies their devotion. It intensifies their sharing the gospel.

Very good point. Cameron? Cameron? Mine was kind of going back to the point you were making earlier, but, you know, in 2 Corinthians, Paul again writes, For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

Indeed, we had felt that we had received the sentence of death, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. And so one of the things I find is some, I don't know, kind of a God thing sometimes, how often things I've been looking at or, you know, lessons I've been teaching the youth kind of pop up again just to kind of help drill it into myself.

But, you know, we were going through Romans 8 and talking about the highs and the lows, and one of the points I made was sometimes I love the lows. You know, we talk about valleys, and sometimes when you're in those deepest, darkest valleys, you just have no other option but to look up.

[34 : 53] You have no other option but to rely on something other than yourself. You have no other option but to trust in Christ to pull you out of that valley. And so that's one of the things I, when I look back on my life, you know, you remember the highs and you remember how good they were.

But a lot of times the lows you remember as those were turning points or those were things that truly refined you or truly deepened your relationship with Christ, truly taught you something about your faith that you just have leaned on ever since then.

And so a lot of times for me, when I look back, I'm more thankful for the valleys than I am the highs. Amen. Good. I had a, there was a time, and I was going through just a difficult season in college my freshman year, and I called my youth pastor, and he came to my dorm, which, you know, where I grew up, the church wasn't far where I went to college.

And I remember him saying something similar to me in a visual illustration. So, you know, the valleys, if you look at a valley, that's where all the growth takes place. That's where all the life and the vegetation is.

But on the peaks, not so much. And so it's down in the valley where we really grow. It's down in the valley where we really learn a lot about, again, God and who he is and who we are and how much we are in desperate need of him.

[36 : 25] I was going to hit on 2 Corinthians 2 where Paul talks about his sufferings. And I think it helps in answering the second part of that question. How does God glorifying himself benefit us?

In chapter 11, beginning in verse 24, Five times I received at the hands of the Jews forty lashes, less one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked a night and a day and was adrift at sea. On frequent journeys in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people.

Danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. In toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night. In hunger and thirst, often without food.

In cold and exposure and apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant? [37 : 26] If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weaknesses. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

So, what does or how does God glorify himself benefit us? And that, what is Paul saying? He's not going to boast, right? It takes away boasting.

I have nothing to boast in. If I'm going to boast, I'm going to boast in the Lord and who he is. Not in myself. Not in whatever perceived strength I might have. I'm going to boast in my weaknesses. Because I've known and I've experienced through suffering that compared to God, I'm nothing. And without God, I am nothing. But in Christ, I have everything.

And so, I'll suffer. Again, as we talked about, being able to rejoice in those sufferings, to be identified with Christ. That was his goal. Who else?

[38 : 27] How does God glorifying himself benefit us? Because, you know, we could be saying, hey, I want to be the one who benefits, right? Okay, go ahead, Wes.

I think one of the big benefits we get when God does things like raising people from the dead and healing blind people, parting this Red Sea, all that kind of stuff, calming the storm that Jesus did, that one always just really blows me away.

That's when the apostles all said, now we're afraid. We're in the boat with God, you know. It really makes me see how awesome God is, how all-powerful he is.

And the things when he's telling the future is going to happen, and it does. Like, that's how smart he is. And so many things like that. So, when I see the glory of God, like in nature or whatever else, and just think of how did this animal come to be?

It didn't just evolve. Everything came together at the right time, the right place. He put it all together, and he knew what he was doing. And all the symbiotic things that go with it that help this whole ecosystem work and the clouds and everything else that brings the rain.

[39 : 34] And it goes back in the oceans, comes back around again. It's like he really knows what he's doing, but it's not just a smart guy. He is just awesome. He's just totally, totally out there. And when he does things like that that are glorifying himself, it's really bringing me closer to realizing how small we are and just how great he is.

So, that's why I see it. Good. God should be glorified because he's God. God, and we were created for worship.

And we, not I think, we, when we glorify him, when we worship him, we're most satisfied in life.

Like John Piper says, we're most satisfied in God when he is most glorified through us or vice versa. I may be messing that up. But the point is, we were created for worship.

And in glorifying God, we're serving our purpose. And God should be glorified because he's God. He's creator. He's the author and perfecter of our salvation. He sent his son to die on the cross for our sins.

[40 : 38] He's overcome death and sin for us through faith in Jesus Christ, his son, to have eternal life. We couldn't do that for ourselves. No human being could do that for us.

No one deserves the glory that he is due. You think of like Isaiah 6. Go back and read Isaiah 6 when Isaiah sees a vision of God. Isaiah is an upright man.

But he sees God and all he can think about is how sinful he is. And he hears the cherubim crying back and forth, Holy, holy, holy, holy, holy. And he falls as though dead, wishing almost for death or wishing for death because in the sight of a holy God, he realizes who he is.

Yet God's still compassionate in that moment. Sending Isaiah, who will go for us? Here I am, Lord. Send me. Right? Worshiping God, glorifying him, it benefits us because that's what we were created to do.

And, you know, for those people who say, and I've been there before, when we get to heaven, this is just going to be like a giant worship service? That sounds boring to me, you know?

[41 : 47] And it's not going to be because when you see God, you don't want to see anything else. When our eyes are on God and how awesome he is, everything else compares, or nothing else compares to him, and we'll just want to behold him.

We'll just want to behold him. Our eyes will be fixed upon him. What can we compare that to in this world? Nothing. But, you know, I think of going to the Grand Canyon.

God is obviously much more awesome than a big giant hole in the ground. But if you've gone to the Grand Canyon, you know that everybody, you just, you're fixated on this giant hole. Nobody goes to the Grand Canyon and does not spend the majority of their time looking around and in that big giant hole.

You know what I'm saying? Because it's awesome. God is much greater than that, infinitely greater than that. And he's created us to worship him, to glory in him.

And that's our greatest purpose, not to boast in ourselves, but to glory in God. And I think, and I know you've all felt that way before, where you're just, when you're, you know, at home in prayer, reading his word, in a service, worshiping and singing these songs about who he is and what he's done for you, listening to a sermon that's really digging deep into the word of God.

[43 : 18] You, you're glorying in that. And you're so thankful for who God is. So thankful for the salvation that he's given you. So, so looking forward to the eternity that he has for you.

And in those moments, for me, and I'd say it's probably the same for you, nothing else seems to matter. Whatever your problems were, you know, whoever the president of the United States is, or anything like that, it's just, man, God, you are on the throne.

And, and I'm so glad it's you. I'm so glad you're on the throne. Because you're such a good God. So gracious to save a sinner like me and to give me eternal life. And I know that no matter what happens in my life or what happens in this world, I am yours and you're going to bring me home, all the way home.

Let's move on to the next question. Why is it so tempting to lose sight of God's love and sovereignty when we suffer? Why is it so tempting to lose sight of God's love and sovereignty when we suffer? Kayla? I think if you are in a position where you're suffering for a long period of time, you become so bitter towards that suffering.

[44 : 32] And really you're becoming bitter towards the situation that God's put you in. And so when you take a moment to stop and think about, okay, this has to be part of his plan because he's promised that he has a plan.

And so when you take the time to pray and ask God to show you what that suffering is for, it helps give you a different mindset so that you're not taking that for granted.

And then you can see, okay, he's putting me through this suffering because he loves me. And I can see where he's moving me, what direction he's pulling me.

And it's going to strengthen you as you go forward. It doesn't mean you're not going to suffer again. But it just strengthens you and equips you to handle the next situation.

And we might become bitter again because we're human and we think, okay, I can fix this on my own. But if we stop and think and pray for God to reveal the reason or his plan, then it helps us soften our heart towards that suffering.

[45 : 44] Good. Yes, that really helps whenever we are tempted to doubt God's sovereignty. It's like Kayla said, like Doyleen said as well, to stop and to reflect upon what is God doing in my life right now?

What is the Lord teaching me right now? What is the Lord maybe stripping away from my life?

That's a good thing. That I would focus more on him and glory and who he is.

That's a good thing to even mark in your Bible when you're suffering. Put it somewhere close by in God's Word to stop and to think and reflect over, you know, what is God teaching me in this moment because I know that he's using it for a good purpose.

Romans 8, 28. You can mark that there. You know, I know that's one that's a well-worn page in my Bible. All right, Jack. Because you feel that God doesn't love you.

Yeah. I think a lot of people feel that way. And again, like I mentioned this morning with those who are an atheist, a great question to ask an atheist is, what happened in your life that made you want to believe that there was no God?

[46 : 57] I don't know. The times I've asked that before, I mean, it's like it's stopped them in their tracks because it's almost like they realize, yeah, there was a time I believed in God. And you're taking them back to that moment where they stopped wanting to believe.

And usually it has to do with some kind of suffering, wondering, you know, why would God allow this or does God love me? And in that is always a great opportunity, again, certainly when you're

sharing the gospel, to share Jesus, but to talk about his suffering, to talk about sin and its curse and what God has done to put an end to suffering through the suffering of his son.

Cameron? Cameron? Cameron? I think this one almost kind of circled back to the first question for me and how it kind of counters the American gospel, right, like when we're watching those movies. And I feel like I pick on him, but that saying by Bart Campolo, I just can't get out of my head of the, why would I worship the God of the Bible when I can create a better one?

And so we as humans in our sin nature, we just don't want to believe in a God that would allow us to suffer. An almighty, perfect, holy God.

[48 : 16] Why would he allow suffering? And so we as humans in our pride want to say, no, he's just got to be a perfect God that loves us, that always wants us.

If I'm suffering, it must be because it's something with me. We don't want to, you know, put that on God somehow. But when we look at, you know, the Bible specifically, if you're basing your theology, your response to suffering on the Bible, I mean, you know, the prosperity gospel wants to say, you know, well, as long as you're a good Christian, good things are going to happen to you.

But when you look at the Bible and you look at a guy like Paul, like I'm not sure any of us are raising our hands to say we're a better Christian than Paul, right? Like Paul is, you know, he ends up writing, what, half the New Testament?

And he's sitting here, you read them out. It's five times and whipped and stoned and shipwrecked.

And this is the guy that wrote so many books of the Bible, and he's suffering immeasurably.

And so when you see just those kind of examples the Bible lays out for us, like we've got to understand that God's love and sovereignty is always at play, even in the suffering.

[49 : 45] Good. Suffering is an opportunity to showcase the gospel. You're a believer, and your unbelieving family members know it, and your unbelieving coworkers know it, and your unbelieving neighbors know it, and they know you're suffering.

You better believe that the spotlight is on you, and they're watching to see, you know, what is this going to do to their faith, I think. And what an opportunity to say, you know what?

God has given me this opportunity of suffering to showcase my faith in him and to direct others to him as well. Michael? My wife just said this.

She's a little scared to stand up. Yeah, you're supposed to. All right, bring her up here. She says sometimes it's because we lose sight of God's love is because we're sometimes afraid of what he's going to use that for.

What he's going to use that suffering. Like, why am I suffering now, God? What's coming in my future? What more suffering am I going to face? Good. Well said, Heather.

[50 : 55] For your husband. Amy? I'm not as tall as Cameron, so they... 2 Corinthians, chapter 1.

If you're like me, a lot of times these first chapters kind of get skimmed over so I can get to the rest of the book. But this speaks to me.

And I'll start. And I won't read too far, I promise. Greetings from Paul. And grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is with us. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, and we do have sufferings, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

[52 : 15] But if we are afflicted, and we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and your salvation.

Or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same suffering which we also shall endure and suffer.

And our hope is for you that it is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so you are also sharers of our comfort.

And one of the things earlier that Cameron said was about the valleys and about the experiences there in the valley and how they grow us in Christ and how they strip away the stuff, the crud and things.

And there's the old song, well even in the Old Testament, they raised the Ebenezer. And I think it's really important that in those valleys that we will go through that we have to raise an Ebenezer so that when the hard times come again, Amen.

[53 : 40] You can run back to that Ebenezer and say, you've got me out of here once. Amen. You're going to get me out of here again. And your promises are true, and you can remember.

Because when we lose sight of God's love and sovereignty, when we suffer, it's because we've forgotten what He's already done for us. Amen.

So, that's what I've got to say about that. Yeah. Ebenezer, Stone of Remembrance. I'm glad you said that, because I have something to say.

Leads me into something I want to say. Before I say that, what's awesome here about this verse you just read in 2 Corinthians is that the Corinthian church caused Paul a lot of problems.

And here they're suffering. It didn't matter whatever problems they caused him. They were his brothers and sisters in Christ. And he loved them. Suffering has a way that God uses it to bring us together as a family, as his body.

[54 : 45] And so, when someone suffers in our church, it's important that we know that they don't suffer alone. That we're there with them, doing whatever we can. And I will say this also. If you're suffering in the church, let the church help you.

So often, and I've been there, we want to be tough. I can do this alone. I don't need anybody to bring me meals. I don't, and you know, I've shared, I don't need anybody to go help me pick something up with a truck that I don't have.

I'll figure it out on my own. I'll pay money to do it if I have to. And I know that I've got friends with trucks who are willing to help me out. If you're suffering, let us help you. Let us bear that burden.

It's an opportunity that you are giving to us as your church to show you how much we love you and how much we love the Lord. If will you, it's 729. Will you give me five minutes extra?

That wasn't very, that wasn't very, that wasn't very, approving of my extra five minutes. I'm going to take it anyways. You can walk out if you want. I didn't get to share this today because we were running out of time and how I planned to conclude.

[55 : 53] My sermon was talking about something personal that happened to my family and if you've heard my testimony, you've heard me share it. But whenever I think of suffering, I just can't help but think of what the Lord has done in my family.

I'm the youngest of four children. The second child was my brother whose name was Stevie. My parents, my father grew up Catholic, my mother grew up Baptist in Maryland and they got married. They had my sister and then they had my brother. Neither of them was going to church or had been going to church for a long time and my brother contracted a disease.

It's got a long name that my mom always tells me what it is but I can't ever remember. It's just a form of meningitis that was deadly. And on his first birthday, she realized that he was not himself, not smiling, not laughing, miserable, hurting, in pain.

And so they took him to the hospital, found out what was wrong with him and that it was life-threatening. And while they were in the hospital with him for a while, you know, my mom would be in the hospital room with him, my dad would be with my sister in the waiting room, oftentimes.

[57 : 39] My sister is outgoing. If you've ever met my sister, she's very outgoing. She likes to talk to strangers and she does it well. And so she was talking to a lady, an older lady who was there waiting for her husband who was upstairs visiting a member of their church who was sick.

And they were members of a church, Knoll Avenue Church of the Nazarene. And when the husband, whose name was Gail Milhuff, came downstairs and saw my sister talking to his wife and also my dad, he asked what they were doing there.

And so my dad told him about my brother Stevie. And Gail Milhuff said, can I have your phone number? I belong to a church that prays for people and we want to pray for your son.

And so he would call my dad frequently while my brother was in the hospital asking him, how is he doing? And then my brother died.

My brother died. He didn't live much longer than one. He didn't die, I think it wasn't much long after his birthday or before his birthday. I just know those dates are close together.

[59 : 01] And my mom, you know, I might take a little bit more than five, but my mom will tell it that again, they were far from the Lord, but she knew her son was in pain.

They were doing things, having to drill into his brain and do a lot of things. They knew that this is just not something you want to see your child go through.

And so she was in the hospital and she prayed, said, Lord, you know, if your plan is to take him, then take him. She finished that prayer and the alarm went off, the code blew, and she knew it was

him.

And he died. Gail Milhoff called my dad, checking for a report. My dad told him he's passed away. And that man was adamant to get my parents to church. And he did. Eventually, my dad went first with my sister.

[60 : 05] My mom came along soon afterwards. And Gail Milhoff sat in the first couple of pews, which was, I think, really probably awkward for my parents to go and church for the first time in a long time and sit right there in the front.

And I'll never forget my dad talking about how, you know, they came, he came forward to pray. And Gail Milhoff jumped over the front pew.

So it must have been the second. He's an older guy, retired. Jumped over the front pew to go to my dad to pray for him. My brother was buried in Maryland.

My parents were out in Kansas City. Didn't have much. So he's in a burial plot that belonged to my grandparents. First time I went to his grave to where he was buried, I was 16 years old.

And yet, my mom would always have these pictures in our house of him. Ebenezer's. And I remember as a little boy, I mean, I had two sisters and I wanted a brother.

[61 : 21] And my best friends all had brothers. And I remember going home when I was young, maybe younger than Jack, saying, Mom, I wish I had a brother. You know, probably even saying, Can you guys make me a brother or do something?

What do I got to do to get a brother in this family? And she told me, I have a brother. And she showed me his pictures. And so it's hard whenever it's his birthday. For them, it's hard whenever it's the anniversary of his death.

But those pictures are there, those Ebenezers of what God has done in our family. So 16 years old, going to his grave. And I remember my oldest sister was in college. She wasn't there. But me and my other sister and my parents were there and we just circled where his body lay.

And I said, he served his purpose. He had one year to live. A baby.

And he suffered so much in that one year. But God used his short life and his suffering to draw us back to him.

[62 : 33] And I'm saved and my sisters are saved and whatever God has taken away, he will give back. I have a brother in heaven that I've never met.

And I'll tell you, I most look forward to seeing Jesus, right? I can't wait to see my brother. I've got a child there that I can't wait to see. Whatever God takes away, man, he gives back.

And there was purpose in that little boy's suffering that maybe no one could see at the time. But there's a great purpose. He lived his purpose. It was short.

And he suffered. But God had a purpose in it and still does today. So, yes. And there's, man, I thank God for all that he's done.

So, anyhow, there was something else I was going to say after that, but I've forgotten it at this point. But we're over time. But just a reminder that God has a purpose.

[63 : 31] God is a good God. And so when you're suffering, when you're suffering, know that God will use it. And he'll use it in ways that you wouldn't imagine.

And have those Ebenezers remind yourself of God's faithfulness in those different ways. It doesn't have to be a big rock that you put up in your yard, but something to remind yourself God is faithful.

I'm going to pray, and then we'll sing Happy Birthday, and then we'll go have birthday fellowship.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for this time that we've had to be together tonight. Lord, thank you as we've had this opportunity to talk about suffering, to talk about what it means to suffer as a Christian, to talk about the purpose that you have in that.

And though it's difficult, Lord, we know that you love us, and we can see from our own experiences, from the experiences of so many other brothers and sisters in Christ, God, that suffering is not in vain.

It's hard, but you walk with us through it. It's hard, but you use us to make us more like you, to advance the good news of Jesus Christ. It's hard, Lord, but eternity waits where there is no more suffering and there is no more death.

[64 : 49] You use it to direct our attention to you. It's a hard thing, Lord, but it's a good thing. And it's good because through suffering, Lord, especially when we're suffering for our Christian faith, we know that we're being identified with you.

And who else would we more want to be closely identified with than Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior? So, Father, I pray that you would use this time that we've had in your Word to remind us if we're suffering now or when we suffer sometime soon, to draw our attention to you and to be reminded of your goodness, to be reminded of your love, to be reminded of the fact that you are in control and that ultimately, Lord, you will be glorified through it.

And so, Lord, we pray that, again, you would use our lives to make much of the name of Jesus Christ. God, as we prepare soon to depart from this room and go into our fellowship hall, we pray, Lord, that you would bless that time of fellowship and that it would be sweet.

Again, Lord, we love you and we thank you for the hope that we have eternally in Christ in whose name we pray. Amen. Thank you.