



For millions of believers around the world, faith in Christ and belief in the teachings of the Bible are not only discouraged but actually dangerous.

## KNOW HIS PERSECUTED. KNOW HIS WORD.

Periodically, Secret Church gatherings are held to engage in an intense six-hour Bible study as we identify with and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the globe.

The objective of Secret Church is for you to pass along what you learn in these gatherings to others so that you can make disciples of Christ in all nations for God's glory.

**[secretchurch.org](http://secretchurch.org)**

# Beyond These Walls

We're glad you've decided to attend tonight's Secret Church meeting. But even if no one showed up, it would still be worth the effort. Actually, this Bible study will hopefully benefit far more people than just those who were in attendance.

Here's how.

Tonight we will record the teaching sessions, and in the coming months these sessions will be transcribed and translated into many different languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic, and others. The foreign-language versions of Secret Church will be available online as translations are completed. But that is just the beginning.

Most Christ-followers around the world don't have access to seminaries or Bible colleges. In fact, Christ-followers in many parts of the world have no formal Christian teaching at all. Pastor David will lead additional Secret Church studies, creating numerous hours of Bible teaching on various biblical and theological issues. We will then be able to distribute those resources worldwide. The sessions together will compose a portable seminary, so to speak, with minicourses in biblical training accessible to anyone.

During the evening we will collect an offering. All of the proceeds will support persecuted Christians worldwide through ongoing ministry initiatives and provide Secret Church Bible teaching materials in multiple languages. Imagine a house-church leader in Asia or the Middle East now able to hear hours of Bible teaching as he listens to Secret Church in his own language. With your help, this can become a reality.

If you would like to make a donation to Secret Church or would like any of the Secret Church resources in another language, go to **Radical.net**.

# Secret Church Resources

## PAST SECRET CHURCH RESOURCES

Past Secret Church resources (DVDs, CDs, and Study Guides) are available for purchase at The Church at Brook Hills and online at Radical (**Radical.net**).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Secret Church resources, including audio and video recordings of the teaching sessions, downloadable study guides, and links to additional information about the persecuted church are available on the Secret Church website (**SecretChurch.org**) and through the Radical website (**Radical.net**).

## TRANSLATED RESOURCES

Secret Church resources and other message series have been translated into multiple languages. Audio recordings, transcripts, and study guides can be downloaded from the Radical website in the Resource Library (**Radical.net**). Current languages include Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Hindi, Indonesian, Russian, Farsi, French, Vietnamese, Thai, and Amharic. New resources and languages are continually being added to the website.

## BOOKS BY DAVID PLATT

David Platt is the author of two books: *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* and *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God*. These books are available online at Radical (**Radical.net**).

If you would like additional information about the books, visit **RadicalTheBook.com** and **RadicalTogether.com**. All proceeds from book sales go toward promoting the glory of Christ in all nations.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources such as sermons, Small Group Guides, Family Worship Guides, and more are available on the Radical website (**Radical.net**).

# Program Notes

## TONIGHT'S SCHEDULE

5:00 p.m.	Simulcast Begins
6:00 p.m.	Announcements
6:05 p.m.	Welcome from Pastor David
6:10 p.m.	Musical Worship
6:30 p.m.	Teaching Segment 1
7:30 p.m.	Break
7:45 p.m.	Teaching Segment 2
8:45 p.m.	Persecuted Church Highlight: Horn of Africa
8:50 p.m.	Prayer for the Persecuted Church
9:10 p.m.	Break
9:25 p.m.	Teaching Segment 3
10:25 p.m.	Giving Report/Offering
10:35 p.m.	Break
10:50 p.m.	Teaching Segment 4
11:50 p.m.	Musical Worship
11:55 p.m.	Simulcast Concludes

*(Times are approximate, and the schedule is subject to change.)*

Pastor David will be teaching tonight from the English Standard Version (ESV).  
Scriptures and references are included in the Study Guide.

So as not to distract from the study, please turn all cell phones to the "silent" or "off" mode during our time together.

## THE CROSS AND SUFFERING

Secret Church

*"O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted."*  
*Habakkuk 1:2-4*

*"The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation."*  
*John Stott*

## The World Around Us ...

- Suffering is a global reality.
  - We live in a world full of natural evil.
    - Diseases
      - Almost 50,000 people contracted HIV last week; approximately 40,000 others died of AIDS in that same week.
      - In the next year, over 1.5 million people will be diagnosed with cancer; over 500,000 people will die of cancer. Based on current trends, almost 50 percent of men and women born today will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lifetimes.
    - Disasters
      - Hundreds of thousands of people died instantly in recent earthquakes in Haiti and China, in a cyclone in Myanmar, and in a tsunami in Southeast Asia.
      - Over 13 million people are currently suffering amid famine and food shortages in the Horn of Africa; hundreds of thousands are on the brink of starvation.
    - Death
      - Approximately 25,000 children under the age of 5 die every day due to poverty. That's over 9 million children every year who die because of poverty. Almost 40 percent of those children die during the first month of their lives.
      - Over 150,000 people die every day in the world. That's over 60 million people who will die this year.

*"One hundred [people] are dying each minute. If you could hear them all, you'd hear so many screams you'd go insane. Only God can hear them all and not go insane. God parcels out our awareness in small amounts lest we go under. How can you live in a world like that as a loving person and rejoice in the Lord?"*  
*John Piper*

- We live in a world full of moral evil.
  - Slavery and abortion.
  - Beatings and murders.
  - Robberies and riots.
  - Torture and rape.
  - Discrimination and persecution.
  - War and terrorism.
  - Violence and genocide.
  - Suffering is a universal experience.
- All people experience suffering.
- All Christians undergo suffering.
  - Satan intends every type of suffering to sabotage us.
  - God intends every type of suffering to sanctify us.
- Suffering is a personal struggle.
  - Physical pain.
  - Emotional hurt.
  - Intellectual questions ...
    - Why do evil and suffering exist?
    - Where is God in the middle of suffering?
    - How can I suffer well?
    - When will my suffering end?
    - How can God be good and allow so much evil in the world?
    - How can God be gracious and ordain such suffering in my life?
  - Insufficient answers ...
    - Atheism: God and evil do NOT exist.

*"None can account for the tremendous amount of suffering in a world in which an allegedly omnipotent, omniscient and wholly good God reigns... The conclusion to which we are drawn, therefore, is that the existence of such a God is implausible."*

*Andrew Weisberger*

*"Not many years ago when I was an atheist, if anyone had asked me, 'Why do you not believe in God?' my reply would have run something like this: 'Look at the universe we live in.' ... History is largely a record of crime, war, disease, and terror. ... But all civilizations pass away and, even while they remain, inflict peculiar sufferings of their own. ... Every race that comes into being in any part of the universe is doomed; for the universe, they tell us, is running down. ... All stories will come to nothing; all life will turn out in the end to have been a transitory and senseless contortion upon the idiotic face of infinite matter. If you ask me to believe that this is the work of a benevolent and omnipotent spirit, I reply that all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Either there is no spirit behind the universe, or else a spirit indifferent to good and evil, or else an evil spirit."*

*C. S. Lewis, referencing his life before he became a Christian*

- Christian Science: Evil is illusory.
- New Age: Evil is the result of ignorance.

- Dualism: Good and evil are two forces, equal in power and opposite in purpose.
- Fatalism: Blind fate determines the depth of evil in our lives and in the world.
- Process Theism: God's power is always evolving; He is limited in His ability to prevent evil.

*"It is too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims."*

*Rabbi Harold Kushner, When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

- Open Theism: God's knowledge is always increasing; because He has limited information, He sometimes makes errors in judgment.

*"Decisions not yet made do not exist anywhere to be known even by God. They are potential—yet to be realized but not yet actual. God can predict a great deal of what we will choose to do, but not all of it, because some of it remains hidden in the mystery of human freedom. ... The God of the Bible displays an openness to the future that the traditional view of omniscience simply cannot accommodate."*

*Clark Pinnock*

- Intense longing ...
  - We don't want thoughts from men.
  - We want truth from God.

## The Word Before Us ...

- The Bible addresses suffering honestly.

*Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long?*

*Psalms 6:2-3*

*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?*

*How long will you hide your face from me?*

*Psalms 13:1*

*Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!*

*Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?*

*Psalms 44:23-24*

- The Bible addresses suffering effectively.

*If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.*

*Psalms 119:92*

*“What did this book mean to me during the long and weary years of solitary confinement and then for the last four years at Dachau? The Word of God was simply everything to me—comfort and strength, guidance and hope, master of my days and companion of my nights, the bread which kept me from starvation and the water of life that refreshed my soul.”*  
*Martin Niemoller, German pastor who spent years in a Nazi concentration camp*

- The Bible addresses suffering theologically.

*“Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to; or he cannot and does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, and does not want to, he is wicked. But, if God both can and wants to abolish evil, then how comes evil in the world?”*

*Epicurus, fourth-century philosopher*

- Does God exist?
- How good is God?
  - Is He loving?
  - Is He malicious?
- How great is God?
  - Is He all-knowing?
  - Is He all-powerful?

- The Bible addresses suffering mysteriously.

*“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*

*Deuteronomy 29:29*

*“Because all Christian doctrines relate to God who is ultimately beyond our comprehension, there will inevitably be some element of mystery, or transcendence, that cannot be reduced to human understanding. Nonetheless, within these limits the theological effort must be carried on.”*

*J. Rodman Williams*

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*

*1 Corinthians 4:1-2*

- Contradiction: A condition in which at least two things are truly contrary to each other.
- Paradox: A correlation that appears to be a contradiction or even absurd, but when closely examined, it proves to be true.
- Antinomy: A combination of two thoughts or principles, each of which is true in its own right but which we cannot harmonize.
- Mystery: An assumed truth which the human mind cannot comprehend but which we accept by faith.

*“Man with all his shrewdness is as stupid about understanding by himself the mysteries of God, as [a donkey] is incapable of understanding musical harmony.”*

*John Calvin*

## The Journey Ahead of Us ...

- We want to explore suffering in all of Scripture.
  - Covering 75 key texts.
    - Old Testament
      - Pentateuch
      - Historical Books
      - Psalms and Wisdom Literature
      - Prophets
    - New Testament
      - Gospels
      - Acts
      - Pauline Letters
      - General Letters
  - Drawing five foundational conclusions.
- We want to exalt Christ in all of Scripture.
  - The cross of Christ is the center of all Scripture (and all history!).

*And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

*Luke 24:25-27*

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.*

*1 Peter 1:10-11*

- The cross of Christ is the key to understanding all suffering.

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 5:3-8*

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Hebrews 12:1-3

- If we want to discover the mystery of suffering, we must behold the majesty of the cross.
- Everything in all history, including suffering ...
  - Was planned for \_\_\_\_\_ Good Friday \_\_\_\_\_.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Ephesians 1:3-10

- Ultimately points to Good Friday.
  - Everything before the cross points forward to it.
  - Everything since the cross points back to it.
  - Everything that will last was purchased on it.
  - Everything that matters hinges on it.
- We want to examine our hearts.
  - Have I been \_\_\_\_\_ saved \_\_\_\_\_?

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might ...

2 Thessalonians 1:5-9

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were

in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

"A nominal Christian often discovers in suffering that his faith has been in his church, denomination, or family tradition, but not Christ. As he faces evil and suffering, he may lose his faith. But that's actually a good thing. I have sympathy for people who lose their faith, but any faith lost in suffering wasn't a faith worth keeping."

Randy Alcorn

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Colossians 1:21-23

For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Hebrews 3:14

- Am I prepared to \_\_\_\_\_ suffer \_\_\_\_\_?

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:10-13

"We do not give the subject of evil and suffering the thought it deserves until we ourselves are confronted with tragedy. If by that point our belief—not well thought out but deeply ingrained—are largely out of step with the God who has disclosed himself in the Bible and supremely in Jesus, then the pain from the personal tragedy may be multiplied many times over as we begin to question the very foundations of our faith."

D. A. Carson

"Wimpy worldviews make wimpy Christians.  
And wimpy Christians won't survive the days ahead."

John Piper

- Am I ready to \_\_\_\_\_ die \_\_\_\_\_?



*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

*Philippians 1:21*

*“Whatever the church does, it should prepare its members to face death and meet God.”*

*D. A. Carson*

- We want to equip one another.

*When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

*Acts 14:21-22*

- To stand firm on the Word.

*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

*Philippians 1:27-30*

*“Just as the small fire is extinguished by the storm whereas a large fire is enhanced by it, likewise a weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes whereas a strong faith is strengthened by them.”*

*Viktor Frankl, Auschwitz survivor*

- To spread the gospel in the world.

*And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

*Acts 20:22-24*

*“Where are the men and women of this generation who will hold their lives cheap, and be faithful even unto death, who will lose their lives for Christ’s, flinging them away for love of him? Where are those who will live dangerously, and be reckless in this service?”*

*Howard Guinness*

- We want to embrace suffering in our lives, our families, and our churches.

- Not because suffering is easy.

- But because suffering is worth it.

- To experience the sufficiency of Christ in our weakness.

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

*2 Corinthians 12:7-10*

- To share the sufferings of Christ on this earth.

*... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

*Philippians 3:10-11*

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church ...*

*Colossians 1:24*

- To show the supremacy of Christ to all nations.

*“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”*

*Matthew 24:9-14*

*“Believing that further delay would be sinful, some of God’s insignificants and nobodies in particular, but trusting in our Omnipotent God, have decided on certain simple lines, according to the Book of God, to make a definite attempt to render the evangelization of the world an accomplished fact. ... Too long have we been waiting for one another to begin! The time for waiting is past! The hour of God has struck! In God’s holy name let us arise and build! We will not build on the sand, but on the bedrock sayings of Christ, and the gates and minions of hell shall not prevail against us. Should such men as we fear? Before the whole world, aye, before the sleepy, lukewarm, faithless, namby-pamby Christian world, we will dare to trust our God, we will venture our all for Him, we will live and we will die for Him, and we will do it with His joy unspeakable singing aloud in our hearts. We will a thousand times sooner die trusting only in*

our God than live trusting in man. And when we come to this position the battle is already won, and the end of the glorious campaign in sight. We will have the real Holiness of God, not the sickly stuff of talk and dainty words and pretty thoughts; we will have a Masculine Holiness, one of daring faith and works for Jesus Christ.”  
C. T. Studd

- To experience the satisfaction of Christ for all eternity.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.  
2 Corinthians 4:16-18

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Romans 8:18-39 (NIV)

## SEVENTY-FIVE KEY TEXTS

A Biblical Theology of Evil and Suffering

### The Pentateuch

#### 1. Genesis 1-11: Essential Foundations

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God  
he created him; male and female he created them.  
Genesis 1:27

#### The Nature of God ...

- He is the supreme Creator.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.  
Genesis 1:1

- He is the sovereign King.

And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.  
Genesis 1:29-30

- He is the righteous Judge.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”  
Genesis 2:16-17

- He is the merciful Savior.

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.  
Genesis 3:21

#### The Nature of Creation

- Fashioned by the Word of God.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.  
Genesis 1:3



*And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."*

*Genesis 1:6*

*And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.*

*Genesis 1:9*

*And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so.*

*Genesis 1:11*

*And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years ...*

*Genesis 1:14*

*And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."*

*Genesis 1:20*

*And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.*

*Genesis 1:24*

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

*Genesis 1:26*

- Sustained by the power of God.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

*Colossians 1:15-17*

- Evidence of the goodness of God.

*The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:12*

*... to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:18*

*So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:21*

*And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:25*

*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

*Genesis 1:31*

### **The Nature of Man ...**

- Created in the image of God ...

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

*Genesis 1:26*

- We are a unique reflection of God.
- We are utterly reliant upon God.
- We are ultimately responsible to God.
- Created for the purpose of God ...

*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

*Genesis 1:28*

- To enjoy a relationship with God.
- To rule over all creation.
- To reproduce God's glory to the ends of the earth.

### **The Nature of Satan ...**

*"You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit."*

*Isaiah 14:13-15*

*And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

*Revelation 12:9*

- Significant truths ...
  - God is Creator; Satan is creature.
  - God is sovereign; Satan is subordinate.
  - This is not dualism; this is domination!
- Significant characteristics ...
  - Satan can speak, and he is smart.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"*  
Genesis 3:1

- Satan is a malicious liar and an evil murderer.

*But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*  
Genesis 3:4-5

*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*  
John 8:44

### The Nature of Sin ...

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ...*  
Romans 5:12

- The core of sin ...
  - Rejecting God's Word.
  - Spurning God's authority.
  - Denying God's character.
- The conflict brought about by sin ...
  - Conflict between man and God.
    - Guilt.

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*  
Genesis 3:7

- Shame.

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*  
Genesis 2:24-25

*And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*  
Genesis 3:8

- Fear.

*But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."*  
Genesis 3:9-10

- Conflict between man and woman.

*To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."*  
Genesis 3:16

- Conflict between man and creation.

*And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*  
Genesis 3:17-19

- The consequences of sin ...
  - Immediate spiritual death.

*Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*  
Genesis 3:22-24

- Murder.

*Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.*  
Genesis 4:8

- Evil hearts.

*And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."*

Genesis 8:21

- Corrupt minds.

*The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Genesis 6:5

- Violence.

*And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth."*

Genesis 6:13

- Division.

*So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.*

Genesis 11:8-9

- Curse.

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Genesis 12:1-3

- Eventual physical death.

*Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.*

Genesis 5:5

*Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."*

Genesis 6:3

### **The Need for Redemption ...**

- Genesis 1–11 gives us glimpses of grace ...
  - The promise of Christ.

*The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

Genesis 3:14-15

- Satan will be trampled.
- Christ will triumph.
- The presence of a covenant.

*For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.*

Genesis 6:17-18

- Genesis 1–11 leaves us holding on to hope ...
  - That Satan will be defeated.
  - That sin will be destroyed.
  - That God's creation will be restored.
  - That God's people will be rescued.
  - That God's name will be praised.
- Genesis 1–11 points us to the centrality of Christ ...
  - The Bible is a story of redemption that spans from creation to re-creation.
  - Redemption is possible only through a Redeemer.

## **2. Genesis 37–50: Pain and Providence**

*Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.*

Genesis 37:3-11

### The Portraits of Joseph ...

- The favorite son.
- The despised \_\_\_\_\_ brother \_\_\_\_\_.
- The slave in a foreign land.

*Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.*

Genesis 37:25-28

- The \_\_\_\_\_ pure \_\_\_\_\_ servant.

*Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house."*

Genesis 39:6-15

- The slandered prisoner.

*As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.*

Genesis 39:19-20

- The \_\_\_\_\_ leader \_\_\_\_\_ over all the land.

*Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.*

Genesis 41:42-43

- The restorative brother.

*When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.*

Genesis 42:1-3

*And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.*

*I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice."*

Genesis 43:8-10

*When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?" And Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found." But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father."*

Genesis 44:14-17

*So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry.'*

Genesis 45:4-9

- The reunited \_\_\_\_\_ son \_\_\_\_\_.

*He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen. Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."*

Genesis 46:28-30

*When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed and breathed his last and was gathered to his people. Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him.*

*Genesis 49:33–50:1*

*When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you." And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.'" Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

*Genesis 50:15-21*

#### **The Providence of God ...**

- He is the ever-\_\_\_\_present\_\_\_\_ Lord.

*The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.*

*Genesis 39:2-3*

*And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.*

*Genesis 39:20-23*

- He is the ever-\_\_\_\_subtle\_\_\_\_ King.

*So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt.'"*

*Genesis 45:4-9*

- Unexplainable friends ...

- Divine sovereignty.

*When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.*

*Psalms 105:16-17*

- Human \_\_\_\_responsibility\_\_\_\_.

- The ultimate conclusion ...

- The responsibility of man cannot be ignored.
- The will of God cannot be thwarted.

- He is the ever-\_\_\_\_faithful\_\_\_\_ Savior.

- God keeps His promises.

*Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."*

*Genesis 15:13-16*

- God preserves His people.

*And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two.*

*All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.*

*Genesis 46:27*

*When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.*

*Deuteronomy 32:8*

#### **The Point for Us ...**

- We have a Lord who is \_\_\_\_with\_\_\_\_ us.

- God is with you in your exaltation.
- God is with you in your humiliation.

- We have a King who is \_\_\_\_guiding\_\_\_\_ us.

- God does not overlook some of the details in your life.
- God orchestrates \_\_\_\_all\_\_\_\_ of the details of your life.

- He is orchestrating a variety of circumstances ...
- ... in a variety of people ...
- ... for a variety of goals.

- God's providence is the only foundation for embracing life's \_\_\_\_pain\_\_\_\_.

- God takes evil and turns it into good.
- God takes suffering and turns it into \_\_\_\_satisfaction\_\_\_\_.



*Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

*Genesis 41:50-52*

- We have a Savior who will redeem us.
  - Don't miss the parallels ...
    - God uses a dreadful sin to preserve His people in Genesis.
    - God will use a dreadful sin to save His people for all eternity.
    - In both stories God takes the sins of the destroyers and makes them the means of their deliverance.
  - Don't miss the promise ...

*"Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."*

*Genesis 49:8-10*

- God will take the Lion of Judah and make him the Lamb who was slain.

*And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

*Revelation 5:5-6*

- Don't miss the point ...
  - Joseph points us to Jesus.
  - In this grand story of redemption, the One who has saved us from our sins will one day glorify us with Him.

### 3. Exodus 3: The Lord Who Sees Our Suffering

*"It is not a cheerful thought that millions of us who live in a land of Bibles, who belong to churches and labor to promote the Christian religion, may yet pass our whole life on this earth without once having thought or tried to think seriously about the being of God. Few of us have let our hearts gaze in wonder at the I AM, the self-existent Self back of which no creature can think. Such thoughts are too painful for us. We prefer to think where it will do more good – about how to build a better mousetrap, for instance, or how to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. And for this we are now paying a too heavy price in the secularization of our religion and the decay of our inner lives."*

*A. W. Tozer*

### God's Revelation Amidst Suffering ...

- I am holy.

*Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.*

*Exodus 3:1-6*

- He is perfectly unique.
- He is completely separate.
- He is absolutely pure.
- I am merciful.

*Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."*

*Exodus 3:7-10*

- He sees our affliction.
- He hears our cries.
- He knows our sufferings.
- He remembers His covenant.

*Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."*

*Genesis 15:13-16*

- I am ever-present.

*But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."*

*Exodus 3:11-12*

- I am all- powerful.

*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

*Isaiah 40:28*

- I am self-existent.
  - God has no origin.

*Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

*Exodus 3:13-14*

- I am self- sufficient.

- God has no needs.

*"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."*

*Psalms 50:7-15*

*"Were all human beings suddenly to become blind, still the sun would shine by day and the stars by night, for these owe nothing to the millions who benefit from their light. So, were every man on earth to become an atheist, it could not affect God in any way. He is what He is in Himself without regard to any other. To believe in Him adds nothing to His perfections; to doubt Him takes nothing away."*

*A. W. Tozer*

- I am eternal.

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

*Psalms 90:1-2*

- His glory never dims.

- His beauty never fades.

*"When we enjoy God, we enjoy him in his eternity without any flux. ... After many ages, the joys will be as savory and satisfying as if they had been but that moment first tasted by our hungry appetites. When the glory of the Lord shall rise upon you, it shall be so far from ever setting, that after millions of years are expired, as numerous as the sands on the seashore, the sun, in the light of whose countenance you shall live, shall be as bright as at the first appearance; he will be so far from ceasing to flow, that he will flow as strong, as full, as at the first communication of himself in glory to the creature. God is always vigorous and flourishing; a pure act of life, sparkling new and fresh rays of life and light to the creature, flourishing with a perpetual spring, and contenting the most capacious desire; forming your interest, pleasure, and satisfaction; with an infinite variety, without any change or succession; he will have variety to increase delights, and eternity to perpetuate them; this will be the fruit of the enjoyment of an infinite and eternal God."*

*Stephen Charnock*

- I am immutable.

*"For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed."*

*Malachi 3:6*

- His perfections never change.
- I am faithful.

*God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"*

*Exodus 6:2-8*

- He promises liberation.
  - He promises redemption.
  - He promises adoption.
  - He promises possession.
- I am sovereign.

*But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go.*

*Exodus 3:19-20*

- I am just.
  - Be careful not to evaluate God's justice in the short term.
  - God will assert His justice ultimately and completely in His perfect time.
- I am God.

*And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."*  
Exodus 20:1-3

#### Our Response Amidst Suffering ...

- Put your faith and hope in God.
  - The steadfast confession of the Old Testament: God is Lord.

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."*  
Deuteronomy 6:4-5

- The stunning realization of the New Testament: Jesus is Lord.

*The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.*  
John 8:48-59

- Find your rest and refuge in God.

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*  
Psalm 46:1

- Do not focus on the circumstances that are difficult around you.

*Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all."*  
Exodus 5:22-23

- Put your focus on the character of the One who called you.

*God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD."*  
Exodus 6:2

#### 4. Exodus 12-24: Blood That Saves from Suffering and Sin

God delivers His children from suffering through blood.

*The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt."*  
Exodus 12:1-13

- The portrait of the Lord in Egypt ...
  - He is the holy Judge.
    - Man deserves destruction.

*For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.*  
Exodus 12:23

- He is the loving Savior.
  - God gives grace.

*"And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.*  
Exodus 12:25-27

- The provision from the Lord in Egypt ...
  - The blood of a spotless lamb.
    - By grace this sacrifice is acceptable to God.
    - Through faith this sacrifice is applied to man.

*Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!"*

*Exodus 12:28-32*

**God guarantees His children His love through blood.**

*And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.*

*Exodus 24:4-11*

- See the significance of God's law.

*And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your*

*daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."*

*Exodus 20:1-17*

- See the beauty of God's mercy.
  - God's people are forgiven by the blood of a sacrifice.
  - God's people are covered by the blood of a sacrifice.
    - They gaze on His glory.
    - They celebrate in His presence.

**God saves His children from sin through blood.**

*When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."*

*Genesis 22:9-14*

*Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

*Hebrews 9:22*

*Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*

*Romans 5:9*

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ...*

*Ephesians 1:7*

*So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.*

*Hebrews 13:12*



... knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

1 Peter 1:18-19

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

- The blood of the Lamb of God will satisfy the \_\_\_\_\_wrath\_\_\_\_\_ of God.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Romans 3:23-25

- The blood of the Lamb of God will save the children of God.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:29

- By grace His sacrifice is acceptable to God.
- Through faith His \_\_\_\_\_sacrifice\_\_\_\_\_ is applied to us.
- We now gaze on His glory.
- We now \_\_\_\_\_celebrate\_\_\_\_\_ in His presence.

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Matthew 26:26-29

## 5. Leviticus and Numbers: The Law, the Land, and Suffering

### God is holy.

"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground."

Leviticus 11:44

- We cannot be \_\_\_\_\_casual\_\_\_\_\_ with God.

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace.

Leviticus 10:1-3

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering."

Leviticus 16:1-3

- We must be contrite before God.

"And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever."

Leviticus 16:29-31

### Sin is deadly.

Now an Israelite woman's son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel. And the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought in the camp, and the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name, and cursed. Then they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. And they put him in custody, till the will of the LORD should be clear to them. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.'"

Leviticus 24:10-16

- The propensity to sin is strong.

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, "We came to the land to which



you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.” But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” Then the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.” So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

Numbers 13:25-33

Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

Numbers 14:1-4

- God's people disregarded His goodness.
- God's people doubted His greatness.
  - They magnified potential problems.
  - They minimized powerful promises.

The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Genesis 13:14-18

Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Genesis 15:13-16

- God's people disobeyed His Word.

And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

Numbers 14:4

- God's people disqualified themselves from His blessing.
 

“I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.”

Numbers 14:35

- The punishment for sin is severe.

“The awareness of sin, a deep awareness of disobedience, and painful confession of sin used to be our shadow. Christians hated sin. They feared it, they fled from it, they grieved over it. Some of our [forefathers] agonized over their sins. A man who lost his temper might wonder if he could still go to holy communion. A woman who for years envied her more attractive and intelligent sister might wonder if this sin threatened her very salvation. ... That shadow has dimmed. Nowadays the accusation, ‘You have sinned,’ is often said with a grin and with a tone that signals an inside joke. At one time this accusation still had the power to jolt people.”

Cornelius Plantinga

#### Sacrifice is necessary.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.”

Leviticus 17:11

- The provision in the Old Testament: an annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement.
  - The elements ...
    - A priest entering an earthly sanctuary.

“But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.”

Leviticus 16:3-10

- The blood of a spotless animal.

*“Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil and put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die. And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.”*  
*Leviticus 16:11-17*

- God saw the sins of Israel.
- God was satisfied by the sacrifice of a substitute.

*“And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.”*  
*Leviticus 16:20-22*

- A sacrifice that would need repeating.

*“And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.” And Aaron did as the LORD commanded Moses.*  
*Leviticus 16:34*

- The effect ...
  - A reminder of all our sin.

*For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*  
*Hebrews 10:1-4*

- The provision in the New Testament: an abiding sacrifice in the death of Christ.

*And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*  
*Hebrews 10:10*

- The elements ...
  - A priest entering a heavenly sanctuary.

*Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*  
*Hebrews 9:23-24*

- The blood of a sinless man.

*But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*  
*Hebrews 9:11-14*

- God sees the sins of our lives.
- God is satisfied by the sacrifice of His Son.
- A sacrifice that will last forever.

*And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*  
*Hebrews 10:11-14*

- The effect ...
  - The removal of all our sin.

*Then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”*  
*Hebrews 10:17*

**Jesus is worthy.**

- He is the High Priest who will continually represent us.

*The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

*Hebrews 7:23-25*

- He is the Sacrificial Lamb who will eternally reign over us.

*And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”*

*Revelation 5:5-10*

## 6. Deuteronomy: The God Who Afflicts His People

### Old Testament: Blessings and Curses

- God promises blessings for obedience.

*“And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.”*

*Deuteronomy 28:1-6*

- God pronounces curse for disobedience.

*“If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed. Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God. And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.”*

*Deuteronomy 28:58-63*

### New Testament: The Cross and the Curse

*For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

*Galatians 3:10-14*

- We are under the curse of God's law.
- Christ came under the curse of God's judgment.

*... his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.*

*Deuteronomy 21:23*

*“Our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law [so that] we could never be delivered from it by our own power, sent his only Son in the world and laid upon him all the sins of all men, saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them [all].”*

*Martin Luther*

- We stand within the grasp of God's grace.
  - We can ignore the curse.
  - We can work to overcome the curse.
  - We can embrace the curse and run to the cross.

## Historical Books

### 7. Joshua and Judges: Fear and Judgment

#### Exhortation Amidst Fear

*After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

Joshua 1:1-9

- Trust divine \_\_\_\_\_ promises \_\_\_\_\_.

*Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours. Your territory shall be from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea. No one shall be able to stand against you. The LORD your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you shall tread, as he promised you.*

Deuteronomy 11:24-25

- God had given them the land.
- God had guaranteed them the land.
- Follow divine commands.
  - God's Word must be on our minds.
  - God's Word must be in our mouths.
- Depend on divine presence.
  - From the perspective of the world, Joshua should be scared to death.
  - With the presence of God, Joshua could be \_\_\_\_\_ sure \_\_\_\_\_ of victory.
- Live for divine glory.

*"Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.*

*And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

Joshua 24:14-15

- God orchestrates the events of His people for the display of His glory.

#### Demonstration of Judgment

- God judges \_\_\_\_\_ individuals \_\_\_\_\_ ...

*"But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."*

Joshua 6:18-19

*But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.*

Joshua 7:1

- One individual's sin harms the entire people of God.

*Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai. And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few." So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water. Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?" The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." ' "*

Joshua 7:2-13

- One individual's sin forfeits the favorable \_\_\_\_\_ presence \_\_\_\_\_ of God.



*And the LORD commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you."*

*Deuteronomy 31:23*

*Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you.  
Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses!*

*Joshua 1:17*

*The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you."*

*Joshua 3:7*

*So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.*

*Joshua 6:27*

*Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.*

*Joshua 7:12*

- One individual's sin brings dishonor on the glory of God.

*"For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will you do for your great name?"*

*Joshua 7:9*

- One individual's sin warrants the swift and just wrath of God.

*So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today."*

*And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day.*

*Joshua 7:22-26*

- Gods judges pagan nations.

*But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.*

*Deuteronomy 20:16-18*

- For some time, God demonstrates His patience toward undeserving sinners.

*Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."*

*Genesis 15:13-16*

*Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?*

*Ezekiel 33:11*

- In due time, God doles out His judgment on deserving sinners.

*Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.*

*Genesis 18:27-33*

- God judges His people.

*When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely. And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol, so the Canaanites lived among them, but became subject to forced labor. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon or of Ahlab or of Achzib or of Helbah or of Aphik or of Rehob, so the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out. Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, so they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land.*

*Judges 1:28-33*



And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress. Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so. Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not." So the LORD left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and he did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

Judges 2:10-23

- The pattern ...
  - Relapse.
  - Ruin.
  - Repentance.
  - Restoration.
  - Rest.

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, 'When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" And Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God." And Joshua said, "Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan."

Joshua 3:7-11

- The problem ...
  - They illustrated man's depravity.
    - The core of their sin: blatant idolatry.

The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the LORD and did not serve him.

Judges 10:6

- The consequence of their sin: rampant immorality.

As they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless fellows, surrounded the house, beating on the door. And they said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know him." And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing. Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine. Let me bring them out now. Violate them and do with them what seems good to you, but against this man do not do this outrageous thing." But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and made her go out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go. And as morning appeared, the woman came and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, until it was light. And her master rose up in the morning, and when he opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, behold, there was his concubine lying at the door of the house, with her hands on the threshold. He said to her, "Get up, let us be going." But there was no answer. Then he put her on the donkey, and the man rose up and went away to his home. And when he entered his house, he took a knife, and taking hold of his concubine he divided her, limb by limb, into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. And all who saw it said, "Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak."

Judges 19:22-30

"No people ever rise higher than their idea of God, and conversely, a loss of the sense of God's high and awesome character always involves a loss of a people's moral values and even what we commonly call humanity."

James Montgomery Boice

- They needed God's deliverance.

Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, and the LORD raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man.

The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab.

Judges 3:15

- They needed someone to rescue them from divine judgment.
- They needed someone to show them divine mercy.

*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*  
Judges 21:25

## 8. Ruth: The Sovereign Mystery of Surprising Mercy

### The Setting ...

- Two places:

*In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.*  
Ruth 1:1

- A land of promise.
- A land of compromise.
- Two people:
  - A woman with honest hurt.

*So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women said, "Is this Naomi?" She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"*  
Ruth 1:19-21

- A woman with humble devotion.

*But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."*  
Ruth 1:16-17

- Two points of need:

*So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.*  
Ruth 1:22

- They were in need of food.
- They were in need of family.
- Two pictures of God:

*I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, when the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"*  
Ruth 1:21

- He is great.
- He is good.

*Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food.*  
Ruth 1:6

- One promise:
  - In God's sovereign design He ordains sorrowful tragedy to set the stage for surprising triumph.
    - We think that God is far from us ...
      - When we are surrounded by famine.
      - When everything seems foreign.
      - When death strikes.
      - When despair sinks in.
      - Amidst loneliness.
      - Amidst barrenness.
      - In our grief.
      - In our shame.
    - But God will show Himself faithful to us.

*So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.*  
Ruth 1:22

### The Redeemer ...

- The portrait of a kinsman-redeemer ...
  - He seeks the outcast as his family.

*But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before."*  
Ruth 2:11

- He shelters the weak under his wings.

*"The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge!" Then she said, "I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, though I am not one of your servants."*  
Ruth 2:12-13

- He serves the hungry at his table.

*And at mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here and eat some bread and dip your morsel in the wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed to her roasted grain. And she ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over.*

*Ruth 2:14*

- He showers the needy with his grace.

*When she rose to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. And also pull out some from the bundles for her and leave it for her to glean, and do not rebuke her." So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up and went into the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She also brought out and gave her what food she had left over after being satisfied.*

*Ruth 2:15-18*

- The price of a kinsman-redeemer ...

*Naomi also said to her, "The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers."*

*Ruth 2:20*

- He must have the right to redeem.
- He must have the resources to redeem.
- He must have the resolve to redeem.

*Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and to Mahlon. Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day."*

*Ruth 4:9-10*

### **The Resolution ...**

- Obed in redemptive history ...

*So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are*

*the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.*

*Ruth 4:13-22*

- God brings His people from death to life.
- God brings His people from curse to blessing.
- God brings His people from bitterness to happiness.
- God brings His people from emptiness to fullness.
- God brings His people from despair to hope.

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.*

*Matthew 1:1-6*

*... and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*

*Matthew 1:16*

- Jesus in redemptive history ...
  - He alone is able to pay the price for our salvation.
  - He alone is able to guarantee the promise of our restoration.

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us.*

*Ephesians 1:7-8*

### **The Conclusion ...**

- God is committed to sovereignly providing for His people.
  - He is sovereign over every setback.
  - He is sovereign over all suffering.
- Even when we cannot understand His manner, we can always trust His mercy.
  - His path to our joy is not always smooth.
  - His path to our joy is not always straight.
  - His path to our joy is always satisfying.

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up his bright designs  
And works his sovereign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purpose will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan his work in vain:  
God is his own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.*

*William Cowper*

## 9. 1 Samuel 17: Our Champion in Battle

*Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.*  
1 Samuel 17:1-4

### Three Facets of This Story ...

- An invincible character.

*He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him.*

1 Samuel 17:5-7

- An impossible challenge.

*He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*

1 Samuel 17:8-11

- An improbable champion.

*Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.*

1 Samuel 17:12-15

- He was passionate for the glory of God.

*And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"*

1 Samuel 17:26

- He was confident in the power of God.

*And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."*

*And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"*

1 Samuel 17:37

*And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword*

*and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand." When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it.*

*1 Samuel 17:41-51*

### Three Levels to This Story ...

- Individual History ...
  - The character: Goliath.
  - The challenge: Defeat the giant.
  - The champion: David the soon-to-be king.

*And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.*

*1 Samuel 16:12-13*

- National History ...
  - The character: Surrounding nations.
  - The challenge: Deliver God's people.
  - The champion: David the shepherd king.
- Redemptive History ...
  - The character: Satan.
  - The challenge: Destroy sin.
  - The champion: Jesus the Savior King.

### Three Takeaways from This Story

- We must live with passion for God's glory ...
  - In every problem we face.
  - In every place we go.
- We can live with confidence in His power.

*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

*Colossians 2:13-15*

- We do not fight for victory.
- We fight from victory.

*Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

*1 John 4:4*

- We will look to Jesus as our champion ...
  - In every temptation and sin we encounter.
  - In every trial and struggle we experience.

## 10. Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles: Sin and Suffering

### The Seriousness of Sin in the Kings of Israel ...

- Sin's anatomy:

*It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"*

*So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."*

*2 Samuel 11:2-5*

*When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her husband. And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.*

*2 Samuel 11:26-27*

- It appears so subtly.
- It harms so deeply.
- It controls so quickly.
- It devastates so painfully.
- Sin's tragedy:
  - The defiance of God.

*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

*Psalms 51:3-5*

- The distress of men.



## The History of Suffering in the People of Israel ...

*For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.*

1 Kings 11:4-8

- Covenant chronology:
  - United kingdom (1 Kings 1–11).
  - Divided kingdom (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17).
  - Captive kingdom (2 Kings 18–25).
- Covenant loyalty:
  - 0 of the 19 northern kings followed the Lord.
  - 8 of the 20 southern kings followed the Lord.
    - Asa, Jehosaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jothan, Hezekiah, Josiah.
- Covenant catastrophe:
  - 970–931—division (1 Kings 12:16-24)
  - 931–841—slaughter (2 Kings 10:28-29)
  - 841–722—destruction of Samaria by Assyria (2 Kings 17:6)
  - 722–586—fall of Jerusalem to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-11)

## 11. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther: The God Who Preserves His People

### The Plot ...

*In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”*

Ezra 1:1-4

- The return of the remnant to Jerusalem.

*Now these were the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of those exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia. They returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town.*

Ezra 2:1

- The rebuilding of the temple.

*And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.*

Ezra 6:14-16

- The rebuilding of the city walls.

*So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.*

Nehemiah 6:15-16

### The Structure ...

- National restoration (Ezra 1–6)
- Spiritual reformation (Ezra 7–10)
- Physical repair (Nehemiah 1–6)
- Spiritual revival (Nehemiah 7–13)

### The Point ...

- God will ultimately and providentially preserve His people for His glory.

*The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.*

*He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths.*

All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

2 Chronicles 36:15-23

And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

Nehemiah 2:8

And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

Nehemiah 2:18

Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah 2:20

When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work.

Nehemiah 4:15

And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

Nehemiah 4:19-20

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

Nehemiah 6:15-16

Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it ...

Nehemiah 7:5

○ Even when we cannot see God, He is still present.

Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them. If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries."

So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you."

Esther 3:8-11

- Persian King Xerxes (mentioned by name 29 times)
- Haman (mentioned by name 48 times)
- Mordecai (mentioned by name 54 times)
- Esther (mentioned by name 48 times)
- God (never mentioned by name)

And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Esther 4:12-16

○ Even (or especially) when we suffer, He is still worthy.

And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

Esther 9:20-22

And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Nehemiah 12:43

## Psalms and Wisdom Literature

### 12. Job 1–2: God's Sovereignty in Suffering

*Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*

*Job 1:20-22*

#### The Suffering of Job ...

- Suffering is often undeserved.

*There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.*

*Job 1:1*

*And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"*

*Job 1:8*

- Suffering is often unexpected.

*Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."*

*Job 1:13-17*

- Suffering is often unimaginable.

*While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."*

*Job 1:18-19*

- Suffering is always painful.

*So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.*

*Job 2:7-8*

*And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven.*

*Job 2:12*

*For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water. For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.*

*Job 3:24-25*

*My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh.*

*Job 7:5*

*... he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness.*

*Job 9:18*

*My face is red with weeping, and on my eyelids is deep darkness ...*

*Job 16:16*

*My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother. Even young children despise me; when I rise they talk against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me. My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.*

*Job 19:17-20*

*The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.*

*Job 30:17*

*My inward parts are in turmoil and never still; days of affliction come to meet me. I go about darkened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. I am a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches. My skin turns black and falls from me, and my bones burn with heat. My lyre is turned to mourning, and my pipe to the voice of those who weep.*

*Job 30:27-31*

#### The Sovereignty of God ...

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and*

turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Job 1:6-12

- God is sovereign over angels.
- God is sovereign over \_\_\_\_\_ demons \_\_\_\_\_.
- God is sovereign over nations.

He makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away.

Job 12:23

- God is sovereign over nature.

For to the snow he says, "Fall on the earth," likewise to the downpour, his mighty downpour. He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom he made may know it. Then the beasts go into their lairs, and remain in their dens. From its chamber comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds. By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen.

Job 37:6-13

- God is sovereign over disease.
- God is sovereign over \_\_\_\_\_ death \_\_\_\_\_.
- God is sovereign over comfort.
- God is sovereign over calamity.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job 2:9-10

### God's Sovereignty in Our Suffering ...

- God's sovereignty \_\_\_\_\_ design \_\_\_\_\_ for our lives on this earth includes suffering.
- The sovereignty of God is the only foundation for \_\_\_\_\_ praise \_\_\_\_\_ in the middle of pain.
  - His sovereignty assures us that God is in control.
    - At every moment in our suffering, God is \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ us.
    - At every moment in our suffering, God is \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ us.
  - His sovereignty reminds us that Satan has been conquered.

- His sovereignty guarantees us that one day our suffering will conclude.
- Ultimately, our pain on earth can be rightly understood only from the sovereign \_\_\_\_\_ perspective \_\_\_\_\_ of heaven.

### 13. Job 3–31: God's Sufficiency in Suffering

#### Three Friends ...

- Eliphaz
- Bildad
- Zophar

#### Four Truths ...

After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job said: "Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man is conceived.' Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. That night—let thick darkness seize it! Let it not rejoice among the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. Behold, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry enter it. Let those curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan. Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none, nor see the eyelids of the morning, because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes. "Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?"

Job 3:1-11

- When the pain of suffering persists, God is still \_\_\_\_\_ present \_\_\_\_\_.

Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?

Job 3:23

- We want an explanation.
- God gives us \_\_\_\_\_ revelation \_\_\_\_\_.

" 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Job 42:4-6

- When the gifts we enjoy are gone, God is still \_\_\_\_\_ good \_\_\_\_\_.

For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal.

Job 5:18

- A false gospel ...
  - Sees suffering as evidence of the displeasure of God.

- The true gospel ...
  - Sees suffering as a means to more deeply treasure God.
- In the confusion of our circumstances, God is all-wise.

*“But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’ and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. Abaddon and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’ God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. And he said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.’”*  
Job 28:12-28

- The limited wisdom of man ...
  - We lack knowledge.
  - We lack perspective.
  - We lack experience.
- The unlimited wisdom of God ...
  - He has perfect knowledge.
  - He has eternal perspective.
  - He has infinite experience.

*“With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack?”*  
A. W. Tozer

- In the depth of our despair, God is our hope.

*“Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!”*  
Job 19:23-27

- He will heal our bodies.
- We will see His face.

## 14. Job 32–37: God’s Purpose in Suffering

### Significant Foundations ...

- God has a purpose.

*“Behold, God is mighty, and does not despise any; he is mighty in strength of understanding. He does not keep the wicked alive, but gives the afflicted their right. He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the throne he sets them forever, and they are exalted.”*  
Job 36:5-7

- God’s purpose is sometimes different.

*He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen.*  
Job 37:11-13

- God’s purpose is always good.

*“The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate. Therefore men fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit.”*  
Job 37:23-24

### Various Purposes for Which God Uses Suffering ...

- God uses suffering to refine our faith.

*“For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds, then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings, that he may turn man aside from his deed and conceal pride from a man; he keeps back his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.”*  
Job 33:14-18

*“Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life.”*  
Job 33:29-30

- God uses suffering to reveal His glory.

*“Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you contend against him, saying, ‘He will answer none of man’s words?’”*  
Job 33:12-13



○ How God reveals Himself ...

- In creation.

*“Behold, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him? Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, ‘You have done wrong’? Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar. Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable. For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunders of his pavilion? Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance. He covers his hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declare that he rises.”*

*Job 36:22-33*

- Through His Word.

*“In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds, then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings, that he may turn man aside from his deed and conceal pride from a man.”*

*Job 33:15-17*

- In our pain.

*“Man is also rebuked with pain on his bed and with continual strife in his bones, so that his life loathes bread, and his appetite the choicest food. His flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out. His soul draws near the pit, and his life to those who bring death. If there be for him an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, and he is merciful to him, and says, ‘Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom; let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigor’; then man prays to God, and he accepts him; he sees his face with a shout of joy, and he restores to man his righteousness.”*

*Job 33:19-26*

*“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”*

*C. S. Lewis*

○ What God reveals about Himself ...

- He is just.

*“Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding; far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong. For according to the work of a man he will repay him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him. Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice.”*

*Job 34:10-12*

- He is merciful.

*“He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity. He also allured you out of distress into a broad place where there was no cramping, and what was set on your table was full of fatness.”*

*Job 36:15-16*

- He is great.

*“Out of the north comes golden splendor; God is clothed with awesome majesty. The Almighty—we cannot find him; he is great in power; justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate. Therefore men fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit.”*

*Job 37:22-24*

○ As we wrestle with God’s revelation of Himself in suffering, we need to avoid these extremes:

- Declaring our innocence.

*“Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary! Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown; I would give him an account of all my steps; like a prince I would approach him.”*

*Job 31:35-37*

*“Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I have heard the sound of your words. You say, ‘I am pure, without transgression; I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me. Behold, he finds occasions against me, he counts me as his enemy, he puts my feet in the stocks and watches all my paths.’ Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. Why do you contend against him, saying, ‘He will answer none of man’s words?’”*

*Job 33:8-13*

- Distrusting His justice.
- Missing His mercy.
- Minimizing His greatness.

- God uses suffering to teach us to rely on Him.

*Who gave him charge over the earth, and who laid on him the whole world? If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.*

*Job 34:13-15*

- God uses suffering to bring us to repent of and renounce all sin in our lives.

*“But you are full of the judgment on the wicked; judgment and justice seize you. Beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing, and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside. Will your cry for help avail to keep you from distress, or all the force of your strength? Do not long for the night, when peoples vanish in their place. Take care; do not turn to iniquity, for this you have chosen rather than affliction.”*

*Job 36:17-21*

- God uses suffering to lead us to our reward in Him.

*I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.*

*Job 42:5*

#### **Possible Questions to Ask in the Middle of Suffering ...**

- What areas of my faith are being refined through this suffering?
- What is God revealing about Himself through this suffering?
- How can I rely on God more as a result of my suffering?
- What sin(s) do I need to repent of and renounce as a result of my suffering?
- How can this suffering drive me to find deeper reward in God?

#### **15. Job 38–42: God’s Power in Suffering**

*Then Job answered the LORD and said: “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*

*Job 42:1-6*

- What we want in our suffering ...
  - An explanation from God.
- What we receive in our suffering ...
  - A revelation of God.

*“God, like a father, doesn’t just give advice. He gives himself. He becomes the husband to the grieving widow (Isaiah 54:5). He becomes the comforter to the barren woman (Isaiah 54:1). He becomes the father of the orphaned (Psalm 10:14). He becomes the bridegroom to the single person (Isaiah 62:5). He is the healer to the sick (Exodus 15:26). He is the wonderful counselor to the confused and depressed (Isaiah 9:6).”*

*Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes*

#### **The Revelation of God ...**

- His power is great.
  - He is our Creator.

*“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed?’”*

*Job 38:4-11*

*“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind? Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods stick fast together?”*

*Job 38:34-38*

- He is our Sustainer.

*“Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their thicket? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food?”*

*Job 38:39-41*

*“The wings of the ostrich wave proudly, but are they the pinions and plumage of love? For she leaves her eggs to the earth and lets them be warmed on the ground, forgetting that a foot may crush them and that the wild beast may trample them. She deals cruelly with her young, as if they were not hers; though her labor be in vain, yet she has no fear, because God has made her forget wisdom and given her no share in understanding.”*

*Job 39:13-17*

*“When the trumpet sounds, he says ‘Aha!’ He smells the battle from afar, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?”*

*Job 39:25-27*

- He is our Savior.

*“Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his? Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor. Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him. Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.*

*Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.”*

*Job 40:8-14*

- He is our Friend.

*After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite:*

*“My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them, and the LORD accepted Job’s prayer.*

*Job 42:7-9*

- His purpose is guaranteed.

*“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”*

*Job 42:2*

- Satan’s attempts to attack God’s people only serve to accomplish God’s purpose.

- His knowledge is perfect.

*“Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”*

*Job 42:3*

- He knows all things comprehensively.
- He knows each of us completely.

- His mercy is personal.

*“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*

*Job 42:5-6*

- Our initial reaction is awe.
  - We repent of our sin.
- Our eternal response is adoration.
  - We rejoice in our God.

## 16. Psalms: Songs Amidst Suffering

### Lament Amidst Suffering ...

*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,” lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

*Psalm 13*

- A heartfelt cry.
- An honest complaint.
- A humble confession.

### Confidence Amidst Suffering ...

*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, LORD, do I seek.” Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger, O you who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation! For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in. Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!*

*Psalm 27*

- What David saw ...
  - Devastation
  - Desertion
  - Danger
- What David prayed ...
  - The shock of his prayer:
    - David doesn’t ask first for deliverance.
    - David asks first for God.

- The benefits of his request:
  - God is absolutely sovereign.
  - God is incomparably beautiful.
- The relevance of his example:
  - What is our one thing?
  - Do we find God useful for our circumstances, or do we find Him glorious regardless of circumstances?
- What David concluded ...
  - Confidence is found in focus on God amidst our affliction.

### Thanksgiving Amidst Suffering ...

*You have dealt well with your servant, O LORD, according to your word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. You are good and do good; teach me your statutes. The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts; their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law. It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.*  
Psalm 119:65-72

- Suffering drives us to God's Word.
  - To learn it.
  - To believe it.
  - To obey it.
  - To love it.

*"I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the Word of God as now [in prison]. The Scriptures that I saw nothing in before are made in this place to shine upon me. Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now. Here I have seen him and felt him indeed. ... I have seen [such things] here that I am persuaded I shall never while in this world be able to express. ... Being very tender of me, [God] hath not suffered me to be molested, but would with one scripture and another strengthen me against all; insomuch that I have often said, were it lawful I could pray for greater trouble for the greater comfort's sake."*  
John Bunyan

- Suffering reminds us of God's goodness.
  - His character is good.
  - His Word is good.
  - His ways are good.

### 17. Proverbs: Suffering and Wisdom

#### Two important reminders ...

- Wisdom is the fruit of the fear of God.

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*  
Proverbs 9:10

- Proverbs are guidelines for living, not guarantees in life.

*... for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.*  
Proverbs 3:2

*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*  
Proverbs 15:1

#### Two general takeaways ...

- Wisdom sometimes keeps us from suffering.

*A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.*  
Proverbs 10:4

*Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.*  
Proverbs 19:15

*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*  
Proverbs 13:20

*The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.*  
Proverbs 22:3

*For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait. She seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him, "I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows; so now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen; I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home." With much seductive speech she persuades him;*

*with her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life. And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.*

*Proverbs 7:6-27*

- Wisdom always sustains us through suffering.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

*Proverbs 3:5-6*

*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

*Proverbs 17:17*

*Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.*

*Proverbs 30:7-9*

## 18. Ecclesiastes: Suffering and Worldliness

### Understanding Ecclesiastes ...

*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*

*Ecclesiastes 1:2*

- We need to hear two voice in the text:
  - The voice of the preacher.

*I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.*

*Ecclesiastes 1:12*

- The voice of the narrator.

*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity.*

*Ecclesiastes 12:8*

- We need to understand two key ideas:

*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*

*What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?*

*Ecclesiastes 1:2-3*

- "Vanity"
  - "Vanity" refers to meaninglessness, futility, or pointlessness.
- "Under the sun"
  - "Under the sun" denotes life without reference to God.

*Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.*

*Ecclesiastes 10:19*

### Hearing Ecclesiastes ...

- In the Old Testament context:
  - The Preacher observes two problems:
    - What we see "under the sun" is permanent.

*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. ... What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.*

*Ecclesiastes 1:2-4, 9-11*

- What we see "under the sun" is pointless.
  - Wisdom is pointless.

*And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.*

*Ecclesiastes 1:13-14*

- Pleasure is pointless.

*I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"*

*I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. I made great works.*

*I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ... I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found*



*pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.*

*Ecclesiastes 2:1-6, 10-11*

- Labor is pointless.

*I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. ... For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.*

*Ecclesiastes 2:18-19, 23*

- Life is pointless.

*For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun. Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.*

*Ecclesiastes 9:5-7*

- The narrator offers two conclusions:

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

*Ecclesiastes 12:13*

- Fear God.
- Keep His commandments.

- In the New Testament context:

- All of us live under the curse of God.
  - Our relationship with our Creator is destroyed.
  - Our relationship with creation is distorted.
- This curse is by divine design.
  - The curse alerts us to the problem of sin.
  - The curse points us to Jesus.
- Jesus redeems us from the curse of God.

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us— for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

*Galatians 3:13-14*

- Suddenly, in Christ, there is something new “under the sun.”
- And, in Christ, no longer is anything vanity.

### Applying Ecclesiastes ...

- Be warned about worldly pursuits.

*“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”*

*John 6:27*

- Be working in the Lord.

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

*1 Corinthians 15:58*

- Be longing for His return.

*“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”*

*Revelation 21:4-5*

## Prophets

### 19. Isaiah 53: Salvation Through a Suffering Servant

#### The Setup in Isaiah ...

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."*

Isaiah 6:1-8

- God is majestic.
  - The terrifying holiness of God ...

*To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.*  
Isaiah 40:25

- He is without error.
- He is without equal.
- The total sovereignty of God ...

*"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it."*

Isaiah 46:8-11

- He is the Creator of the world.
- He is the Ruler of history.
- He is the King of all nations.
- He is the Judge of all peoples.

*The LORD has taken his place to contend; he stands to judge peoples.*  
Isaiah 3:13

- Man is depraved.

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.*

Isaiah 1:2-4

- Painstaking sin ...
  - They trusted in foreign kings.
  - They trusted in false gods.
  - They trusted in their things.

*For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.*

Isaiah 2:6-8

- They trusted in their leaders.
- They trusted in themselves.

*Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?*  
Isaiah 2:22

- Breathtaking grace ...

*"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins."*

Isaiah 43:25

- Their sins will be removed.
- Their sins will never be remembered.
- Redemption is sure.
  - God sends His prophet.

*And he said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'"*

Isaiah 6:9

- God will preserve His people.
- God will restore all peoples.

*It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

*Isaiah 2:2-3*

- Look for a spectacular sign.

*And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."*

*Isaiah 7:13-14*

- Look for a promised son.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

*Isaiah 9:6-7*

- Look for a Suffering Servant.

### The Servant in Isaiah ...

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.*

*Isaiah 42:1*

- He will repulse, but He will redeem.

*Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.*

*Isaiah 52:13-15*

- He is a human servant with an appalling nature.

*The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.*

*Isaiah 50:5-6*

- He is a divine sovereign who will astound the nations.
- The Lord will reveal Him, but we will reject Him.

*Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*Isaiah 53:1-3*

- See His humiliation.
- See our condemnation.
- He will be slaughtered so that we can be saved.

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*Isaiah 53:4-6*

- He will endure the penalty of sin.
- He will take the place of sinners.
  - The essence of sin: Man substitutes himself for God.
  - The essence of salvation: God substitutes Himself for man.
- He will suffer in sinless silence.

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

*Isaiah 53:7-9*

- All will be satisfied in His substitution.

*Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many ...*

*Isaiah 53:10-12*

- The Father will be satisfied ...
  - He will display the full extent of His justice.
  - He will demonstrate the full expression of His love.
  - He will satisfy Himself and save sinners at the same time.
  - Before the cross is for anyone else's sake, the cross is for \_\_\_\_\_ God's \_\_\_\_\_ sake.

*"If I would appreciate the blood of Christ I must accept God's valuation of it, for the blood is not primarily for me but for God."*

*Watchman Nee*

- The Son will be satisfied ...
  - He will rescue the children of God in His death.
  - He will show the power of God in His resurrection.
  - He will accomplish the will of God in His exaltation.
  - The Suffering Servant will become the sovereign \_\_\_\_\_ Savior \_\_\_\_\_.
- We will be satisfied ...
  - We will be vindicated before God the Father.
  - We will be \_\_\_\_\_ victors \_\_\_\_\_ with God the Son.

*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

*1 Peter 2:22-25*

## 20. Jeremiah 31: Weep No More

### A Weeping Prophet ...

*My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me. ...  
Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*

*Jeremiah 8:18, 9:1*

*Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.*

*Jeremiah 15:10*

*Now Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. Then Pashhur beat Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper Benjamin Gate of the house of the LORD.*

*Jeremiah 20:1-2*

*And the officials were enraged at Jeremiah, and they beat him and imprisoned him in the house of Jonathan the secretary, for it had been made a prison.*

*Jeremiah 37:15*

- Personal: God calls Jeremiah (1)
- National: Messages for Judah (2–33)
- Personal: Suffering for Jeremiah (34–45)
- International: Messages for the Nations (46–51)
- Personal/National/International: The Fall of Jerusalem (52)

### A New Covenant ...

- The problem in the old covenant ...
  - The people of God were \_\_\_\_\_ idolatrous \_\_\_\_\_.

*Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

*Jeremiah 2:11-13*

- The people of God were immoral.

*"For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight, declares the LORD. They have set their detestable things in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind."*

*Jeremiah 7:30-31*

- The people of God were \_\_\_\_\_ incapable \_\_\_\_\_ of anything different.
- The promise of the new covenant ...

*"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares*

*the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*  
*Jeremiah 31:31-34*

- We will receive a new covenant.
  - The law of God ...
    - Old covenant: Written on stone tablets.
    - New covenant: Written on human hearts.
      - Our worst enemy: fleshly religion.
      - Our greatest need: spiritual regeneration.
      - Obedience to the law is not a condition for entering the new covenant.
      - Obedience to the law is a promise we experience in the new covenant.

*"I think the difference here pointed out between these two covenants, lies plainly here, that in the old covenant God promised to be their God upon condition of hearty obedience; obedience was stipulated as a condition, but not promised. But in the new covenant, this hearty obedience is promised."*  
*Jonathan Edwards*

- The knowledge of God ...
  - Old covenant: We relate to God through flawed men.
    - Limited admission to the presence of God.
    - Distant encounter of the glory of God.
  - New covenant: We are reconciled to God through a flawless man.
    - Unlimited access to the presence of God.
    - Direct experience of the glory of God.

*Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.*

*But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

*2 Corinthians 3:12-18*

- We will compose a new community.

- We will anticipate a new city.
  - For them: In light of the words of Jeremiah, look forward to the restoration of Jerusalem.

*"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. And the measuring line shall go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah."*

*Jeremiah 31:38-39*

- For us: In light of the words of Jesus, long for the re-creation of a new Jerusalem.

*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."*

*Revelation 21:1-3*

## 21. Lamentations: Steadfast the Mercies of God in the Sufferings of Men

### The Crisis in Lamentations ...

- Sin brought about suffering that was ...
  - Tragic.

*How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave.*

*Lamentations 1:1*

- Just.

*Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; she herself groans and turns her face away.*

*Lamentations 1:8*



*“The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; my young women and my young men have gone into captivity.”*

*Lamentations 1:18*

- God-given.

*Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?  
Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?*

*Lamentations 3:37-38*

- Severe.

*The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them. Those who once feasted on delicacies perish in the streets; those who were brought up in purple embrace ash heaps. For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, and no hands were wrung for her.*

*Lamentations 4:4-6*

- Suffering brought about questions that were ...
  - Profoundly intense—“Are we forsaken?”

*Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days? Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old—unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.*

*Lamentations 5:20-22*

- Eternally significant—“Can we be forgiven?”

### **The Comfort in Lamentations ...**

*Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

*“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”*

*Lamentations 3:19-24*

- The writer found comfort in ...
  - The fresh mercies of God.
- Rooted in ...
  - The unfailing love of God.
  - The unceasing faithfulness of God.
- Which gave rise to ...
  - A settled hope in the provision of God.

- A deep confidence in the character of God.

*The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; let him put his mouth in the dust—there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.*

*Lamentations 3:25-33*

- An urgent desire to repent before God.

*Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins? Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD!*

*Lamentations 3:39-40*

### **The Christ of Lamentations ...**

- Christ has endured the penalty of sin in the place of His people.

*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 5:6-8*

- Christ has ensured the mercies of God for the sake of His people.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ...*

*Ephesians 1:3*

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ...*

*Ephesians 1:7*

### **The Challenge from Lamentations ...**

- Trust in the character of God.
- Confess the depth of your sins.
- Bank on the mercies of Christ.

*“None are fitter for comfort than those that think themselves furthest off.”*

*Richard Sibbes*

## 22. Ezekiel: God-Centered Suffering (Part 1)

### Three Observations ...

- God judges all peoples for His glory.

*“And I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”*  
Ezekiel 25:11

*“I will execute great vengeance on [Philistia] with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I lay my vengeance upon them.”*  
Ezekiel 25:17

*“Thus I will execute judgments on Egypt. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”*  
Ezekiel 30:10

- God disciplines His people for His glory.

*The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity. So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land.’ But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came. Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.”*  
Ezekiel 36:16-23

- They had exchanged the splendor of the true God for the senselessness of false gods.
- They had exchanged the protecting presence of God for the punishing presence of God.
- God saves His people for His glory.

*“And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”*  
Ezekiel 34:23-24

- He will anoint a new king.
  - The servant of God.

- The shepherd of men.
- He will inaugurate a new covenant.

*“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”*  
Ezekiel 37:24-28

- The old covenant: perpetual promises.
- The new covenant: permanent peace.
- He will form a new people.

*“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”*  
Ezekiel 36:25-27

- Forgiven of their sin.
- Filled with His Spirit.
- He will bring them to a new place.

*“You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”*  
Ezekiel 36:28

- For them ...
  - They looked forward to the city of Jerusalem.
  - In that city they would rebuild the temple.
- For us ...
  - We look backward to the cross of Jesus.

*And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”*  
Mark 15:37-39

- In Christ we have become the temple.

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

#### **One Conclusion ...**

- We need a radically \_\_\_\_\_ God \_\_\_\_\_-centered perspective of our suffering.

*Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

*1 Corinthians 10:31*

### **23. Daniel: God-Centered Suffering (Part 2)**

#### **In the midst of suffering, look up ...**

- See the \_\_\_\_\_ sovereignty \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
  - He is the God of heaven.

*Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."*

*Daniel 2:19-23*

- He is the God of gods.

*Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."*

*Daniel 2:46-47*

- He is the \_\_\_\_\_ Lord \_\_\_\_\_ of kings.
- He is the revealer of mysteries.
- He is the Most High God.

*It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.*

*Daniel 4:2*

*"... this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."*

*Daniel 4:24-25*

- He is the King of heaven.

*At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

*... Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

*Daniel 4:34-37*

- He is the God of Daniel.

*"I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end."*

*Daniel 6:26*

- He is the living God.
- He is the Ancient of Days.

*"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*

*Daniel 7:13-14*

- Seek the \_\_\_\_\_ face \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

*When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.*

*Daniel 6:10*

- Pray consistently.
- Pray with courage.

*Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.*

*Daniel 6:16-17*

- Pray contritely.

*I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules."*

*Daniel 9:3-5*

- Pray with confidence.

*Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come."*

*When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was mute. ... Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince."*

*Daniel 10:12-21*

- We are in a       battle      .
- God will win the war.

- Trust the       promises       of God.

#### **In the midst of suffering, look forward ...**

- God will redeem His people.

*"Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."*

*Daniel 9:24-27*

- God will       resurrect       His people.

*"At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."*

*Daniel 12:1-3*

- God will reign over all peoples.

*"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*

*Daniel 7:13-14*

- The coming King ...
  - He is human.
  - He is       divine      .

*But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."*

*Mark 14:61-62*

- The coming Kingdom ...
  - Universal: For all nations.

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

*Matthew 28:18-20*

- Eternal: For all       time      .

#### **24. Hosea: Unfaithful People and an Unreasonable God**

*When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.*

*Hosea 1:2-3*



Hosea is a story of an unfaithful people.

*“Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband—that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked and make her as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and make her like a parched land, and kill her with thirst. Upon her children also I will have no mercy, because they are children of whoredom. For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’ Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.’ And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. Therefore I will take back my grain in its time, and my wine in its season, and I will take away my wool and my flax, which were to cover her nakedness. Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand. And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts. And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages, which my lovers have given me.’ I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall devour them. And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals when she burned offerings to them and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares the LORD.”*

*Hosea 2:2-13*

- She was adulterous.
- She was idolatrous.
- She was hypocritical.
- She was forgetful.

*“And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ...”*

*Deuteronomy 8:10-14*

*“Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.”*

*Deuteronomy 8:17-20*

Hosea is a story of an unreasonable God.

*“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My Baal.’ For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘You are my God.’”*

*Hosea 2:14-23*

- I will allure her.
- I will lead her.
- I will speak tenderly to her.
- I will give to her.
- I will restore her.
- I will protect her.
- I will betroth her.
- I will respond to her.
- I will establish her.
- I will pay the price for her.

*And the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins.” So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. And I said to her, “You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you.”*

*Hosea 3:1-3*

- On the cross Jesus will be condemned like the harlot's children.
  - Like Jezreel, He will be the place of bloodshed.

*And the LORD said to him, “Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”*

*Hosea 1:4-5*



- Like No Mercy, He will be given no relief.

*She conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Call her name No Mercy, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."*  
Hosea 1:6-7

- Like Not My People, He will be cut off from the Father.

*When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the LORD said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."*  
Hosea 1:8-9

- On the cross Jesus will be regarded as the unfaithful wife.

*"When we see this love at work through the heart of Hosea we may wonder if God is really like that. But everything in the Word and in experience shows us that He is. He will give man the trees of the forest and the iron in the ground. Then He will give to man the brains to make an axe from the iron to cut down a tree and fashion it into a cross. He will give man the ability to make a hammer and nails, and when man has the cross and the hammer and the nails, the Lord will allow man to take hold of Him and bring Him to that cross, and in so doing will take the sins of man upon Himself and make it possible for those who have despised and rejected Him to come unto Him and know the joy of sins removed and forgiven, to know the assurance of pardon and eternal life, and to enter in the prospect of the hope of glory with Him forever. This is even our God, and there is none like unto Him."*  
Donald Grey Barnhouse

## 25. Joel

*Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near,  
and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.*  
Joel 1:15

*The day of the Lord will be a day of destruction for the resistant.*

*The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful.  
For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?*  
Joel 2:10-11

- Judgment on God's people.
- Judgment on all peoples.

*Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.*  
Joel 3:14-15

- The day of the Lord will be a day of salvation for the repentant.

*The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.*  
Joel 2:31-32

- We repent.

*"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.*  
Joel 2:12-13

- God relents.

## 26. Amos

- Amidst great social injustice, God demands justice from His people.

*"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*  
Amos 5:21-24

- Amidst great social injustice, God brings justice to all peoples.

*Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."*  
Amos 3:1-2

- Sin will ultimately never be excused.
  - Our sin against God is grave.
- Judgment will inevitably never be escaped.
  - Our need for Christ is great.

## 27. Obadiah

*For the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations. As you have done,  
it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.*

*Obadiah 15*

- Overall structure:
  - The coming doom of Edom (1-16)
  - The coming restoration of Israel (17-21)
- Overall point:
  - God will ultimately assert His victory over all earthly powers.

*The exiles of this host of the people of Israel shall possess the land of the  
Canaanites as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in  
Sepharad shall possess the cities of the Negeb. Saviors shall go up to Mount  
Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.*

*Obadiah 20-21*

## 28. Jonah

- God possesses sovereign control ...
  - Over nature.

*But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty  
tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up.*

*Jonah 1:4*

*And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah.  
And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

*Jonah 1:17*

*And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.*

*Jonah 2:10*

*Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over  
Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his  
discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant.*

*Jonah 4:6*

*But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed  
a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered.*

*Jonah 4:7*

*When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun  
beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that  
he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."*

*Jonah 4:8*

- Over nations.
- God's people cannot outrun God's pursuit.
- God expresses merciful compassion ...

*When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented  
of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.*

*Jonah 3:10*

- Toward sinful pagans.
- Toward selfish prophets.

*Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish ...*

*Jonah 2:1*

- God's capacity to forgive is greater than our capacity to sin.

*And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did  
you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And  
should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000  
persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"*

*Jonah 4:10-11*

## 29. Micah

- In Israel we see the ravages of our sin.

*And I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to  
know justice?—you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my  
people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their  
skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot,  
like flesh in a cauldron. Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not answer them;  
he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil.*

*Micah 3:1-4*

- Sin is disorienting.
  - We approve the bad and condemn the good.
- Sin is deceiving.

*Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."*

*Micah 3:11*

- We act as if God will never judge.

*Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster. In that day they shall take up a taunt song against you and moan bitterly, and say, "We are utterly ruined; he changes the portion of my people; how he removes it from me! To an apostate he allots our fields."*

*Micah 2:1-4*

- Sin is destructive.

*Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.*

*Micah 3:12*

- We ask disaster into our lives.
- In Christ we see the reign of our Shepherd.

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.*

*Micah 5:2-5*

- He rescues His sheep.

*In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.*

*Micah 4:6-7*

- He forgives His sheep.

*Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.*

*Micah 7:18-20*

- He purifies His sheep.

*And in that day, declares the LORD, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes; and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you, and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities.*

*Micah 5:10-14*

- He protects His sheep.

*And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men ...*

*Micah 5:4-5*

### 30. Nahum

- God is our warrior.
  - He is jealous.

*The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies.*

*Nahum 1:2*

- He is just.

*The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.*

*Nahum 1:3*

- He is good.

*The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.*

*Nahum 1:7*

- He is sovereign.

- Nineveh's power was unrivaled in Nahum's day.

*Thus says the LORD, "Though they are at full strength and many, they will be cut down and pass away. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more."*

*Nahum 1:12*

- God's power is unparalleled in any age.

*The river gates are opened; the palace melts away.*

*Nahum 2:6*

- He is Judge.

- His judgment is terrifying for the enemies of God.

*Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no longer be heard.*

*Nahum 2:13*

- His judgment is liberating for the people of God.

*Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace! Keep your feasts, O Judah; fulfill your vows, for never again shall the worthless pass through you; he is utterly cut off.*

*Nahum 1:15*

- We are at war.

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

*Ephesians 6:12*

- All creation lies in the power of the Evil One.

*We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

*1 John 5:19*

- All of God's children overcome the power of the Evil One.

*Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

*1 John 4:4*

- Jesus triumphed over all enemies through His suffering.

*And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

*Colossians 2:13-15*

- Jesus extends His kingdom even now through His church.
- Jesus will reign on the earth upon His return.

*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

*Revelation 19:11-16*

### 31. Habakkuk: Questioning God

#### The Hard Reality of Habakkuk ...

God uses painful experiences to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

- The struggle of faith ...

*The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?*

*Habakkuk 1:1-2*

- Does God hear?
- Does God care?
- Is God good?

*Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.*

*Habakkuk 1:3*

*You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?*

*Habakkuk 1:13*

- Is God holy?

- Where is God's power?

*So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.*

*Habakkuk 1:4*

- Where is God's Word?

*Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?*

*Habakkuk 1:17*

- Will God show that He is just?
- Is God worthy of my trust?
- The life of faith ...

*And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith."*

*Habakkuk 2:2-4*

- Listen to the truth of God.
- Lean on the timing of God.
- Live with your trust in God.
  - For your salvation.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

*Romans 1:16-17*

- Amidst your suffering.
- Look forward to the triumph of God.

*For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond. "Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity! Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."*

*Habakkuk 2:11-14*

- He will show His glory.
- We will stand in awe.

*But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.*

*Habakkuk 2:20*

- The song of faith ...

*O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.*

*Habakkuk 3:2*

- God is awesome.
- God is full of wrath.
- God is full of mercy.

*God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.*

*Habakkuk 3:3*

- God is present in all creation.
- God is praised by all creation.
- God has power over all things.

*His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear.*

*Habakkuk 3:4-11*

- God is sovereign in all things.
- God is the protector of His people.

*You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck.*

*Habakkuk 3:12-13*

- God is the deliverer of His people.



*You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters. I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.*  
Habakkuk 3:14-16

- God is our satisfaction.

*Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.*  
Habakkuk 3:17-19

- God is our strength.
- God is our victory.

### **The Comforting Reality of the Cross:**

**God Uses His Son's Suffering to Accomplish His People's Salvation.**

- His pain brings us peace.
- His death brings us life.
- Because of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the grave, we know:
  - Our suffering is temporary.
  - Our God is trustworthy.

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.  
My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

*For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.*

*But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!  
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!*

*And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

*It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

Horatio Spafford

## **32. Zephaniah**

- Overall structure ...
  - God will judge Judah (1:1–2:3).
  - God will judge the nations (2:4–3:7).
  - God will restore His people (3:8-20).
- Overall point ...
  - One day God's people will exchange their shame for His honor.

*Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD.*  
Zephaniah 3:14-20

## **33. Haggai and Zechariah**

- Repent of sin ...

*Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.*  
Zechariah 1:3

- In the fear of God.

*Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.*

*Haggai 1:12*

- By the Spirit of God.

*Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts."*

*Zechariah 4:6*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Renew \_\_\_\_\_ your strength ...

*"For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts."*

*Haggai 2:6-9*

- For the glory of God.

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

*Zechariah 9:9*

*"Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.' Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"*

*Zechariah 8:20-23*

### 34. Malachi

- What the Old Testament has taught us about ourselves ...

- We are \_\_\_\_\_ dead \_\_\_\_\_ in our sin.

- We are prone to defame God.

*If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.*

*Malachi 2:2*

- We are prone to dishonor one another.

*"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts."*

*Malachi 3:5*

- Sin is too subtle in us.
- Sin is too seductive to us.
- Sin is too \_\_\_\_\_ strong \_\_\_\_\_ for us.
- We are desperate for a \_\_\_\_\_ Savior \_\_\_\_\_.
- The problem of evil and suffering in the world is ultimately a problem with people's \_\_\_\_\_ hearts \_\_\_\_\_.
- Only Jesus can change the hearts of evil people.
- Therefore, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ foremost \_\_\_\_\_, fundamental, necessary, nonnegotiable way to address evil and suffering in the world.
- To work against evil and suffering in the world apart from proclaiming the gospel of Jesus will ultimately be \_\_\_\_\_ futile \_\_\_\_\_.

- What the Old Testament has taught us about God ...

- He is overwhelmingly \_\_\_\_\_ gracious \_\_\_\_\_.
- He is inexpressibly \_\_\_\_\_ holy \_\_\_\_\_.
- He is consistently \_\_\_\_\_ faithful \_\_\_\_\_.
- He is completely \_\_\_\_\_ just \_\_\_\_\_.

*You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"*

*Malachi 2:17*

- He will demonstrate His righteousness.
- He will demand our repentance.
- He will display His wrath.

*But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.*

*Malachi 3:2*

- He is ultimately sovereign.

*“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.”  
Malachi 3:6*

- He is unquestionably supreme.

*For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering.  
For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.  
Malachi 1:11*

- He is the only Savior.

*Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.  
Malachi 3:16*

- He will preserve a remnant.
- He will provide a Redeemer.

*“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.”  
Malachi 3:1*

## Gospels

### 35. Matthew 4: Temptation to Sin ... The Root of Suffering

#### Two Pictures ...

- Jesus is the new man, stepping into the universal human story.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”  
Genesis 3:1*

- Jesus is the true son, suffering through the particular Israelite story.

*“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son ...’ ”  
Exodus 4:22*

*... and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”  
Matthew 2:15*

*And behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”  
Matthew 3:17*

#### Two Questions ...

- Does God tempt us?

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.  
Matthew 4:1*

*Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.  
James 1:13*

- We are tempted by Satan (who is subordinate) for evil.
- We are tested by God (who is sovereign) for good.
- Could Jesus have sinned?
  - Jesus is fully man.
  - Jesus was fully tempted.

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.  
Hebrews 4:15-16*

*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*  
1 Corinthians 10:13

- Jesus is fully God.
- God cannot be tempted.

*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*  
James 1:13

### Three Temptations ...

- The first temptation: self-gratification.

*And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*  
Matthew 4:2-4

- We are tempted to fulfill our wants apart from God's will.

*And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*  
Deuteronomy 8:2-3

- Jesus trusted the all-satisfying, all-sufficient goodness of the Father.
- The second temptation: self-protection.

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, " 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.' " Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*  
Matthew 4:5-7

- We are tempted to question God's presence and manipulate God's promises.

*And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"*  
Exodus 17:7

- Jesus rested in the shelter of the Father's unshakeable security.
- The third temptation: self-exaltation.

*Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' " Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' " Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*  
Matthew 4:7-11

- We are tempted to assert ourselves in the world while we rob God of His worship.
- Jesus refused to exchange the end-time exaltation by the Father for a right-now exaltation of a snake.

### One Conclusion ...

- Jesus has done what no one else has ever done or will ever do: He has resisted temptation fully and conquered sin completely.

*Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?*  
John 8:46

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*  
2 Corinthians 5:21

*For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*  
Hebrews 7:26

*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*  
1 Peter 2:22

*You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.*  
1 John 3:5

### 36. Luke 4:16-21: Good News for the Suffering

*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Luke 4:16-21

#### Jesus reverses our status.

*While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.*

Luke 5:12-13

- From dirty to clean.
  - To all who feel helpless, He will restore you.

*And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ... And [Jesus] said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

Luke 7:37-50

- From rejected to accepted.
  - To all who are hurting, He will receive you.

*"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."*

Luke 15:20-24

- From lost to found.
  - To all who feel hopeless, He will rescue you.

*"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.'"*

Luke 16:19-25

- From poor to rich.
  - To all who are humble, He will reward you.

*As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.*

Luke 18:35-43

- From blind to seeing.
  - To all who need healing, He will reveal Himself to you.

*As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*

John 9:1-7

*So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What*



did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

John 9:24-39

- We may not be certain of the cause of our suffering, but we can always be confident in the purpose of our suffering.

### Jesus redeems our souls.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 4:18-19

"You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan."

Leviticus 25:8-10

- From cross to resurrection.
  - To all who are held captive by sin, He will set you free.

### 37. Mark 4–5: Good News for the Weak

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be

still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Mark 4:35-41

- Jesus has power over nature.
  - See the presence of God.

O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

Psalms 89:8-9

- "You are not alone."

And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.

Mark 5:2-15

- Jesus has power over demons.
  - See the peace of God.
  - "You are safe in me."

And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said,

*“Who touched my garments?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ” And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”*

*Mark 5:24-34*

- Jesus has power over disease.
  - See the \_\_\_\_\_ healing \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
  - “I care for you.”

*And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.”*

*Mark 5:21-23*

*While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.*

*Mark 5:35-43*

- Jesus has power over death.
  - See the \_\_\_\_\_ hope \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
  - “You will live forever.”

### 38. Luke 13:1-5: Jesus and Natural Disasters

*There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”*

*Luke 13:1-5*

### Two Disasters ...

- Moral evil ...
  - Ambush at the temple.
- Natural evil ...
  - Fall of a tower.

### Four Reminders ...

- Natural disasters remind us that death is \_\_\_\_\_ unpredictable \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Death is often sudden.
  - Death is often surprising.
  - Death is always sure.

*“Resolved, to think much, on all occasions, of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death.”*

*Jonathan Edwards*

- Natural disasters remind us of the penalty of \_\_\_\_\_ sin \_\_\_\_\_, which plagues all of us.
  - Our sin is universal.
  - Our suffering is \_\_\_\_\_ inevitable \_\_\_\_\_.

*“Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God.”*

*Jonathan Edwards*

- Natural disasters remind us to repent and be \_\_\_\_\_ reconciled \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

*“Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.”*

*Jonathan Edwards*

- Natural disasters remind us of the \_\_\_\_\_ urgency \_\_\_\_\_ of our mission.

*“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. ... You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

*Luke 12:35-40*

- Life is fleeting.
- People are perishing.
- Eternity is \_\_\_\_\_ coming \_\_\_\_\_.

*“Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can. Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.”*

*Jonathan Edwards*

### 39. Matthew 10: Suffering Promised for Christians

#### Where to Go ...

- Go to great need.

*These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons ...”*

*Matthew 10:5-8*

- Go to the diseased.
- Go to the dying.
- Go to the despised.
- Go to the dirty.
- Go to great danger.

*“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.”*

*Matthew 10:16-18*

- Be as foolish as sheep.
- Be as smart as snakes.
- Be as pure as doves.

#### What Will Happen ...

- You will be betrayed.

*“Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death ...”*

*Matthew 10:21*

- You will be hated.

*“... and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”*

*Matthew 10:22*

- You will be persecuted.

*“When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.”*

*Matthew 10:23-25*

- The reality we must face ...
  - The danger of our lives increases in proportion to the depth of our relationship with Christ.
- The question we must ask ...
  - Do we really want to be like Jesus?
- Fear will tempt you.

*“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

*Matthew 10:26-28*

- See with an eternal perspective.
- Speak with a holy boldness.
- Sacrifice with reckless abandonment.
- The Father will take care of you.

*“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

*Matthew 10:29-31*

- He rules you sovereignly.
- He knows you completely.
- He loves you deeply.

#### What You Do ...

- Confess Him publicly.

*“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”*

*Matthew 10:32-33*

- Love Him supremely.

*“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth.  
I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”  
Matthew 10:34*

- Take the ultimate risk.

*And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.  
Matthew 10:38-39*

- Find the ultimate reward.

#### 40. Selected Texts: Christians' Response to Suffering

##### Christians' Response to Those Who Cause Suffering ...

- Bless them.

*“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.”  
Luke 6:27-29*

- Love them.

*“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.”  
Luke 6:35*

- Pray for them.

*“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ...”  
Matthew 5:44*

- Forgive them.

*“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”  
Matthew 6:14-15*

*And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.  
Luke 23:34*

- Do not seek revenge against them.

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”  
Matthew 5:38-42*

##### Christians' Response to Those Who Are Suffering ...

- Feed the hungry.

*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink ...’ ”  
Matthew 25:34-35*

- Give water to the thirsty.

*“And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”  
Matthew 10:42*

- Reflect the grace of God.

*“So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”  
Matthew 18:35*

- Demonstrate the mercy of God.

*And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And [Jesus] said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”  
Luke 10:27-28*

- Express the love of God.

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”  
John 13:34-35*

#### 41. Selected Texts: The Prediction of Christ's Sufferings

Jesus suffered willingly.

- This was the sovereign grace of God.

*And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

Mark 14:32-36

*"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."*

John 10:16-18

**Jesus suffered \_\_\_\_\_ necessarily \_\_\_\_\_.**

- This was the sovereign plan of God.

*From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

Matthew 16:21-23

*And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."*

Luke 18:31-33

*"For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment."*

Luke 22:37

## **42. Selected Texts: The Purpose of Christ's Sufferings**

### **Why Did Jesus Suffer?**

- To \_\_\_\_\_ obey \_\_\_\_\_ the Father's will and fulfill the Father's Word.

*"I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."*

John 17:4-5

- To ransom people from slavery to sin.

*"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Mark 10:45

- To give all who believe unhindered access to the Father.

*And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.*

Matthew 27:51

- To deliver people from the Evil One.

*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

John 12:31

- To deliver people from the \_\_\_\_\_ wrath \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

Matthew 27:46

- To proclaim the message of salvation for the nations.

*... and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."*

Luke 24:46-47

- To bring sheep into the fold of the Good Shepherd.

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."*

John 10:11-18

- To establish a new, eternal \_\_\_\_\_ covenant \_\_\_\_\_ with the people of God.



*"... for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."  
Matthew 26:28*

- To demonstrate God's supreme love for sinners by giving eternal life to all who believe.

*"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."  
John 3:14-16*

- To glorify the Father.

*"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."  
John 12:27-28*

#### 43. John 3:16: Everlasting Life and Everlasting Suffering

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."  
John 3:16*

**The unpopular reality: We are all perishing.**

*"If there is any truth in Scripture at all, this is true—that those who stubbornly refuse to submit to the Gospel, and to love and obey Jesus Christ incur at the Last Advent an infinite and irreparable loss. They pass into a night on which no morning dawns."  
James Denney*

- Our condemnation is personal.

*"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."  
John 3:18*

- Our condemnation is total.

*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.  
John 3:36*

- Our condemnation is eternal.

*"And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."  
Matthew 25:46*

*"And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' "  
Mark 9:43-48*

*"And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."  
Revelation 14:11*

*"Thus it is in Hell; they would die, but they cannot. The wicked shall be always dying but never dead; the smoke of the furnace ascends forever and ever. Oh! Who can endure thus to be ever upon the rack? This word 'ever' breaks the heart."  
Thomas Watson*

- In hell ...
  - We will realize how serious sin really is.
  - We will realize how just God really is.
  - We will realize how endless suffering really is.

*Consider "the torment of burning like a livid coal, not for an instant or for a day, but for millions and millions of ages, at the end of which souls will realize that they are no closer to the end than when they first begun, and they will never, ever be delivered from that place."  
George Whitefield*

**The unprecedented rescue: God is all-pursuing.**

- His salvation is personal.

*"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."  
John 6:44*

- His salvation is total.

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."  
John 10:10*

- His salvation is eternal.

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

*John 11:25-26*

- In heaven ...
  - We will realize how glorious grace really is.
  - We will realize how merciful God really is.
  - We will realize how endless satisfaction really is.

#### 44. Selected Texts: The Suffering of the Son of God

*And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.*

*Mark 15:37*

#### The Timeline ...

- Saturday
  - The anointing of Jesus

*Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

*John 12:1-3*

- Sunday
  - The arrival of Jesus

*And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna!*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.*

*Mark 11:9-11*

- Monday
  - The anger of Jesus

*And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.*

*Mark 11:15-18*

- Tuesday
  - The authority of Jesus
    - His authority is challenged.

*And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?"*

*Mark 11:27-28*

- His authority is asserted.

*And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.*

*Mark 13:26-27*

- Tuesday/Wednesday
  - The betrayal of Jesus

*Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.*

*Mark 14:10-11*

- Thursday
  - The last supper

*And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?"*

*Mark 14:12*

*And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.*

*Mark 14:16*

- The humility of Christ: He washes His disciples' feet.

*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

*John 13:1-5*

- The prophecy of Christ: He predicts Peter's denial.

*And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.*

*Mark 14:27-31*

- The comfort of Christ: He promises the Holy Spirit.

*"Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"*

*Mark 14:25-27*

- The prayer of Christ: He intercedes for His disciples.

*"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours."*

*John 17:9*

*"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word ..."*

*John 17:20*

- The Garden of Gethsemane
  - Three agonizing prayers

*And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."*

*Mark 14:32-36*

- Three tired disciples

*And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."*

*Mark 14:41-42*

- The Arrest of Jesus

*And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him.*

*Mark 14:43-46*

- Friday
  - The Trials of Jesus
    - Before the Jewish authorities
      - Preliminary hearing before Annas

*So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.*

*John 18:12-14*

*But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.*

*John 11:49-53*

- Hearing before Caiaphas

*And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.*

*Mark 14:53-56*

- Trial before the Council

*And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.*

*Mark 15:1*

- Before the Roman Authorities
  - First hearing before Pilate

*And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.*

*Mark 15:2-5*

- Hearing before Herod

*When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.*

*Luke 23:6-7*

*And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.*

*Luke 23:11-12*

- Last hearing before Pilate

*And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" And they cried out again, "Crucify him." And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

*Mark 15:12-15*

- The Torture of Jesus

*And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him.*

*Mark 15:16-19*

- The Crucifixion of Jesus

- First three hours ...

*And it was the third hour when they crucified him. And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!"*

*Mark 15:25-30*

- The prayer for his persecutors.

*And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.*

*Luke 23:34*

- The promise to the criminal.

*One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."*

*And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

*And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."*

*Luke 23:39-43*

- The provision for his mother.

*But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

*John 19:25-27*

- Last three hours ...

*And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.*

*Mark 15:33-37*

- The cry of dereliction.

*And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

*Mark 15:34*

- Acknowledgment of thirst.

*After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."*

*John 19:28*

- The cry of triumph.

*When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished,"  
and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.  
John 19:30*

- The cry of resignation.

*Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands  
I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.  
Luke 23:46*

#### 45. John 19: The Resurrection of the Son of God

*After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.  
John 19:38–20:10*

#### Possible Explanations ...

- Jesus didn't die on the cross.
- Jesus' tomb was not empty.
- The disciples stole the body of Jesus.
- The disciples were delusional when they claimed to see Jesus.

*"The early Christians did not invent the empty tomb and the meetings or sightings of the risen Jesus. Nobody was expecting this kind of thing. No kind of conversion experience would have invented it. To suggest otherwise is to stop doing history and enter into a fantasy world of our own."  
N. T. Wright*

- Jesus died on the cross and actually rose from the grave.

#### Startling Implications ...

- Jesus is Lord over life and death.

*"No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."  
John 10:18*

- Jesus is Lord over sin, suffering, and Satan.

*"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
1 Corinthians 15:55-57*

- Jesus is Lord over you and me.

*But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.  
Romans 10:8-10*



## Acts

### 46. Acts 4:23-31: Confidence in Prayer

*When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'—for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*

*Acts 4:23-31*

- The church prays to ...
  - The One who is in control of the world.

*The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein ...*

*Psalms 24:1*

- The One who is always faithful to His Word.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."*

*John 14:12-14*

*"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."*

*John 15:7-8*

- The church prays for ...
  - The honor of Christ.
  - The boldness of Christians.
  - The advancement of the kingdom.

### 47. Acts 4:32-37: Generosity with Possessions

*Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

*Acts 4:32-37*

*"We must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of this narrative."*

*John Calvin*

- The church gives humbly to help sufferers.

*But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess.*

*Deuteronomy 15:4*

- The church gives sacrificially to address suffering.

### 48. Acts 5-7: Joy Amidst Persecution

- The church's suffering is inevitable.

*But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.*

*Acts 5:17-18*

*Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.*

*Acts 5:41-42*

*Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

*Acts 7:54-60*

*“But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”*

*Luke 22:69*

*Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands  
I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.*

*Luke 23:46*

*Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day,  
until you deny three times that you know me.”*

*Luke 22:34*

- The church’s mission is unstoppable.

*And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution  
against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the  
regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen  
and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and  
entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them  
to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.*

*Acts 8:1-4*

*Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen  
traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one  
except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming  
to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of  
the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.*

*Acts 11:19-21*

- Satan’s strategies to stop the church ultimately serve to spread  
the church.

#### 49. Acts 8: Boldness in Proclamation

- The Spirit leads the church.

*Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went  
down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.*

*Acts 8:4-5*

- The Spirit empowers the church.

*Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned  
to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.*

*Acts 8:25*

- The Spirit uses the church ...

*And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried  
Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way  
rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through  
he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.*

*Acts 8:39-40*

- To advance the gospel of God.
- To show the greatness of God.

*“Nothing can defeat them—not the beatings of swaggering tyrants, not  
the cunning of embittered religious rulers, not the internal struggles of  
discontented members—but like a mighty army with banners, they move out  
to disciple the nations in the Name of their risen and reigning Lord.”*

*Robert Coleman*

#### 50. Acts 9: God’s Sovereignty over Disease and Death

- The healing of Aeneas

*Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the  
saints who lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden  
for eight years, who was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus  
Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.” And immediately he rose. And all  
the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.*

*Acts 9:32-35*

- The resurrection of Dorcas

*Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.  
She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died,  
and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near  
Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him,  
“Please come to us without delay.” So Peter rose and went with them. And when he  
arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping  
and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.  
But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body  
he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.  
And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he  
presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed  
in the Lord. And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.*

*Acts 9:36-43*

- See the presence of Christ at work in His people.

*Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.*  
*John 5:8-9*

*And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.*  
*Mark 5:40-42*

- See the kingdom of Christ advancing through His people.

## 51. Acts 9: Converted by Christ to Suffer

- See the identification of Christ with His church.

*Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."*  
*Acts 9:3-5*

- See the association of Paul's salvation with Paul's suffering.

*But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.*  
*Acts 9:13-19*

## 52. Acts 12: God's Sovereignty over Persecuted Disciples

- James: Beheaded as a follower of Christ.

*About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword ...*  
*Acts 12:1-2*

- Peter: Rescued as a follower of Christ.

*So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!" But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place.*  
*Acts 12:5-17*

- God holds world leaders in His hands.

*Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. But the word of God increased and multiplied.*  
*Acts 12:20-24*

- God holds our lives in His hands.

## 53. Acts 13–14: Paul's First Missionary Journey

- They were sent by God's Spirit.

*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.*  
*Acts 13:4*

- They were confident in God's Word.

*When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.*  
Acts 13:5

- They experienced victory in spiritual warfare.

*But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.*  
Acts 13:9-12

- They experienced success in gospel witness.

*And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.*  
Acts 13:48-49

- They experienced slander.

*But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.*  
Acts 13:50

- They endured stoning.

*But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.*  
Acts 14:19

- They remained steadfast.

*But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*  
Acts 14:20-22

## 54. Acts 16–18: Paul's Second Missionary Journey

- By His grace, God overcomes conflict we create inside the church.

*Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other.*  
Acts 15:37-39

- For His glory, God ordains persecution we face outside the church.

*Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.*  
Acts 16:1-5

- They followed the Spirit of God.

*And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*  
Acts 16:6-10

- They celebrated the grace of God.

- In the conversion of sinners.

*One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*  
Acts 16:14

*And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.*  
Acts 16:18

*Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

*And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.*

*Acts 16:30-32*

- In the center of prison.

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.*

*Acts 16:25-26*

- They proclaimed the truth of God.

*And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."*

*And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also ..."*

*Acts 17:2-6*

- They exalted the glory of God.

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you."*

*Acts 17:22-23*

- He is the Creator of the universe.

*"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man ..."*

*Acts 17:24*

- He is the Sustainer of life.

*"... nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."*

*Acts 17:25*

- He is the Ruler of the nations.

*"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place ..."*

*Acts 17:26*

- He is the Savior of the needy.

*"... that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us ..."*

*Acts 17:27*

- He is the Father of each of us.

*"... for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'"*

*Acts 17:28*

- He is the King over all of us.

*"Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man."*

*Acts 17:29*

- He is the Judge of the world.

*"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

*Acts 17:30-31*

- They believed in the power of the gospel of God.

*And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

*Acts 18:9-11*

- We are not afraid.
- We are not alone.
- We will not be silent.
- We will not be stopped.



*But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law." But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.*

*Acts 18:12-17*

## 55. Acts 19-28: Paul's Third Missionary Journey

- Proclamation of the gospel will always be challenged in this world.

*About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way.*

*Acts 19:23*

- Proclamation of the gospel will always be costly in your life.

*And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

*Acts 20:22-24*

- Are you willing to go wherever He leads?
- Are you willing to give whatever He asks?
- Are you willing to sacrifice everything to finish the assignment He gives?

*While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."*

*Acts 21:10-14*

- Proclamation of the gospel will always necessitate confidence in God's sovereignty.

*And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: 'Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.'" "*

*Acts 28:24-28*

- We don't despair over gospel rejection.
- We persist faithfully in gospel proclamation.

*He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.*

*Acts 28:30-31*

## Pauline Letters

### 56. Romans 5: Hope in Suffering (Part 1)

- Our great hope: the glory of God.

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

*Romans 5:1-2*

- The path to our great hope: the sufferings of this world.

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

*Romans 5:3-5*

- Our suffering produces endurance.
- Our endurance produces character.
- Our character produces hope.
- So we joyfully embrace suffering as the means by which our hope in the glory of God (which is infinitely greater than everything else in the world that we could imagine) grows.

### 57. Romans 8: Hope in Suffering (Part 2)

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

*Romans 8:28-30*

- We have been saved to love Him.
  - We have no condemnation before Him.

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

*Romans 8:1-2*

- We are children of God.

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

*Romans 8:14-17*

- We have been saved to become like Him.
  - God ordains suffering to conform us to the image of Christ.

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

*Romans 8:18-21*

- Now we suffer with him.

*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

*Romans 8:16-17*

- Then we will be glorified with him.
  - God ordains suffering to tether us to the hope of Christ.

*For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

*Romans 8:22-25*

- God ordains suffering to press us to the Spirit of Christ.

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

*Romans 8:26-27*

- We have been saved to glorify Him.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*  
*Colossians 1:15*

*And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*  
Colossians 1:18

- We celebrate His power.

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*  
Romans 8:31

- We trust His provision.

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*  
Romans 8:31-34

- We rest in His ever-present, always-persevering love.

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*  
Romans 8:35-39

## 58. 2 Corinthians 1, 4, 12: Suffering for God's Sake

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we 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. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.*  
2 Corinthians 1:3-11

**We experience suffering in God.**

- He is sovereign over all suffering.
- He is familiar with all suffering.
- He is the source of all compassion.
- He is sufficient for all comfort.

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*  
2 Corinthians 12:7-10

**We extend comfort from God.**

- We are comforted for each other's sake.

*For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.*  
2 Corinthians 2:4

*... for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.*  
2 Corinthians 8:2

- So that we might care for each other's hurts.

*But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.*  
2 Corinthians 7:6-7

- So that we might carry each other's burdens.

*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*  
Galatians 6:2

- We are a fellowship of the broken.

*... which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*  
1 Corinthians 12:24-26

### **We exult in the glory of God.**

- He is our victory.

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

- He is our deliverer.

*He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*

2 Corinthians 1:10

- He is our hope.
  - Suffering comes full circle ...
    - God uses suffering for our sake.
    - God uses suffering for others' sake.
    - God uses suffering for His sake.
  - Suffering becomes well worth it ...

*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

- All affliction for the Christian is light and temporary.
- Coming glory for the Christian is vast and eternal.

### **59. Galatians 6: Boasting in the Suffering of Christ**

*See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.*

Galatians 6:11-18

### **We boast in the cross because it confronts us with the reality of our sin.**

- We were once dead in sin.
- Now, in the cross, we are alive in Christ.

### **We boast in the cross because it comforts us with the provision of our Savior.**

- Christianity is not about human achievement.
  - Christianity is all about divine accomplishment.
- We no longer live for the applause of men.
  - We now live with the pleasure of God!

### **We boast in the cross because it reminds us that our safety is not found in this world.**

*Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 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 I 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? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.*

2 Corinthians 11:23-30

- We do not fear suffering.
- We are now free to suffer.

### **We boast in the cross because it keeps us from wasting our lives in this world.**

- This world has nothing for us.
- Christ is everything to us.

### **We boast in the cross because it supplies us with every good thing we have.**

- We have been re-created by His Spirit.
- We will always be recipients of His grace.

*When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast save in the death of Christ, my God,  
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down,  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*His dying crimson, like a robe, spreads o'er His body on the tree,  
Then I am dead to all the world and all the world is dead to me.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small,  
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Isaac Watts

## 60. Philippians 1; 3: Suffering and the Life That Counts

*... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection,  
and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that  
by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

*Philippians 3:10-11*

**The life that counts \_\_\_\_\_ treasures \_\_\_\_\_ Christ above everything this world  
has to offer.**

*... circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of  
Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a  
persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*

*Philippians 3:5-6*

- The many treasures of the wasted life:
  - Family heritage.
  - Social status.
  - Biblical knowledge.
  - Religious activity.
  - A moral lifestyle.
- The only treasure of the life that counts: Christ.

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

*Philippians 3:7*

- We have found Someone worth losing \_\_\_\_\_ everything \_\_\_\_\_ for.
- We are free to embrace suffering once we realize death is a \_\_\_\_\_ reward \_\_\_\_\_.

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

*Philippians 1:21*

*"During an early interrogation I had told an officer who was threatening to kill me, 'Sir, let me  
explain how I see this issue. Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.'*

*'Here is how it works. You know that my sermons on tape have spread all over the country.  
If you kill me, those sermons will be sprinkled with my blood. Everyone will know I died  
for my preaching. And everyone who has a tape will pick it up and say, 'I'd better listen  
again to what this man preached, because he really meant it; he sealed it with his life.'*

*'So, sir, my sermons will speak ten times louder than before.  
I will actually rejoice in this supreme victory if you kill me.'*

*After I said this, the interrogator sent me home.*

*Another officer who was interrogating a pastor friend of mind told him, 'We know that*

*Mr. Tson would love to be a martyr, but we are not that foolish to fulfill his wish.' I  
stopped to consider the meaning of that statement. I remembered how for many years, I  
had been afraid of dying. I had kept a low profile. Because I wanted badly to live, I had  
wasted my life in inactivity. But now that I had placed my life on the altar and decided  
I was ready to die for the Gospel, they were telling me they would not kill me! I could go  
wherever I wanted in the country and preach whatever I wanted, knowing I was safe. As  
long as I tried to save my life, I was losing it. Now that I was willing to lose it, I found it."*

*Josef Tson*

**The life that counts \_\_\_\_\_ trusts \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ to provide everything we could  
never need.**

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything  
as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have  
suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and  
be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that  
which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that  
I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming  
like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

*Philippians 3:7-11*

- His righteousness covers our sin.
- His power guarantees our resurrection.
- His satisfaction transcends our \_\_\_\_\_ suffering \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Knowing Christ involves the joy of becoming like Christ,  
even in His sufferings.

*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should  
not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake ...*

*Philippians 1:29*



- Suffering becomes a gift when identification with Christ is your goal.

## 61. Colossians 1: Filling Up Christ's Afflictions

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*  
Colossians 1:24-29

### "CHRIST"—The empowered life ...

- He is the image of God.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*  
Colossians 1:15

- He is the author of creation.

*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*  
Colossians 1:16-17

- He is the head of the church.

*And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*  
Colossians 1:18

- He is the Savior of the world.

*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell ...*  
Colossians 1:19

### "IN"—The transformed life ...

- Jesus died for you so that He can live in you.

*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*  
Galatians 2:20

- Christianity is nothing less than the outliving of the indwelling Christ.

### "YOU"—The exchanged life ...

- Jesus has exchanged His life with us.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*  
2 Corinthians 5:17-21

- To fulfill His mission through us.

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known ...*  
Colossians 1:24-25

- Christ suffered to accomplish salvation.
- We suffer to spread salvation.

*"Christ's cross was for propitiation; ours is for propagation."*  
Josef Tson

- In this way God ordains our lives to complete the sufferings of Christ.

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*  
2 Timothy 1:8-12

- God's strategy for redeeming the world to Himself has always been a suffering servant; that strategy has not changed.

*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake ...*  
Philippians 1:29

- So we gladly embrace the cross of Christ so that others might eternally enjoy the Christ of the cross.

*"I remember one Monday when two officers were interrogating me. About midday, a general came into the room. He signaled with his hand for them to leave. He began to curse me and hit me, slapping my face and hitting my head with his fist, finally knocking my head against the wall. I screamed—intentionally. I shouted so the other detainees in nearby rooms would hear me. What the general was doing was clearly illegal. That, of course, was why he had ordered the two officers out of the room. He wanted no witnesses at my trial. He kept on for a while, and then left without another word. The two officers came back and resumed the interrogation as if nothing had happened.*

*"On Thursday afternoon, the general returned. Again he motioned with his hand for the two to leave. I braced myself for a second round of beating. But the man sat down behind the desk and said, 'Don't worry. This time I am calm. I have come to talk to you.' Now the Lord has promised that when His people are questioned, the Holy Spirit within them will do the talking. I can testify to this truth. I myself was surprised as I said, 'Mr. General, because you came to talk to me, I want first of all to apologize for what happened Monday.' He was very surprised. 'Let me explain what I mean,' I said. 'On Tuesday, I was kept here the whole day without being interrogated. I had plenty of time to think. All of a sudden it dawned on me that this is Holy Week. And sir, for a Christian, nothing is more beautiful than to suffer during the time his Savior and Lord suffered. When you beat me, you did me a great honor. I am sorry for shouting at you. I should have thanked you for the most beautiful gift you could ever have given me. Since Tuesday I have been praying for you and your family.'*

*"I saw the man choking. He tried hard to swallow. Then, somehow, he said, 'Well, I shouldn't have done it. I am sorry—let's talk.' We talked many days after that. Eventually he said, 'Would you put on paper all you have said to me? I want the president of the country to read it.' From this I learned that no one—not even a Communist—is beyond the reach of Calvary love. These are savable people, redeemable people like anyone else. They desperately needed to see Christ in me."*  
Josef Tson

**"THE HOPE OF GLORY"—The secured life ...**

- Christ is in you.
- You are in Christ.
- Christ is in God.

*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*  
Colossians 3:3-4

## 62. 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12: Reminders Amid Affliction

- God has a sanctifying purpose in persecution.

*We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering ...*

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

- God will administer punishment to persecutors.

*... since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

- The church prays ...
  - For steadfast faith among those who are persecuted.

*To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

- For saving faith among those who are persecuting.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.*  
Romans 12:14

## 63. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: Responding to Death

- Our response to death is distinct from the despair of this world.

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13

- The people of God should be different.
- We do not grieve as those without hope.

*... and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

Acts 1:11

- Our response to death is rooted in the story of the gospel.

*For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:14*

- Jesus' resurrection is both ...
  - Proof that God can raise the dead.
- And a ...
  - Promise that He will raise the dead.

*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

*1 Corinthians 15:20-23*

*Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*

*1 Corinthians 15:49*

- Our response to death is strengthened by the certain return of the Lord.

*For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:15*

- His return will be personal.
- His return will be public.

*Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.*

*Revelation 1:7*

- His return will be powerful.
  - The dead will come from their tombs!
  - The living will come to their King!
  - The Lord will come to His throne!
- His return will be permanent.
- Our confidence in the face of death is celebrated and confessed for the sake of one another.

*Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:18*

## General Letters

### 64. Hebrews 10:32-39: Our Hope Amidst Suffering

*But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

*Hebrews 10:32-39*

- The barriers to our hope ...
  - We will face trials.
  - We will face temptations.

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

*Hebrews 11:1*

- The basis of our hope ...
  - The faithfulness of God to His promises.

*For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*

*Hebrews 6:13-20*

- The return of Christ for His people.

*And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

*Hebrews 9:27-28*

## 65. Hebrews 11:23-26: The Reward of Suffering

*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.*

*Hebrews 11:23-26*

- He chose suffering instead of sin.
- He chose reproach because he was looking to his reward.

## 66. Hebrews 11:29-40: Conquering Suffering and Continuing in Suffering

*By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

*Hebrews 11:29-40*

- God is sovereign over our struggles.
  - See His sovereign power.
  - See His sovereign plans.
  - See His sovereign grace.
- God is hope in our suffering.
  - Faith conquers in struggles.
  - Faith continues in suffering.
- God is faithful for our salvation.

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.*

*1 Peter 1:10-11*

- We are not home yet.

## 67. Hebrews 12:1-3: The Suffering Savior

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Hebrews 12:1-2*

- Lay aside...
  - The weights in this world.
  - Our sin and ourselves.
- Look ahead...
  - To the One who saved us.
  - To the One who is saving us.
  - To the One who shows us how to suffer for joy.
  - To the One who sits at the Father's right hand.

## 68. Hebrews 12:3-11: The Suffering Child of God

*Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

*Hebrews 12:3-11*

- Receive the Father's discipline.
- Rejoice in the Father's love.
- His discipline is hard but helpful.
- His discipline is painful yet good.



## 69. Hebrews 13:11-14: Suffering with Jesus Outside the Camp

*For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.*

*For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.*

*Hebrews 13:11-14*

- Will we die in our religion or die in our devotion?

- Two problems:

- They were driven by formalism.
- They were paralyzed by fear.

- Two options:

- Retreat from the mission.
- Risk everything for the mission.

*Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."*

*Numbers 13:31-14:4*

*Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it."*

*Numbers 14:20-23*

*"But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure." I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die."*

*Numbers 14:32-35*

- Will we embrace our comforts, or will we embrace the cross?

- Let's go with Jesus to the ...

- Dirty places.

*And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire. And he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.*

*Leviticus 16:27-28*

- Despised places.

*"The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' "*

*Leviticus 13:45*

- Dangerous places.

*And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.*

*Leviticus 23:13-14*

- Do we really want to be where Jesus is?
- Mission without suffering is Christianity without a cross.
- Suffering is not a consequence of our mission; it's a central strategy for achieving our mission.

- Will we live for pleasure in this world or paradise in the world to come?

- The best earthly security is ultimately insecure.
- The bottom line: it's worth it!

## 70. James 1: Faith That Perseveres (Part 1)

- God is sovereign over our trials.

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

*James 1:2-3*

- We learn to grow in His likeness.

*And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*James 1:4*

- We learn to trust in His wisdom.



*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

*James 1:5-8*

- We learn to rely on His resources.

*Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.*

*So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.*

*James 1:9-11*

- We learn to live for His reward.

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*

*James 1:12*

- We are responsible in our temptations.
  - The origin of sin ...

*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.*

*James 1:13*

- God is perfectly sinless.
- We are utterly sinful.
- The anatomy of sin ...

*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

*James 1:14-15*

- Step One: Deception.
- Step Two: Desire.
- Step Three: Disobedience.
- Step Four: Death.
- God is faithful for our salvation.

*Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

*James 1:16-18*

- His goodness is unchanging.
- His goodness is undeserved.
- His goodness is unending.
  - He has saved us from our sin.
  - He will see us through our sorrow.

## 71. James 4–5: Faith That Perseveres (Part 2)

- Faith that perseveres is humble before the sovereignty of God.

*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

*James 4:13-16*

- We can become so consumed with the material realm ...
  - That we become blind to spiritual realities.
- God is sovereign over our life and our death ...
  - And over our activities and our accomplishments.
- Faith that perseveres is obedient to the will of God.

*So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*

*James 4:17*

- Sins of commission: doing what God has said not to do.
- Sins of omission: disregarding what God has said to do.
- Faith that perseveres is confident in the justice of God.

*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.*

*James 5:1-6*

- He is coming to judge the sinful.
  - For hoarding wealth ...
    - Their treasures on earth would bring about their torment in eternity.
  - For cheating workers ...
    - Their possessions were accumulating while people were dying.

- For living in self-indulgence ...
  - They were overfed and unconcerned.
- For condemning men ...
  - Their oppression of others would lead to their own damnation.
- He is coming to deliver the faithful.
- Faith that perseveres is patient in suffering.

*Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

*James 5:7-11*

- Like a farmer ... waiting for the harvest.
  - Trusting in God with what you cannot control.
  - Honoring God with what you can control.
- Like a prophet ... speaking the truth.
- Like Job ... hoping in God's purpose.
- Faith that perseveres is trustworthy in speech.

*But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*

*James 5:12*

- Faith that perseveres is prayerful in sorrow.

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*

*James 5:13-18*

- Pray when you are hurting.
- Pray when you are happy.
- Pray with the elders.
- Pray with the church.

- Confess your sins to one another.
  - Sin directly causes some sickness.

*That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.*

*1 Corinthians 11:30*

- Sin indirectly causes all sickness.
- Intercede on behalf of one another.
- Faith that perseveres is loving toward sinners.

*My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

*James 5:19-20*

- Earthly restoration ...
  - Saves souls.
  - Covers sins.
- Eternal security ...
  - Is always a certainty.
  - Is accomplished through community.

## 72. 1 Peter: Suffering in Christ and the Christian

### On Christ's Suffering ...

- He bears our sins.

*When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

*1 Peter 2:23*

- He heals our wounds.

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

*1 Peter 2:24*

- He restores our relationship with God.

*For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

*1 Peter 2:25*

### On the Christian's Suffering ...

- Suffering is often necessary for the Christian.

*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while,  
if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials ...*  
1 Peter 1:6

- Suffering is a proving ground for your faith that results in glory for God.

*... so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold  
that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result  
in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*  
1 Peter 1:7

- Suffering is given to you by God for your inexpressible joy.

*Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him,  
you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with  
glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*  
1 Peter 1:8-9

- Suffering leads you to find your security and confidence in Christ alone.

*Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?*  
1 Peter 3:13

- Suffering spurs you on toward Christlike belief and behavior.

*... but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being  
prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason  
for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect ...*  
1 Peter 3:15

- Suffering leads you away from sinful lusts.

*Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of  
thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for  
the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.  
For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in  
sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.*  
1 Peter 4:1-3

- Suffering believers trust in the judgment of God.

*... but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*  
1 Peter 4:5

- Suffering is a part of the good plan and sovereign purpose of God.

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you  
to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*  
1 Peter 4:12

- Suffering unites you intimately with Christ himself.

*But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you  
may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*  
1 Peter 4:13

*For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what  
will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous is  
scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" Therefore let those who  
suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*  
1 Peter 4:17-19

- Suffering is a reminder that the Spirit and glory of God are resting on you.

*If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed,  
because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*  
1 Peter 4:14

- Suffering is an opportunity to glorify God.

*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed,  
but let him glorify God in that name.*  
1 Peter 4:16

- Suffering involves entrusting your soul to the care of your Creator.

*Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust  
their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*  
1 Peter 4:19

- Suffering is spiritual warfare.

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring  
lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same  
kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*  
1 Peter 5:8-9

- Suffering is a temporary stop on a path that leads to eternal glory.

*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to  
his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*  
1 Peter 5:10

### 73. 1 John: His Work and Our Wait

*And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

1 John 2:28–3:10

#### His Work of Destruction ...

- The reality of sin ...
  - Sin's scope: universal.
  - Sin's nature: lawlessness.
  - Sin's origin: the Devil.
- The reason Christ came ...
  - His essence: without sin.
  - His mission: destroy sin.

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

1 John 2:1-2

- The result for Christians ...

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

1 John 1:8-10

- Our belief in Christ makes persistent sin inconceivable.

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

1 John 2:1

- Our new birth in Christ makes persistent sin impossible.

#### Our Waiting in Anticipation ...

- When He comes back ...
  - We will see Him.
  - We will be like Him.
- While we wait ...
  - We fix our eyes on Him.
  - We purify our lives before Him.

### 74. Revelation 2: The Suffering Church

- Suffering in Ephesus

*"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary."*

Revelation 2:2-3

- Suffering in Smyrna

*"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

Revelation 2:9-10

- Suffering in Pergamum

*"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."*

Revelation 2:13

- Suffering in Thyatira

*"I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first."*

Revelation 2:19

## 75. Revelation 5: The Conquering Lamb

- Jesus has identified the ultimate problem.

*Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne  
a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.*

*Revelation 5:1*

- We stand before a holy God hopeless.
  - We stand before a holy God helpless.
- Jesus has paid the ultimate price.

*And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

*Revelation 5:5-6*

- He is a conquering Lion.
  - He is a suffering Lamb.
- Jesus has fulfilled the ultimate purpose.

*And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.*  
*Revelation 5:7*

- Jesus now deserves the ultimate praise.

*And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

*And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

*Revelation 5:8-14*

- Our song will be new.
  - Our song will be never-ending.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. A high view of God—His sovereignty, His wisdom, His goodness, and His glory—is essential for understanding suffering in your life and in this world.

**God exists.**

*The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt,  
they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good.*

*Psalms 14:1*

- Look at creation.

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

*Genesis 1:1*

- “Ex nihilo nihilo fit”—out of nothing, nothing comes.
  - Threefold progression:
    - Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
    - The universe began to exist.
    - Therefore, the universe has a cause.

*“The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same. ... This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always believed the word of the Bible. But we scientists did not expect to find evidence for an abrupt beginning because we have had, until recently, such extraordinary success in tracing the chain of cause and effect backward in time. ... At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”*

*Robert Zastrow*

*One-time director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies*

- Look at design.
  - God leaves the imprints of His glory on the design of the earth.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

*Romans 1:18-20*



*"Through my scientific work I have come to believe more and more strongly that the physical universe is put together with an ingenuity so astonishing that I cannot accept it merely as a brute fact."*

*One-time Agnostic Paul Davies*

- Look at morality.
  - The existence of objective moral values points to a moral Creator.

*They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ...*

*Romans 2:15*

- If God does not exist, then good and evil do not exist.

*"If we are purely material beings, then we should no more object to mass murder than a river objects to drying up in a drought. ... Our ability to distinguish between good and evil, and to recognize these as real, means that there is a moral standard in the universe that provides the basis for this distinction. And what is the source of that moral standard if not God?"*

*Dinesh D'Souza*

- An atheistic worldview provides no objective basis for distinguishing between good and evil.

*"The position of the modern evolutionist is that ... morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth. Considered as a rationally justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when somebody says 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' they think they are referring above and beyond themselves. Nevertheless, such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction ... and any deeper meaning is illusory."*

*Michael Ruse, Noted Agnostic Philosopher of Science*

*"We have not been able to show that reason requires the moral point of view, or that all really rational persons should not be individual egoists or classical amorlists. Reason doesn't decide here. The picture I have painted for you is not a pleasant one. Reflection on it depresses me. ... Pure practical reason, even with a good knowledge of the facts, will not take you to morality."*

*Kai Nielsen, Atheist Ethicist at the University of Calgary*

- Atheism is left with ...
  - Hopeless subjectivity.
  - Changing society.
- The implications are frightening.

*"In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at the bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no other good. Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music."*

*Richard Dawkins*

**God is sovereign over all evil and suffering.**

- God is sovereign over evil nations and rulers.

*Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding ..."*

*Daniel 2:20-21*

- God is sovereign over demons and evil spirits.

*And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.*

*Mark 5:6-10*

- God is sovereign over temptations we face.

*"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.*

*And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."*

*Luke 22:31-32*

- God is sovereign over suffering and persecution.

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*

*1 Peter 5:8-9*

- God is sovereign over natural disasters.

*By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen. "Hear this, O Job; stop and consider the wondrous works of God."*

*Job 37:10-14*

- God is sovereign over sickness and disease.

*... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*  
Acts 10:38

- God is sovereign over death itself.

*"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand."*  
Deuteronomy 32:39

- Any attempt to minimize God's sovereign power and authority ...

- Denies the testimony of Scripture.
- Destroys the hope of sufferers.
  - A God who cannot deliver us from suffering cannot deliver us through suffering.
- Defames the glory of God.

*Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.*  
1 Chronicles 29:11-13

**God is wise in the midst of all evil and suffering.**

- God has all knowledge and all wisdom at all times.

*Do you know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge ... ?*  
Job 37:16

*God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.*  
1 John 3:20

- God possesses all knowledge.
  - He knows Himself perfectly.
  - He knows all things perfectly.
    - All things actual.

*And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*  
Hebrews 4:13

- All things possible.

*"... remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose ...' "*  
Isaiah 46:9-10

- God knows everything at every moment.
  - God never learns.
  - God never discovers.
  - God never forgets.

*"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins."*  
Isaiah 43:25

- God never ponders.
- God is never surprised or amazed.
- God simply knows.
- The humbling, terrifying, glorious truth: God knows us completely.

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.*  
Psalm 139:1-6

*"That God knows each person through and through can be a cause of shaking fear to the man that has something to hide—some unforsaken sin, some secret crime committed against man or God. ... [But] to us who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us in the Gospel, how unutterably sweet is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father knows us completely. No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us."*  
A. W. Tozer

- Because God is wise, He always accomplishes the best purposes through the best means.
 

*"With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding."*  
Job 12:13

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have  
you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.  
Psalm 104:24

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!  
Romans 11:33

... to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.  
Romans 16:27

*"To believe actively that our Heavenly Father constantly spreads around us providential circumstances that work for our present good and our everlasting well-being brings to the soul a veritable benediction. Most of us go through life praying a little, planning a little, jockeying for position, hoping but never being quite certain of anything, and always secretly afraid that we will miss the way. This is a tragic waste of truth and never gives rest to the heart. There is a better way. It is to repudiate our own wisdom and take instead the infinite wisdom of God. Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it is a real hindrance to our spiritual progress. God has charged himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to him."*  
A. W. Tozer

- Any attempt to minimize God's knowledge and/or wisdom ...
  - Contradicts the testimony of Scripture.
  - Creates a god in the image of man.

*"In one correspondence my father asked me why God would allow Adolf Hitler to be born if he foreknew that this man would massacre millions of Jews. It was a very good question. The only response I could offer then, and the only response I continue to offer now, is that this was not foreknown as a certainty at the time God created Hitler."*  
Gregory Boyd

**God is good in the midst of all evil and suffering.**

*... though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.*  
Lamentations 3:32-33

- God relates to sin variably.
  - He prevents sin.

Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her."  
Genesis 20:6

Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.  
Psalm 19:13

- He permits sin.

*"But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels."*  
Psalm 81:11-12

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.  
Romans 1:24-28

- He directs sin.

*But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."*  
Genesis 50:19-20

*"Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."*  
Acts 2:36

- He limits sin.

*And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.*  
Job 1:12

*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*  
1 Corinthians 10:13

- He never directly causes sin.

*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

*James 1:13-15*

- God never sins in Scripture.
- God is never blamed for sin in Scripture.
- God relates to good and evil asymmetrically (in different ways).
  - God behind good ...
    - All that is good is under His sovereignty.

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!*

*Psalms 107:1*

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

*1 John 1:5*

- All that is good is morally chargeable to Him.

*"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."*

*Deuteronomy 32:4*

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

*James 1:17*

*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Psalms 16:11*

*"God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean."*

*Jonathan Edwards*

- God behind evil ...
  - All that is evil is under His sovereignty.

*To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the earth, to deny a man justice in the presence of the Most High, to subvert a man in his lawsuit, the Lord does not approve. Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?*

*Lamentations 3:34-38*

*And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'"*

*Exodus 4:21-23*

*For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.*

*Joshua 11:20*

*"If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.*

*1 Samuel 2:25*

*Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*

*Job 1:20-22*

*I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

*Isaiah 45:7*

- All that is evil is not morally chargeable to Him.

*"He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight."*

*Isaiah 66:3-4*

You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

Romans 9:19-21

○ Remember the mystery of God’s will ...

- God is sovereign.
  - We are responsible.
- God is in control.
  - We make \_\_\_\_\_ choices \_\_\_\_\_.

But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”

Genesis 50:19-20

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

Acts 2:22-24

**God is worthy of all glory in a world of evil and suffering.**

- Our ultimate aim in suffering is not to analyze and evaluate the character of God.
- Our ultimate aim in suffering is to adore and \_\_\_\_\_ exalt \_\_\_\_\_ the glory of God.

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!

Psalm 107:1-8

- He is \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ you in your suffering.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Psalm 46:1-7

- He is \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ you in your suffering.

Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Psalm 46:8-11

- Yet the starting point for understanding suffering is realizing that \_\_\_\_\_ God \_\_\_\_\_ is the center of the universe ... not you.

- You have been created to know and \_\_\_\_\_ enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ His glory.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

Psalm 63:1-8

- You have been commissioned to show and \_\_\_\_\_ exclaim \_\_\_\_\_ His glory.

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Isaiah 43:1-7

- So \_\_\_\_\_ trust \_\_\_\_\_ in the sovereign wisdom and goodness of God.

“Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you’re free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to do miracles-and he certainly can-is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So although miracles do happen, they’re rare by definition. A miracle has to be an unusual thing. Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying himself in history and you say,



where in all of history has God most glorified himself? He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though he could have. Jesus said, 'Don't you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for my defense?' But he didn't do that. And yet that's where God is most glorified. God is in charge. When things like this come into our lives, they are not accidental. It's not as if God somehow forgot what was going on, and something bad slipped by. God is not only the one who is in charge; God is also good. Everything he does is good. If God does something in your life, would you change it? If you'd change it, you'd make it worse. It wouldn't be as good."

James Montgomery Boice

(Diagnosed with liver cancer and died eight weeks after sharing this with his congregation)

- And live to know, enjoy, and declare the sovereign glory of God.

"People will often express their care and concern by inquiring about your health.

That's good, but the conversation easily gets stuck there. So tell them openly about your sickness, seeking their prayers and counsel, but then change the direction of the conversation by telling them what your God is faithfully doing to sustain you with ten thousand mercies. Robert Murracy McCheyne wisely said, 'For every one look at your sins, take ten looks at Christ.' ... For every one sentence you say to others about your cancer, say ten sentences about your God, and your hope, and what he is teaching you, and the small blessings of each day. For every hour you spend researching or discussing your cancer, spend ten hours researching and discussing and serving your Lord."

David Powlison

**A high view of God—His sovereignty, His wisdom, His goodness, and His glory—is essential for understanding suffering in your life and in this world.**

**2. A humble view of man—his sinful depravity and small perspective—is essential for understanding suffering in your life and in this world.**

"The subject of sin is vital knowledge. To say that our first need in life is to learn about sin may sound strange, but in the sense intended it is profoundly true. If you have not learned about sin, you cannot understand yourself, or your fellow-men, or the world you live in, or the Christian faith. And you will not be able to make head or tail of the Bible.

For the Bible is an exposition of God's answer to the problem of human sin and unless you have that problem clearly before you, you will keep missing the point of what it says."

J. I. Packer

**We have a dangerous tendency to overestimate our wisdom.**

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:8-9

- Our ways are not God's ways.
- Our thoughts are not God's thoughts.

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'? Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment. From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken. Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this."

Job 38:1-18

- Our timing is not God's timing.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

"There is nothing which shows our ignorance so much as our impatience under trouble.

We forget that every cross is a message from God, and intended to do us good in the end. Trials are intended to make us think—to wean us from the world—to send us to the Bible—to drive us to our knees. Health is a good thing but sickness is far better if it leads us to God. Prosperity is a great mercy; but adversity is a greater one if it brings us to Christ. Anything, anything is better than living in carelessness and dying in sin."

J. C. Ryle

- Our ability to comprehend is infinitely smaller than God's ability to communicate.

"Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable. How many hours are there in a mile? Is yellow square or round? Probably half the questions we ask—half our great theological and metaphysical problems—are like that."

C. S. Lewis

*“Providence is wonderfully intricate. Ah! You want always to see through Providence, do you not? You never will, I assure you. You have not eyes good enough. You want to see what good that affliction was to you; you must believe it. You want to see how it can bring good to the soul; you may be enabled in a little time; but you cannot see it now; you must believe it. Honor God by trusting him.”*

*Charles Spurgeon*

**We have a damning tendency to underestimate our wickedness.**

- We see evil and suffering, and we think it's unfair.
- We have denounced His sovereignty.

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

*Genesis 3:6-7*

- We have dishonored His holiness.

*“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.”*

*Ezekiel 36:22-23*

- We have despised His righteousness.

*... as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”*

*Romans 3:10-12*

- We have disregarded His wrath.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

*Ephesians 2:1-3*

- We have denied His love.

*Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*

*Romans 2:4*

- Our minds are blinded.

*And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

*Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*

*Romans 1:28-32*

*In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

*2 Corinthians 4:4*

- Our emotions are disordered.

*For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

*Romans 1:26-27*

*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

*1 Peter 2:11*

- Our bodies are defiled.

*“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

*Romans 3:13-18*

- Our wills are distorted.

*For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God,  
for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.  
Romans 8:7*

- Our relationships are broken.
  - With God.

*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.  
James 4:4*

- With one another.

*For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.  
Titus 3:3*

- We are slaves to sin.

*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you,  
everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."  
John 8:34*

- We are dominated by Satan.

*... and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare  
of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.  
2 Timothy 2:26*

- We are lovers of darkness.

*For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and  
does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.  
John 3:20*

*They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God  
because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.  
Ephesians 4:18*

- We are children of wrath.

*... among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of  
the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.  
Ephesians 2:3*

- We are perishing.

*The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power  
and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who  
are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.  
2 Thessalonians 2:9-10*

- We are morally evil.

*And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will  
never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from  
his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."  
Genesis 8:21*

- We are sinfully sick.

*But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well  
have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."  
Matthew 9:12*

- We are spiritually dead.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ...  
Ephesians 2:1*

- We have denounced God's sovereignty, dishonored God's holiness, despised God's righteousness, disregarded God's wrath, and denied His love. Our minds are blinded, our emotions are disordered, our bodies are defiled, and our relationships are broken. We are slaves to sin, dominated by Satan, lovers of darkness, children of wrath, morally evil, sinfully sick, and spiritually dead ...
  - And we want what's fair?

*"Do you really want nothing but totally effective, instantaneous justice? Then go to hell."  
D. A. Carson*

- And we know how to instruct God on what's good and evil?
    - God is not accountable to us.
    - We are accountable to Him.
- The startling realities ...
  - Evil is not just outside of us; it's inside of us.
    - What we do.
    - What we fail to do.
  - We are different from violent criminals in degree, not in kind.
- The common question ...
  - "Why do bad things happen to good people?" is a bad question.

... as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

Romans 3:10-12

- What if God is actually restraining 99.99% of evil and suffering in the world right now?

Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her."

Genesis 20:6

Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

Psalms 19:13

- Let us not rail against God in self-righteousness.
- Let us repent of sin against God in heartfelt brokenness.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalms 51:1-17

- In order to see suffering for why it's here ...
  - We must see sin for what it is.
  - We must see ourselves for who we are.

**A humble view of man—his sinful depravity and small perspective—is essential for understanding suffering in your life and in this world.**

### 3. The ultimate reason suffering exists is to exalt the glory of God's grace through the suffering of God's Son for the salvation of undeserving sinners.

To exalt the glory of God's grace ...

- God creates us for His glory.

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Isaiah 43:1-7

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

- God saves us by His grace.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:4-10

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his

*will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*  
Ephesians 1:3-14

#### **Through the suffering of God's Son ...**

- God planned the crucifixion of Jesus before the creation of the world.

*... and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.*  
Revelation 13:8

*... this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*  
Acts 2:23

- God permitted sin and suffering in the world ultimately in order to make Good Friday a reality.
  - God permits sin to enter the world.

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*  
Genesis 3:6-7

- God ordains suffering to enter the world.

*To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*  
Genesis 3:16-19

*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*  
Romans 8:20-23

- God sends His Son into the world to suffer for sinners.

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*  
Galatians 4:4-5

- This was not plan B.
  - This was always plan A.
  - God permitted murder in Genesis 4 so that His Son would be murdered, according to Acts 4.

*Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.*  
Genesis 4:8

*"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed"—for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*  
Acts 4:26-28

#### **For the salvation of undeserving sinners.**

- [God permits sin to enter the world.]
- [God ordains suffering to enter the world.]
- [God sends His Son into the world to suffer for sinners.]
- God saves undeserving sinners for the glory of His grace.
  - He saves them by His grace.

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel ...*  
2 Timothy 1:8-10

- He saves them through His Son's suffering.
    - Jesus absorbed God's wrath through suffering.

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree ..."*  
Galatians 3:13



- Jesus bore our sins through suffering.

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

*1 Peter 2:24*

- Jesus purchased our forgiveness through suffering.

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*Isaiah 53:4-6*

- Jesus provided us righteousness through suffering.

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

*2 Corinthians 5:21*

- Jesus defeated death through suffering.

*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*

*Hebrews 2:14-15*

- Jesus disarmed Satan through suffering.

*... by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

*Colossians 2:14-15*

- Jesus reconciled us to God through suffering.

*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

*Romans 5:10-11*

- He saves them \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ His glory.

*And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

*Revelation 5:9-14*

- For all of eternity, the slaughtered Lamb who suffered on our behalf will be at the \_\_\_\_\_ center \_\_\_\_\_ of our worship.

*And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

*Revelation 15:3-4*

- Forever we will \_\_\_\_\_ praise \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus for the glory of God's grace.
- He suffered on our behalf to save us from our sins, and all of this was \_\_\_\_\_ planned \_\_\_\_\_ before time began.

**This is the ultimate reason we have suffering in the world: to exalt the glory of God's grace through the suffering of God's Son for the salvation of undeserving sinners.**

#### **4. God \_\_\_\_\_ ordains \_\_\_\_\_ suffering for the Christian in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes.**

*"Jesus, however, came to redeem us from Satan's power and dominion over us. ... We are to reign as kings in life. That means that we have dominion over our lives. We are to dominate, not to be dominated. Circumstances are not to dominate you. Poverty is not to rule and reign over you. You are to rule and reign over poverty. Disease and sickness are not to rule and reign over you. You are to rule and reign over sickness. We are to reign as kings in life by Christ Jesus, in whom we have our redemption."*

*Kenneth Hagin*

#### **The Definition of "Prosperity Gospel"**

- The prosperity gospel is a theology that believes God's aim is to make believers \_\_\_\_\_ healthy \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ wealthy \_\_\_\_\_ in this life.
  - We enjoy excesses.

- We live like King's kids.

### The Deception of the "Prosperity Gospel"

- The consistent error ...
  - Ripping texts from contexts.

*Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.*  
3 John 2

- Does prayer guarantee health and wealth?

*Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, And in the age to come eternal life."*  
Mark 10:29-30

- Have those who claimed the benefits paid the price?

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases ...*  
Psalm 103:2-3

- Is this general praise or a guaranteed promise?

*As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*  
James 5:10-18

- Faith is patient in suffering.
- Faith is prayerful in sorrow.
- The counter-examples ...

- The life and teachings of Jesus
  - Not the "health and wealth gospel"
  - More like the "homeless and wounded gospel"
  - God may accomplish higher purposes in our death than in our life.

*And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."*  
John 12:23-26

- The life and teachings of Paul
  - Not the "prosperity gospel"
  - More like the "adversity gospel"
  - God may accomplish higher purposes in our sickness than in our health.

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*  
2 Corinthians 12:7-10

*"When Paul was taken in chains from his filthy Roman dungeon and beheaded at the order of the opulent madman Nero, two representatives of humanity faced off, one of the best and one of the worst. One lived for prosperity on earth, the other didn't. One now lives in prosperity in heaven, the other doesn't. We remember both men for what they truly were, which is why we name our sons Paul and our dogs Nero." Randy Alcorn*

### The Dangers of the "Prosperity Gospel"

- It overlooks the design of suffering.
  - Christians may suffer despite their righteousness.
  - Christians may suffer because of their righteousness.
- It fails to acknowledge the necessity of suffering.

**God ordains suffering for the Christian ...**

*And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."*

*Luke 9:23-24*

*"But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives."*

*Luke 21:12-19*

*"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."*

*John 15:20*

*... strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

*Acts 14:22*

*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

*Romans 8:16-18*

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."*

*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

*Romans 8:35-37*

*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake ...*

*Philippians 1:29*

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church ...*

*Colossians 1:24*

*If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

*1 Peter 4:14*

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ...*

*2 Timothy 3:12*

### **God ordains suffering for the Christian in a variety of ways ...**

- The Christian may suffer with sickness.

*I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*

*Philippians 2:25-27*

*"Maybe Alzheimer's disease runs in your family genes, but don't succumb to it. Instead, say every day, 'My mind is alert. I have clarity of thought. I have a good memory. Every cell in my body is increasing and getting healthier.' If you'll rise up in your authority, you can be the one to put a stop to the negative things in your family line. ... Start boldly declaring, 'God is restoring health unto me. I am getting better every day in every way.'"*

*Joel Osteen*

- The Christian may suffer from disaster.

*There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

*Luke 13:1-5*

- The Christian may suffer through various struggles.

*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.*

*1 Timothy 5:23*

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.*  
2 Corinthians 12:7

- The Christian may suffer in persecution.

*Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the 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 I 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.*  
2 Corinthians 11:24-28

- Regardless of what type of suffering the Christian experiences, the Christian suffers “\_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ Christ” or “for Christ” or “in Christ.”

*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*  
Galatians 2:20

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*  
Hebrews 4:15-16

- Satan intends every type of suffering to sabotage us.
- God intends every type of suffering to sanctify us.

#### **God ordains suffering for the Christian in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes.**

- To \_\_\_\_\_ refine \_\_\_\_\_ our faith.

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope ...*  
Romans 5:3-4

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*  
James 1:2-4

*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory ...*  
1 Peter 1:6-8

- To \_\_\_\_\_ reveal \_\_\_\_\_ His glory.
  - To us.

*Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*  
Acts 5:41

*From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*  
Galatians 6:17

*... for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.*  
Philippians 1:19-23

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death ...*  
Philippians 3:7-10

- To others.

*Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”*  
John 9:3

*“But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer ...”*  
Luke 21:12-13

*And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

*Acts 8:1*

*Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.*

*Acts 11:19-21*

*For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.*

*2 Corinthians 1:5-6*

*... always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.*

*2 Corinthians 4:10-12*

*I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.*

*Philippians 1:12*

*I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.*

*Philippians 2:28-30*

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church ...*

*Colossians 1:24*

*... for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

*2 Timothy 2:9-10*

- To teach us to \_\_\_\_\_ rely \_\_\_\_\_ on Him.

*For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we 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.*

*2 Corinthians 1:8-9*

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

*2 Corinthians 12:7-10*

*"The devil will afflict you [and] will make a real doctor of you, and will teach you by his temptations to seek and to love God's Word. For I myself... owe my papists many thanks for so beating, pressing, and frightening me through the devil's raging that they have turned me into a fairly good theologian, driving me to a goal I should never have reached."*

*Martin Luther*

- To bring us to \_\_\_\_\_ repent \_\_\_\_\_ and renounce all sin in our lives.

*But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.*

*Acts 5:1-11*

*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on*



himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:3-11

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent."

Revelation 3:19

- To lead us to our \_\_\_\_\_ reward \_\_\_\_\_ in Him.

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:11-12

For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:15-18

**All of these purposes have one common end:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Joy \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ ...

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:11-12

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

Acts 5:41

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance ...

Romans 5:3

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church ...

Colossians 1:24

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit ...

1 Thessalonians 1:6

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds ...

James 1:2

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:13

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:7-11

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Matthew 13:44

- ... to the \_\_\_\_\_ glory \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

*"I hope in some way I can take my wheelchair to heaven. With my new glorified body I will stand up on resurrected legs, and I will be next to the Lord Jesus. And I will feel those nail prints in his hands, and I will say, 'Thank you, Jesus!' He will know I mean it, because he will recognize me from the inner sanctum of sharing in the fellowship of his sufferings. He will see that I was one who identified with him in the sharing of his sufferings, so my gratitude will not be hollow. And then I will say, 'Lord Jesus, do you see that wheelchair over there? Well, you were right. When you put me in it, it was a lot of trouble. But the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. I do not think I would ever have known the glory of your grace were it not for the weakness of that wheelchair. So thank you, Lord Jesus, for that. Now, if you like, you can send that thing off to hell.'"*

*Joni Eareckson Tada*

**5. The completion of the Great Commission will include great suffering, but eternity will prove it was worth the price.**

**The completion of the Great Commission ...**

*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."*

*Matthew 24:14*

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

*Matthew 28:18-20*

- The Great Commission ...
  - Not a general assignment to make disciples among as many people as possible.
  - Instead, a specific assignment to make disciples among every people group on the planet.
    - Number of people groups worldwide: 11,535.
    - Number of people groups still unreached with the gospel: 6,628.
    - Number of people groups still unreached and unengaged with the gospel: 3,501.
- ... will one day be complete.

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

*Revelation 7:9-10*

*"God alone knows the definition of terms. I cannot precisely define who all the nations are, but I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms; our responsibility is to complete the task. So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission."*

*George Ladd*

**The completion of the Great Commission will include great suffering ...**

*"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."*

*Matthew 24:9-14*

- Jesus said it.

*"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."*

*John 15:20*

*Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*

*John 20:21*

- The church in Acts demonstrated it.

*Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.*

*Acts 7:54–8:4*

*But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."*

*Acts 9:15-17*

*Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.*

*Acts 11:19*

*About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword ...*

*Acts 12:1-2*

*... strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

*Acts 14:22*

- Paul spoke about it.

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.*

*Colossians 1:24*

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted ...*

*2 Timothy 3:12*

- Early Christians experienced it.

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*

*1 Peter 4:12*

*"We [Christians] multiply whenever we are mown down by you; the blood of Christians is seed."*

*Tertullian*

*"The Church of Christ has been founded by shedding its own blood, not that of others; by enduring outrage, not by inflicting it. Persecutions have made it grow; martyrdoms have crowned it."*

*Saint Jerome*

- Revelation anticipates it.

*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*

*Revelation 6:9-11*

- The more passionate we become about spreading the gospel to every people group in the world, the more we will suffer.
  - Satan is prolonging the end as long as he possibly can.
  - As you give your life to advancing the gospel to the ends of the earth, you can expect to be met in force by the Devil and all the demons of hell.

**The completion of the Great Commission will include great suffering, but eternity will prove it was worth the price.**

*Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"*

*Revelation 12:7-12*

- Christ will be honored as King.
  - The salvation of God is here!
  - The power of God is here!
  - The kingdom of God is here!
- The Devil will be cast down in defeat.
  - The ancient serpent of the garden.
  - The great adversary (Satan).
  - The accuser of believers.

*A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and pow'r are great, And, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His name, From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

*And tho' this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph thro' us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim—We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.*

Martin Luther

- The church will rise up in victory.
  - By the blood of Christ shed on a cross.
    - The accusations of the Devil are empty.
    - The peace of Christ is eternal.
  - By the lives of Christians sacrificed in this cause.
    - Believers who shared in Christ's sufferings.
    - Believers who participated in Satan's defeat.
      - When Satan uses persecution to destroy the life of a believer, he ultimately participates in their eternal delight and his own eternal destruction.

*"I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world? Whether you can consent to her departure to a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life? Whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death? Can you consent to all this, for the sake of Him who left His heavenly home and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with a crown of righteousness brightened by the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?"*  
Adoniram Judson, letter to Mr. Hasseltine

*"Deeply appreciate your consolation. Sacrifice seems great, but not too great for Him who gave Himself for us. Experiencing God's grace. Believe wholeheartedly Romans 8:28."*  
Betty Stam's parents

*"Dearest Daddy and Mother, you don't need to hear me say how much we love you and are thinking of and praying for you in these days...I have such radiant pictures of Betty and John standing with their palms of victory before the Throne, singing a song of pure joy because they had given everything they had to their Master, that I cannot break loose and cry about it as people expect. Crying seems to be too petty for a thing that was so manifestly in God's hands alone; but my heart is very, very sore for you."*  
Betty Stam's sister

- So for all who reject the King ...
  - Hell will be a place of irreversible justice.

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*  
Revelation 20:11-15

- And for all who revere the King ...
  - Heaven will be a place of inexpressible joy.

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*  
Revelation 21:1-4

- We will be with Him!

*And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*  
Revelation 21:22-27

- Death will be replaced by life.
  - No more sin.
  - No more sorrow.
  - No more sickness.
  - No more separation.
- Night will be replaced by light.
- Corruption will be replaced by purity.
- Curse will be replaced by blessing.

*No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God  
and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.*

*Revelation 22:1-3*

- We will see His face.

*They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.*

*Revelation 22:4*

*Some day the silver cord will break,  
And I no more as now shall sing,  
But, O, the joy when I awake,  
Within the palace of the King.  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story saved by grace.  
Some day my earthly house will fall,  
I cannot tell how soon 'twill be,  
But this I know, my All in All  
Has now a place in heaven for me.  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story saved by grace.*

*Some day, when fades the golden sun  
Beneath the rosy-tinted West,  
My blessed Lord will say, "Well done!"  
And I shall enter into rest.  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story saved by grace.*

*Some day—till then I'll watch and wait,  
My lamp all trimmed and burning bright,  
That when my Saviour opes the gate,  
My soul to Him may take its flight.  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story saved by grace.*

*Fanny Crosby*

- The claim of Christ ...
  - I am coming soon!

*"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one  
who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*

*Revelation 22:7*

*"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he  
has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

*Revelation 22:12-13*

*He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

*Revelation 22:20*

- The cry of the church ...
  - Amen, Come, Lord Jesus!



# Recommended Reading

If you are interested in further exploring the cross and suffering or specific topics from this evening's Secret Church, the following resources are recommended. Many of these resources were foundational for the truths we explored in our study. Please note, however, that though these books are recommended, Dr. Platt does not necessarily agree with everything written in every one of them. We urge you to read and learn from these books, but at the same time, be wise in your reading to discern good teaching from men's opinions.

## On Suffering ...

- D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?*
- Randy Alcorn, *If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil*
- John Piper and Justin Taylor, *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*
- Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*
- C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed*
- Joni Eareckson Tada, *A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and God's Sovereignty*
- John Piper, *Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ*
- Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson, eds., *Suffering and the Goodness of God*
- Larry Waters and Roy Zuck, eds., *Why, O God? Suffering and Disability in the Bible and the Church*

## On the Cross ...

- John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*
- C. J. Mahaney, *The Cross-Centered Life*
- Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions*
- Leon Morris, *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance*
- John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*
- J. I. Packer and Mark Dever, *In My Place Condemned He Stood*
- Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*

## On Theology ...

- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*
- Daniel Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church*
- D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*

# Pray for the Persecuted Church in the Horn of Africa

This Secret Church we are highlighting the people of the Horn of Africa. "The Horn" refers to a peninsula in east Africa that resembles the horn of a rhinoceros jutting hundreds of kilometers into the Arabian Sea. The countries of the Horn are, for the most part, linguistically and ethnically linked together, displaying a complex pattern of interrelationships among the various peoples. These countries generally include Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia. With a combined population of 100 million people, the Horn is generally inhabited by Cushitic peoples such as the Amhara, Tigre, Afar, and Somali.

Long-term cycles of severe hunger have been sharpened by decades of failed crops, economic crises and climatic changes, and the people are now suffering through the worst drought since 1951. The drought has driven up food prices and weakened livestock, thus increasing malnutrition, hunger, and famine. The UN estimates about 770,000 people have fled to refugee camps and approximately 11 million people are affected by the drought. Thousands of people are dying every day.

According to Operation World, 160 distinct people groups inhabit the Horn of Africa. Of those 160 people groups, 60 are still considered unreached, meaning less than 2 percent of the population are Evangelical Christians. Those 60 groups represent approximately 38 million people in the Horn of Africa. Without a gospel witness, generations will continue to be born, live, and die without any saving knowledge of the gospel.

By God's grace close to 20 percent of the Horn's population are considered Evangelical Christians. Almost 90 percent are living in Ethiopia, the only country where freedom of worship exists. Although the freedom to worship has greatly increased in Ethiopia since 1991, societal persecution continues to exist against Evangelical Christians by both Muslim and Orthodox groups. In Eritrea only 2 percent of the population is evangelical, which is larger than the 1 percent in Djibouti and the 0.01 percent in Somalia, where Islam is the major religion. In all three of these countries, persecution can be particularly severe. The great challenge remains to reach the Somali and Afar peoples.

Persecution is a negative reaction by government, ideologies, society, and family to the presence of Christ. The risk and cost have proved to be great. It is almost impossible for outsiders to do mission work among the Somalis at this point in time. The task is great, and we have the opportunity to pray and work for the gospel to go forward in places like Somalia, Eritrea, and Djibouti. As our brothers and sisters in the Horn of Africa continue to be refined through persecution, let us diligently join in their suffering through prayer, gospel witness, and disciple making in all nations.

## Please join us in praying for our brothers and sisters in the Horn of Africa:

The Horn of Africa generally consists of five countries: Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and northern Kenya. Listed below are specific ways to pray for each country.

### Somalia

- Known as Africa's most failed state, Somalia continues to struggle for stability amid war, violence, and anarchy. Pray for peace and stability for this nation. Pray that decades of war and destruction will come to an end and the Somali people will have a chance to know true and everlasting peace.
- Historically, Somalia was the pathway through which Islam first entered the continent of Africa. Almost universally, Somalis profess unwavering commitment to Islam. In the 1990s the Somali church was driven underground to escape the anarchy and persecution that followed a government turnover. There are an unknown number of believers who meet in secret, but most follow Jesus in isolation. Pray for God to sustain Somali believers and make bold the church in sharing the gospel. Pray for the hearts of Somalis to be opened to the truth of the gospel and for many to know Christ.

### Ethiopia

- Ethiopia continues to be challenged with social, political, and economic crises. The nation has experienced suffering over the past 30 years with drought and famine. Pray for better harvests, a good rainy season, wise governance, and outside assistance rightly applied. Pray for Ethiopians to turn to Christ and trust God amid the adversity they are facing.
- Ethiopia has relatively been a country of religious pluralism, with Muslims, Orthodox, and Evangelicals living in peace with one another. Praise God for this. Pray, though, for continued growth among the Evangelical church. Pray for bold witness of the gospel of Christ to nonevangelical Christian peoples.

### Eritrea

- The land called Eritrea has a rich history reaching into the past that parallels its more famous ancient Egyptian neighbors. However, border disputes with Ethiopia have crippled Eritrea with decades of war, resulting in great suffering for the people. Pray for a nation that is weak from money spent on warring with other countries rather than feeding its own people.
- Christians are being refined and drawn together through the recent decades of war, drought, and government oppression. As Muslim extremism intensifies, the suffering of the Eritrean church is one of the untold stories of the past decade—a story of tragedy and ultimately, we pray, great spiritual harvest. Pray

for the perseverance of the many Eritrean believers who are in prison for their faith. Pray for Christianity to grow in spite of the government's religious oppression.

### Djibouti

- Africa's third smallest state, Djibouti is perhaps the most peaceful country in the region at this time. Pray for this peace and stability to continue. Pray that the peaceful political situation will allow the gospel to be made known among the different peoples, such as the Somalis and Afars, of Djibouti.
- A few Somali and Afar believers are often isolated and suffer under the pressures of relatives to return to Islam. Pray for believers to persevere in their faith and have boldness to share truth with many in their cities and villages.

### Northern Kenya

(Although Kenya is considered a part of east Africa, we have included it in this area highlight because of the ethnic relations of the people and the effects of the recent famine in the area.)

- The peoples of northern and northeastern Kenya are Cushitic and are culturally related to the rest of the Horn. The largest of these people groups includes the Somali, Rendille, Borana, and Gabbra, with a combined population of over one million. Praise God for access to these unreached peoples. Pray for Christ-followers in Kenya to cross ethnic and religious divides and boldly share the gospel in the midst of hostility and persecution.
- Pray for continued rainfall. Pray for relief from this current drought and food crisis, which is the worst on record in the past 60 years. Pray for the current food relief that is being done in some of the hardest-hit areas of northern Kenya. Pray for the church to lead in this effort and care for those in greatest need.

**For more ways to pray for the Horn of Africa,  
please visit [prayforthehorn.com](http://prayforthehorn.com).**

# The Church at Brook Hills

If you are a guest of The Church at Brook Hills tonight, we would like to extend a special welcome to you. If you are not a part of a local church in the Birmingham area, we invite you to join us for one of our Worship Gatherings. Below is our regular Sunday schedule. Each of the worship gatherings on Sunday is identical (i.e., the same worship gathering at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 6:00 p.m.).

## SUNDAY SCHEDULE

8:00 a.m.	Adult Small Groups
9:00 a.m.	Small Groups for all ages Worship Gathering
11:00 a.m.	Small Groups for all ages Worship Gathering
6:00 p.m.	Worship Gathering

## SMALL GROUPS

Brook Hills Small Groups gather weekly to make disciples in the context of relationships with one another. These groups meet at various times throughout the week, and there is a group meeting just about anytime on any day throughout the city. Some meet on the church campus on Sundays, and others meet in homes or area gathering places during the week, so we're pretty confident there's one near you at a time and on a day that will fit your schedule and/or family.

For a complete listing of Small Group opportunities, you can visit us online at ***BrookHills.org/local*** or stop by the Welcome Desk in the lobby at Brook Hills for assistance in connecting with a Small Group.

For more information about The Church at Brook Hills visit our Web site, ***BrookHills.org***.

# About the Teacher

Dr. David Platt, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, is deeply devoted to Christ and His Word. David's first love in ministry is disciple making—the simple, biblical model of teaching God's Word, mentoring others, and sharing faith. He has traveled extensively to teach the Bible alongside church leaders throughout the United States and around the world. Atlanta natives, he and his wife, Heather, made their home in New Orleans until they were displaced by flooding following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

A lifelong learner, David has earned two undergraduate and three advanced degrees. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism (ABJ) from the University of Georgia and a Master of Divinity (MDiv), Master of Theology (ThM), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He has previously served at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary as Dean of Chapel and Assistant Professor of Expository Preaching and Apologetics and as Staff Evangelist at Edgewater Baptist Church in New Orleans. He has authored two books, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* and *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God*.

David and Heather were married in 1999. They are the parents of three children, Caleb, Joshua, and Mara Ruth.

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## NOTES