

REJOICING IN OUR SUFFERING

CLASS 6: GROWING IN THE MIDST OF OUR SUFFERING

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- Suffering is a very normal part of the Christian life.
- It can be hard to comprehend how there is suffering when God, who is good, is sovereign over everything in the world.
- In other words, *how can a good God allow such atrocities to take place right before His face?*
- It has caused many to wonder where or if God is present in the midst of their hardships.
- Combined with a lack of biblical understanding and the church's failure to teach the whole counsel of God's Word, many Christians are left trying to piece together what is going on their life.
- When we are left to our own emotions and experiences to lead, believers often times find themselves staying in the pit of despair or even worse, turning away from the God who loves them.
- Our goal in this class is to develop a proper biblical view of suffering.
- While we will most likely never know why *all* of our suffering is taking place, we can know who God is and what He desires to accomplish through our hardships.
- When we have a biblical understanding of who God is and how He works in His creation, we are then better equipped to not only direct our own hearts but the hearts of those who are suffering around us.
- The Christian should be the most joyous in the world, a beacon of hope to those who are searching and to those who are walking down the same path with them.

Here is the schedule for the upcoming lessons:

- April 27th: Introduction/A Biblical View of Suffering
- May 4th: Suffering and the Sovereignty of God
- May 11th: The Purposes for Suffering
- May 18th: Knowing That God is With Us in Our Suffering
- May 25th: No Class - Memorial Day Weekend
- June 1st: Rejoicing in the Midst of Our Suffering
- June 8th: Growing in the Midst of Our Suffering
- June 15th: When Believers Face Tragedy
- June 22nd: Walking With Others in Their Suffering

FORTIFYING OUR HEARTS IN PREPARATION FOR SUFFERING

- The question we will consider today is, how does a believer grow in the midst of their suffering?
- We will attempt to simplify this into two "phases":
 - How does a believer prepare to grow in the midst of suffering?
 - What are the practical, biblical steps for growth in the midst of suffering?

1. Fortify Your Heart By Developing Convictions

- For the believer, the process of sanctification does not begin in the moment of temptation. The same is true for the suffering believer. Because of that, we want to build up fortifications in our heart to prepare.
- Throughout God's word, there is an understanding of the need for conviction in the life of a believer:
 - It's characteristic of true faith
 - Hebrews 11:1 - *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
 - It is what fueled Paul to move forward in the midst of his sufferings

- 2 Timothy 1:12 - *For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I*

have entrusted to Him until that day.

- It is what Paul called Timothy to in the midst of his difficult ministry in Ephesus

- 2 Timothy 3:12-15 - *Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted... You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become*

convinced of...

- But what is a conviction?

- Simply put, convictions are firmly held beliefs. However, as seen in the verses above, it goes beyond simple cognitive understanding.
- Where knowledge/understanding can stay in the head, conviction affects the heart.
- An illustration of this would be jumping out of an airplane with a parachute on.
 - Knowledge and understanding are knowing how the parachute works.
 - Conviction is pulling the rip chord because you are certain that if you don't, you'll die.
- What does this have to do with suffering?

- As we study the character of God, the life of the believer as laid out in Scripture, the promises of God as our Shepherd and Heavenly Father, passages that speak about the sanctifying work of trials and affliction, are we developing convictions in these areas.

expressing any kind of sorrow or grief as a sinful response.

- Likely, when we consider how to grow in the midst of suffering, we can look at the idea of

1. Weeping

of a believer?

- With all of this in mind, having now laid a foundation and sought the means to prepare for what may lie ahead, what are the practical steps of growing in our suffering? What does this actually look like in the life

PRACTICAL WAYS TO GROW IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

road to our refuge in Christ?

- Are we drawing near to God now, so that when the hard times come, we can run along a well-worn *wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.*
- I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches...in the shadow of Your name... I will praise You. So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your life, my lips will praise You. Your lovingkindness is better than years for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water... Your lovingkindness is better than years for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water... Your lovingkindness is better than years for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water... Your lovingkindness is better than years for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water...*
- Psalm 63:1-8 - *O God, You are my God, I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water... Your lovingkindness is better than years for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water...*
 - We can fall into this if we aren't cultivating our relationship with the Lord.
 - heavenly.
 - We find our joy in things that are temporary and earthly, rather than in what is eternal and suffering, rather than to the Lord as a refuge in times of trouble (Ps 46:1).
- Another temptation is to run to the things of this world as a comfort and refuge in the midst of
 - Does God even care?
 - Is God mad at me? Am I under God's wrath/condemnation?
- standing before and relationship with the Lord.
- Though this is a reality for every believer, one temptation in the midst of suffering is to question our
 - therefore, we have been reconciled to God and have peace with our Heavenly Father (Rom 5:1).
- One of the greatest joys in the life of the believer is the fact that now we have been justified and, *His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark. who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is He*
- Psalm 91:1-4 - *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the*

2. Fortify Your Heart By Drawing Near to God

and crumble under the weight.

- Why? Because *generally*, in the midst of a trial, our fleshly tendency is to retreat, seize up,

the midst of our suffering, this is the idea that we should have.

- As we think of this, though, in the context of suffering, specifically as we consider how we grow in

press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I

by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one

perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of

- **Philippians 3:12-14** - *Not that I have already obtained it or have already become*

brings with it the idea of progression toward something – specifically Christlikeness.

- It has in mind not only an outward expression of an inner faith and love for God, but also

manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...

- **Ephesians 4:1** - *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a*

- **2 Corinthians 5:7** - *for we walk by faith, not by sight—*

of God,

Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge

- **Colossians 1:10** - *...so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please*

- It is the call of every believer to “walk worthy”

seen in God’s word that I’ve come to treasure is that of walking.

- As we look to grow in the midst of suffering, we want to be moving forward. An image consistently

2. Walking

not delay, O my God.

I am afflicted and needy, Let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer; Do

- **Psalms 40:13, 17** - *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; Make haste, O Lord, to help me... Since*

lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me.

- **Psalms 40:11** - *You, O Lord, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your*

dependence on Him, and, in turn, grow in a greater trust in the Lord.

we draw closer to our Heavenly Father in a time of overwhelming affliction, remind ourselves of our

- Lamenting is not wallowing in self-pity or allowing our emotions to control us. Rather, it is a means

lament is Christian.

talk to God about our sorrows as we renew our hope in his sovereign care. To cry is human, but to

- Lament is the prayer language for God’s people as they live in a world marred by sin. It is how we

CONCLUSION

- Now, what we need to be clear on, as we want to have right expectations, is that the Bible never promises a definitive end to a trial or affliction in this life.

- However, the Bible is clear that the Lord is with us in the midst of the fire as these trials are working in us.

- **1 Corinthians 10:13** - *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; **and God is***

Faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, **so that you will be able to endure it.

- **Hebrews 13:5** - *...for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,"*

- **Philippians 1:6** - *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- **Philippians 2:12-13** - *So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **for it is God who is at work in you,** both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

- **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** - *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 will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

- Also, that we do actually grow in the midst of suffering, and as we will see in a later class, our suffering and the Lord's grace in bringing us through a trial equips us to serve others in the body as they are suffering, allowing us to be used by the Lord as a means of God's grace and blessing to others.

- And praise be to God that there is a day coming when all sin, death, affliction, and suffering will end.
- **Revelation 21:4** - *... and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

- Therefore, let us hold to the marching orders given through the apostle Peter to suffering believers:
- **1 Peter 1:13** - *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*