

## **TOPIC: Suffering Common to Man in a Fallen World**

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### SUMMARY OF MESSAGE

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Deuteronomy 29:29

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

Today, we are living in a time of increasing revelation. The Holy Spirit is unpacking for us scriptures. We have more knowledge. Purpose is to apply and live our lives according to the law.

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

We don't have 100% absolute knowledge but relative knowledge. We know in part and whatever part we know, we apply. It is not about knowledge per se as knowledge puffs up. We need to have knowledge combined with love (1 Cor 13). If we have all knowledge but no love, it is nothing. Therefore, when we have speakers who may utter a view different from what we have been taught, we take the meat and throw away the bones. Don't ever part fellowship with others because we disagree with certain issues. The whole purpose is to build conviction of God's love and to develop a correct view of God. Otherwise, we cannot live victoriously as spelt out in the scriptures. We want to journey together to be a group of maturing people.

Prov 23:7 says as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Our interpretation of scriptures is important.

John 10:10 talks about living the more abundant life.

#### **Two Qualifications:**

1) There is one exception and that is martyrdom. But this is not for all believers.

2) We may never know fully what happened to other believers. Were there believers in the Twin Tower? Were there believers in the plane that crashed? The speculation can go on. The needed thing is how to appropriate the divine exchange, how to learn, believe and to be whole people. This message is for us to get our theology correct, i.e.

i) Know and understand God and His Word. Jeremiah 9:24

ii) live victoriously (more abundant life) by accessing the glorious riches of the Grace of God provided for us believers in the Divine Exchange. 1 Thess 5:23.

#### **The Sovereignty of God.**

By this, it refers to His:

1. Omnipotence
2. Omniscience

3. Omnipresence
4. Foreknowledge
5. Wisdom & Power, etc

He is God. He is limitless and has no boundaries. He is infinite. This is the sovereignty of God. The language of the OT attributes everything under the final, absolute authority and command of God. This is the Hebraic way of writing. So when we read the OT, they attribute everything under the sovereignty of God.

Hebrews 4:13

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

**Example 1. Exodus 4:10-12**

10Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." 11So the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? 12Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

On first reading, it appears He deliberately created the mute. We need to know the context. God was telling Moses to go to Pharaoh and He will be his mouth. This passage cannot mean He deliberately creates the blind or the deaf.

**Example 2: Exodus 10:27**

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

How can God be so wicked as to harden Pharaoh's heart? This is wrong interpretation. It's because Pharaoh refused to submit to the man of God despite having seen God's hand at work through him. We are told in 2 Peter 3:9 that it's not God's will that any should perish. God takes no pleasure in one's death (Ez 33:11). Mercy triumphs over judgment.

**Example 3: 1 Samuel 18:8-9**

8Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9So Saul eyed David from that day forward. 10And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul ... So David played music with his hand, as at their times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand.

Did God send an evil spirit to Saul? No. We need to understand principles. In Eph 4:26-27, we are told not to give the devil a foothold by way of our wrath. Here, Saul was very angry and that gave the leeway for the devil to harass him.

**Example 4: Isaiah 45:6-7**

6That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; 7I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.

Are we saying God creates calamity? Again, wrong interpretation. What He said is that He is the sovereign God. Even the demonic world has boundaries. They can only operate within limits.

A basic theological principle that I believe is sound, is that if the entire weight of the Scriptures says one thing, and there are portions of scripture that seem to say otherwise, I would base the principle on the entire weight of the Scriptures (Psalm 119:160).

We have to look from Genesis to Revelations. When we come to a passage that seemingly contradicts another, then the weight of scriptures is what prevails. We cannot take a truth to become the truth. All truth must be submitted to the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The other important principle is to know the difference between the Old Covenant and the New. Calvary changes everything. We are now under a better covenant. No more bulls and cows. It's finished. No more performance treadmill. It is all by the grace of God (Heb 10:1-18). Today you and I have the Holy Spirit. He will write His laws into our hearts and minds. When we yield, He will direct the inclinations of our heart (Ezekiel 36:26-27, Jer 31:33-34)

### **The third guiding principle:**

John 14:6-7, 9b

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. 7 If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. 9 ... He who has seen Me has seen the Father ...

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 1:5b says that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. He is always good. In Him, there is no shifting of shadows. God is not flickered. James 1:17.

God has set laws and principles of life on this earth.

1. God's Word is law and He Himself will abide by it (Psalm 89:34).
2. These laws and principles of life apply to all men - believers and unbelievers (Isaiah 55:111).

God will not alter His covenant, His law. He is no respecter of persons. If we don't take care of ourselves, we will die before our due time. Just because we are pastors doesn't mean all areas of our lives are alright.

3. These laws are perfect and complete in and of themselves. It always works. They will take their courses accordingly.
  - i. Rain - Matthew 5:45
  - ii. Seed Time Harvest; Seasons; Day and Night - Genesis 8:22
  - iii. Giving and Generosity - Proverbs 11:24-25
  - iv. Pride - Fall - Proverbs 16:18
  - v. Man will reap what he sows - Galatians 6:7

God does not unilaterally, randomly and haphazardly intervene. He is the God of order. He is always love, just and righteous (Jeremiah 9:24).

God intervenes based on His Word and when His people pray accordingly. Some prayers are preaching. Some prayers are manipulative. Some prayers are soulish. They will hit the ceiling and bounce back. God intervenes when prayers are aligned to His Word. God cannot be mocked.

In God's sovereignty, He gave man a free will and complete ownership of the earth realm.

a. It is within God's sovereignty to give man a free will.

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

b. It's within God sovereignty to give man complete ownership and responsibility over the earth realm.

Genesis 1:28

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

This doesn't apply to living things only. It is everything. The earth refers to the people we come across with and our circumstances. What happens in other parts of the earth which has nothing to do with us is not our earth.

c. It is within God's sovereignty to place laws and principles of life that will affect man and the earth accordingly.

Genesis 8:22

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."

d. God's sovereignty does not violate the free will of man. (Recommended read: A W Tozer's book on God's sovereignty)

Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live

e. His foreknowledge does not nullify the exercising of our will not negate our choice. Ps 139.

Ephesians 1:4-5

4just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will

Some people read this as pre-destination. We should read verse 13.

Ephesians 1:13

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

The verse says, we have trusted and believed. See Phil 2:12-13. The principle is to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We cannot take one portion and push out another. On our part, we must trust and believe in God, then it happens.

### **Next, two sources of suffering in this world affecting all mankind.**

A. Falleness of Man - Man rebelled against God and fell.

Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death,

B. Man's Falleness caused him to lose his rulership over this earth to the evil one.

Man lost his creation mandate and Jesus came to redeem whatever is lost to the devil.

1 John 5:19b - ... and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. Satan tempted Jesus but Jesus was not going to have the world through the ways of the devil, ie. the devil steals, kills and destroys.

John 10:10a - The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

The falleness of man and works of the evil ones results in:

1. All kinds of conflicts between people.

- |                |               |                |             |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| • Exploitation | *Fights       | *Murders       | *Quarrels   |
| • Envy         | *Covetousness | *Offenses      | *Robbery    |
| • Hatred       | *Arguments    | *Unforgiveness | *Greed, etc |

2. Physical death:

A. Hundreds of years [Adam+]

B. to 120 years [Noah+]

C. to 80 years [Moses to now]

i. Aging Process [affecting life-span]

ii. Sickness and Disease

iii. Corruption and Mortality of the physical body.

3. Fracture of the physical earth and corruption of the environment.

Romans 8:22

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

We see droughts and floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, extreme weather resulting in hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, typhoons, etc.

Within the last 20 years, the earthquakes that happened are more than the previous 6000 years. We are seeing the birthpangs. The time of the Lord's coming is very near.

4. The curse of toil in man's labor.

Genesis 3:17-19

17Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. 18Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. 19In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

Thank God for Galatians 3:13 where the death of Jesus removed the curse. There is blessing in place of the curse but it has to be appropriated.

5. Accidents due to man's carelessness, blind spots, malfunction of machines, etc.  
- Wrong Time Wrong Place

6. Spiritual Death of Man.

Spiritual death is eternal condemnation. It is not annihilation.

Romans 6:23. For the wages of sin is death.

Romans 5:12

Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and this death spread to all men, because all sinned .

### **Next, Suffering in this Fallen World**

a. This suffering affects both the believer and the pre-believer in this fallen world.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

We see a few scenarios:

- "Good" things may happen to "bad" people.
- "Bad" things may happen to "good" people.
- "Good" people may suffer whilst "bad" people may not suffer.

Ecclesiastes 8:14

There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

Some people say that God sends the sickness to teach patience, etc. This is warped theology. God is not the direct source of the sickness, evil, calamity. If God is, what's the point of praying? If He is fickle, what's the point?

b. Therefore when someone dies from a sickness or an earthquake, it is due to the fallenness of man in a fallen world.

c. Avoid saying: "God allows".

1. This statement is intended in the passive sense but received in the active sense.
2. This statement suggests God "permits" whatever is the happening when He is not the direct source of it.
3. In the NT, the only thing that God will not allow / permit for the believer is for him to be in a trial / trouble he cannot overcome - 1 Corinthians 10:13

d. Rather say "God is Sovereign".

This means:

1. I don't know but God knows.
2. I may not fully understand my suffering but God does.
3. I seem to lose control when bad things happen to me but my God knows, He is in-charge as I commit my situation to Him.
4. The question "Why did this happen?" should be followed by the question "Is God with me in this situation?"

Don't tell someone who is unwell that he has no faith or that he sins and hence he has got sickness. For those unwell, they need to seek treatment and simultaneously seek God passionately. Ask the cell to pray. The problem is usually with half-heartedness, listening to many opinions or lukewarmness towards seeking God's intervention. We need to pursue God with all our heart. Celebrate the Lord's Supper and pray as king and priest.

e. Understand clearly the difference between the direct judgment of God and the reaping and consequences of man's actions.

If it is the direct judgment of God, it means there is no more chance; it means final, the end. When will judgment come? It comes after death (2 Peter 2:9, Heb 9:27).

However, let's look at the times when the direct judgments were sent:

**i. Direct Judgment of God:**

- a. In the OT, the nations and in Israel.  
e.g. Numbers 16 - Earthquake on rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

- b. On the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary. This is the ultimate judgment which fell on Him. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. 2 Cor 5:21
- c. In the early church
  - Acts 5:1-11 - Ananias and Sapphira
  - Acts 10:21-23 - Herod

There were some judgments meted out in the times of the early church. After that point, it's the window of grace. Anything that happens during this time is called the consequences. There are three more judgments to come:

Direct Judgment of God:

- d. Judgment Seat of Christ.
- e. Great White Throne.
- f. Judgment when all the books open.

Right now, there is hope in the gospel; there is always grace available. This window will shut at our last breath or when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. Hence, don't give up on your stubborn father, uncle or delinquent child. Keep on praying for them.

- ii. Everything else that happens on earth and to man negatively are consequences of the actions and decisions of Man directly and indirectly and the reaping of what has been sown:
  - a. Personally
  - b. In the family and connected relationships
  - c. In society
  - d. Nationally
  - e. Globally
- f. At the individual level, man will reap what he sows according to the respective laws of life in:

*finances	*sins	*health	*thoughts
*Parenting	*marriage	*work	*relationships
*accidents	*mistakes		

James 5:19-20

19Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

There are sins that will lead to death.

1 John 5:16-17

16If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. 17All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.



Sometimes, on our part, we are not sure but we keep on praying. In terms of effectiveness, our prayers for ourselves are 70%-90%; for our children, it is 50%-70%, for cell members, it is 30%-50% and for strangers, 10%-30%. Notwithstanding this, we keep on praying.

Ecclesiastes 7:17

Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time?

We need wisdom to live our lives. Prov 9:10 says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

g. In these last days, there will be an increase of earthquakes, wars, famines and pestilences and lawlessness according to the scriptures. This is due to the deteriorating corruption of man and the earth.

Matthew 24:8 (NIV)

All these are the beginning of birth-pangs.

Next, the spiritual world cannot intervene in the natural world unless there is a connection.

- A. This applies both to the believer and the non-believer.
- B. The demonic world can influence and control to the extent of the ground given [doorway, foothold].

Ephesians 4:27 - nor give place / ground to the devil.

Ephesians 2:2 - in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

- C. In the case of the believer, the Grace of God comes to him as he prays. God does not unilaterally, randomly, or haphazardly intervene in the affairs on earth unless His people prays.

- ❖ Matthew 6:10
- ❖ Matthew 16:19
- ❖ Matthew 18:18-19

We need to pray God's will to be done on earth as His will is not always done on earth.

1. Our prayers lay the tracks on which the train of God's Grace runs.
2. Our prayers are earthly license for heavenly intervention.
3. Our prayer is the altar we build to connect earth to heaven.
4. Our prayers "create" the ladder on which God commands the angels to descend and ascend to minister to us.
5. If we don't pray, the spiritual world cannot connect with the natural world.
6. If we don't pray, then everything reverts to the natural laws of life.
  - e.g. 1 : un-clean food vs sanctified food
  - e.g. 2 : healing - natural or accelerated

D. For the believer who perseveres to trust in God, the outcome can be positive while he is on this earth which is:

Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Genesis 50:20a - But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good ...

You may be having a problem in your work place but as you release your persecutors to Him, He will work all things for your good. The exception is persecution and martyrdom.

E. The exception is persecution and martyrdom.

Hebrews 11:35b-40

35 ... Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—

Hebrews 11:35b-40

38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

### **Next, God is good and is consistently good all the time.**

Psalms 34:8

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Exodus 33:18-19a

18 And he (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory." 19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the Name of the LORD before you ...

Exodus 34:6-7a

6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, [slow to anger] and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin ...

Jeremiah 32:38-41

38 They shall be My people, and I will be their God; 39 then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. 41 Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.'

3 things regarding 'good' are mentioned above.

God is good and is consistently good all the time. God is good and is always good all the time. The Goodness of God reaches out to man in his fallen state. How is this seen?

- A. He sent Jesus to die to pay the penalty for our sins so that we can be reconciled with Him and be saved from spiritual death, i.e. saved from eternal separation. John 3:16, Rom 6:23
- B. When Jesus was crucified and died, He made provision for our healing by taking upon Himself all our sicknesses and diseases. Acts 10:38, Matt 8:16-17
- C. He made available His Abundant provision of grace to us who believe.

Romans 5:2

through whom [Jesus] also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

## **CONCLUSION**

God is good. Otherwise:

- We are doomed to a life of despair
- Tragedy becomes senseless
- Adversity becomes endless frustration
- Faith turns to doubt, anger and bitterness

1 John 1:5 - God is light and in Him is no darkness at all!

James 1:17 - every good and perfect gift from Father God, no shifting of shadows!

Do NOT judge God's Goodness by your circumstances

See the Goodness of God at Calvary's Cross!

He is the God of how much more!!

Luke 11:13

Romans 8:32

End.

## Questions for discussion

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1) What do you understand by the sovereignty of God?

2) What are some principles/laws that God has laid and how do we relate to them?

3) Despite the fallenness of man and the attending consequences as well as the works of Satan, are you able to see God's good hand at work in humanity or in your life? You may want to elaborate on this.

4) As God does not unilaterally, randomly or haphazardly intervene in affairs of the earth, we are called upon to pray. You may want to pause for a moment and pray over a matter, a need or for someone.

5) God is good and consistently good all the time. Have you caught this aspect and essence of His character? If yes or no, how is it so?