

TOPIC: COMMON ISSUES & QUESTIONS CONCERNING SUFFERING & THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

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SUMMARY OF MESSAGE

Summary Review of Part 2

- I. Suffering due to our own "**faults**".
 1. Our **sinful** nature - the **sin** in us.
 2. Our **sins** are:
 - A. The things we have done which are **wrong**.
 - B. The things we ought to do but **fail** to do so.

- II. Suffering for **righteousness** sake.
 1. **Persecution** for our faith.
 2. In following **Christ** as His disciples.

- III. All Suffering by a believer is a trial of his **faith**.

1. What about the discipline of the Lord in Heb 12:5-11?

Heb 12:5-8

5And you have forgotten that **word of encouragement** that addresses you as sons: "My son, **do not make light** of the **Lord's discipline**, and **do not lose heart** when he **rebukes** you, **6**because the Lord **disciplines** those he loves, and he **punishes** everyone he accepts as a son." **7****Endure hardship** as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? **8**If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

Sometimes translators used words that do not really enlighten. In the passage, there is the word of encouragement on one hand and there is the Lord's discipline on the other. There is the call not to lose heart and the call to endure hardship.

Heb 12:9-11

9Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we **submit to the Father of our spirits and live!** **10**Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us **for our good**, that we may **share in his**

holiness. **11**No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but **painful**. Later on, however, it produces a **harvest of righteousness and peace** for those who have been **trained** by it.

Part of discipline involves pain. Senior Pastor went through some commentaries and discovered that half of them are horrendous. One commentary talks about people being sawn into two, martyred, etc as God's discipline of the believers. This is not so.

Let's run through some points about the Lord's discipline.

A. The discipline of the Lord is training and teaching. It is not judgment nor punishment though some translated so. It is to be understood in the context of the entire New Testament. A better word is 'consequence' with the intent to discipline. This is best seen in the parable of the prodigal son. We are living in the window of grace.

Judgment was placed on the Lord Jesus. The posture of Father God is mercy and grace. When the prodigal son returned, there was not a word of condemnation. His posture was that of looking out for the son to return home. This is the way of the Father God. The moment He saw the son on the horizon, He ran. He put a ring, sandal and new clothing and killed the calf for celebration. The question is not 'Does God discipline?' but "How does He discipline?"

God is sovereign. He had already placed laws in operation. God is the good Father"! Jesus is the good shepherd! That's why we worship and thank Him. That's the bottom line. We are grateful for what He has done and provided. He is our Redeemer, Saviour, Rock and the essence of our worship.

B. The discipline of the Lord is training in holiness.

Hebrews 12:10

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us **for our good**, that we may **share in his holiness**.

What is holiness? It is to be sanctified, set apart. God calls us to be a holy nation. 2 dimensions: separate from the world and separate to God in speech, motivation, conduct, in place we go to, in how we think, do and respond. We are all sons and daughters of a holy God.

C. This training in holiness in our journey in discipleship. How?

C1. In our journey to overcome the **evil one**.

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame him [evil one] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

The Blood is the entire divine exchange. The fear of death is the mother of all fears. Heb 2:15. The devil comes to accuse and condemn. That's what he can do because he cannot harm you. But we can overcome and resist him. We declare and speak what we believe. We must have faith in the finished work of Jesus.

C2. In our journey to overcome the world.

1 John 5:4-5

4For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

How do we overcome? We do so by our faith. What's the world? They are all the issues of life. If we are secured in the love of the Father and are rooted in Him, we will be given the wisdom and favor of the entire divine exchange. The key to overcome the world is to know the love of the Father God. The key to overcome the devil is our faith.

C3. In our journey to overcome our self-life.

Luke 9:23

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

We overcome the self in us, our carnality, by the Holy Spirit, and by denying self.
Romans 8:29

D. The training in holiness in our journey in discipleship will involve:

1. **Rebuke**

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

Doctrine refers to the truth; reproof means re-test, rebuke, show the genuine from the fake; conviction means correcting the wrong way and instruction means to train to always consciously do the right thing. Eg submission and obedience.

D. The training in holiness in our journey in discipleship will involve:

2. **Emotional** Pain

3. **Physical** Pain

1 Corinthians 5:4-5

4In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, **5deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh**, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Here in Corinth was a man committing incest with his mother-in law. Paul said to deliver such one to Satan, meaning to excommunicate him. It means having him out of the shelter. It means no longer having direct fellowship. When we are in direct fellowship with the Body of Christ, we are under covering. We grow together despite the foibles of self. When we leave the fellowship and are apart from the life of the church, we are exposed. We will become prey of the evil one.

1 Corinthians 11:29-32 (NIV)

29For anyone who eats and drinks without **recognizing the body of the Lord** eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30**That is why many among you are **weak and sick**, and a number of you have fallen asleep. **31**But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. **32**When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

Regarding the Lord's Supper, none of us is worthy to partake the Lord's Supper. It is based on the worthiness of the Lord. We come under the Blood, humble to receive the grace. Next, we need to consider the Body of Christ, ie the Church. The Corinthians didn't consider that; I.e. we shouldn't be harboring a grudge or resentment, etc against another brother, sister. We would have failed to consider the Body of Christ when we harbor ill feelings.

1 Timothy 1:19-20

19having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, **20**of whom are **Hymenaeus and Alexander**, whom I **delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme**.

To deliver to Satan means to cut off fellowship and leave them exposed to Satan. The person has no more contact from church.

E. The discipline of the Lord is through the **laws** and **principles** of life through people and circumstances.

The believer makes the choices and reap its **consequences** [good or bad - rebuke and pain] accordingly.

Galatians 6:7-8

7Do not be deceived, **God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap**. **8**For he who sows to his **flesh** will of the flesh **reap corruption**, but he who sows to the **Spirit** will of the Spirit **reap everlasting life**.

There are laws and principles of life affecting believers and non-believers alike. They will take its course accordingly. God is no respecter of persons. We have to take care of our health.

Examples of Rebuke & Pain

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| • Unexpected troubles | * unreasonable criticism | *Disappointments |
| • Harsh words | * Sickness | *Wounds |
| • Irresponsible people | *Any kind of shame | *Pain |
| • Afflictions | *Impolite retort | *Sharp tongues |
| • Problems | *Hurts | *Difficulties |

1 Timothy 5:24

Some men's **sins** are clearly **evident**, preceding them to **judgment**, but those of some men **follow later**

Our business is to reach out to the unsaved and the unchurched. We would be turning them from error and covering a multitudes of sins.

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.

Some years back, a believer backslided and began to sleep with women. His wife continued to pray for him. In this end, this guy ended up with a woman and wanted to divorce her. She consulted a believer and given that it had been 10 years this had been going on and now he had wanted to divorce her, she was advised to cut ties with him. Months later after she prayed to cut the soul tie, this guy was found to have contracted an illness and 6 months later, he died. The man had been sanctified by the spouse all these years but the moment she cut the tie, he was exposed. Don't fool around with sin.

F. We have a **choice** whether to submit and learn.

Hebrews 12:9

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. **How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!**

G. Our journey in discipleship is our journey of **faith** [1 Peter 1:6-7].

All suffering by a believer is a trial of his **faith**.

This includes:

- | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Suffering in a <u>fallen-world</u> | - | <u>No</u> choice |
| 2. Suffering due to our own " <u>faults</u> " | - | <u>Wrong</u> choice |
| 3. Suffering for <u>righteousness sake</u> | - | <u>Right</u> choice |

If we suffer for wrong choices, repent. As we continue to submit, we develop perseverance which is a characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. Other things develop as below:

H. As the believer submits to the discipline - training of the Holy Spirit [Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4]:

1. He will develop strength in **perseverance**.
2. He will develop the **character** of Christ.
3. He will have **hope**.
4. He will experience the deep assurance of the **love** of God.
5. He will be **victorious** i.e. an **overcomer**.
6. He can now **minister** to others the God's Grace.

II. What about Paul's **thorn** in the flesh?

2 Corinthians 12:7

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, **a thorn in the flesh** was given to me, **a messenger of Satan to buffet me**, lest I be exalted above measure.

First, don't force a doctrine into scriptures. We may have speakers who refer the thorns to sickness. Don't let knowledge puff up. Don't cut fellowship with those who speak differently from what we know. What is the thorn mentioned? Let scripture interpret scripture. Passages that speak about thorns are as below:

Numbers 33:55

But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be **irritants in your eyes** and **thorns in your sides**, and they shall **harass** you in the land where you dwell.

Judges 2:3

Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but **they** shall be **thorns in your side**, and **their gods shall be a snare to you.**'"

Joshua 23:13

know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out **these nations** from before you. But they shall be **snare and traps** to you, and **scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes**, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

The thorns are not sickness. They are:

Both human and demonic instruments to persecute, harass, oppress and intimidate Paul.

How do we know that? We see the context.

2 Corinthians 11:23b-28

23 ... I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

We see that the sufferings he went through were physically sufferings associated with external factors and people. Sickness was not mentioned. For context, that is Paul's thorn.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

7And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, [2 Kings 6:2-12 - Elisha] a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

III. What about the man born blind?

John 9:1-4

1Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. 4I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

Wrong Interpretation:

God caused – allowed - permitted the man to be born blind for Him to do His works of healing the blind man.

God doesn't need to have a man born blind to display His power.

Contrast **John 5:14** where the invalid's condition was due to his **own personal sins**.

John 5:14

Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

What's the interpretation? The man's condition was probably due to genetic issues, imperfect genes due to the fallenness of man. This blind man came into a divine appointment with the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus healed, that's the work of God. Today, we represent Him in this world. Today, He is present in this world and we are to make Him visible in the lives of people who need His love, salvation and grace.

John 14:12

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

Application: What if you are still not healed?

- A. No condemnation - reject all the accusations and lies such as:
 - e.g. 1 - you still have sins
 - e.g. 2 - you have no faith, etc
- B. Seek all the medical help available.
- C. Keep on seeking God for healing/answer ("3 times").

Even after due season (“3 times”), just surrender and live totally on the Grace of God as Paul did.

2 Corinthians 12:9a - **My grace is sufficient for you**, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

IV. What about Timothy and his **physical** weakness?

1 Timothy 5:23

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your **stomach’s sake** and your **frequent infirmities**.

Our bodies are **corrupt** and **mortal** and need constant **care** and **nourishment**. To take a little wine doesn’t mean there is no healing. It just mean take it so as to nourish the body.

V. What about Epaphroditus?

Philippians 2:25-30

25Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; **26**since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was **sick**. **27**For indeed he was **sick almost unto death**; **But God had mercy on him**, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. **28**Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. **29**Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; **30****because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life**, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

At time of writing, he was healed! His was a consequence of **BURNOUT!** It was a physical breakdown due to a failure to take care and have proper rest.

VI. What about Trophimus?

2 Timothy 4:19-21

19Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. **20**Erastus stayed in Corinth, but **Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick**. **21**Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

Who is Trophimus? He was a travelling companion of Paul.

Acts 20:4 - Travelled with Paul on his missionary journeys.

Acts 21:29 - An Ephesian, with Paul who was beaten in riot.

He was sick when Paul wrote the letter. That he was unwell at that time proved nothing.

VII. How about **Job**?

A. Why did he suffer **Satan's** attacks?

There were possibly **grounds** that removed God's protective hedge.

Job 1:5

... Job would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, "It **may** be that my **sons have sinned** and **cursed God** in their hearts ...

B. Can what happened to Job happen to **me** today? No. Why?

1. **Prior to** Christ's Death and Resurrection, Satan **had access** to God's Throne.

Zechariah 3:1

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to **oppose-accuse** him [NKJ-NIV].

The last recorded incident where Satan had access to God to ask permission to accuse / seek harm on God's people.

Luke 22:31-32

31And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, **Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.**
32But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

2. Calvary - the Death and Resurrection of Christ **forever** changed the **standing** of Satan in relation to God and the believer.

Luke 10:18

And He said to them, "I saw **Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**

John 12:31

Now is the judgment of this world; now the **ruler of this world will be cast out.**

Revelation 12:10

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for **the accuser of our brethren**, who accused them before our God day and night, **has been cast down** [fallen].

3. The **promise** of God to every believer.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will **not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation will also **make the way of escape**, that you may be **able to bear it**.

4. The **position** of the believer and **authority** to resist the evil one.

Luke 10:19

Behold, I give you the **authority** to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

We sit with Christ in the heavenly realm. Eph 2:6. In Luke 10:19, we are given authority to trample over snakes and scorpions. By our faith, we overcome the evil one. We are kings, priests and prophets. As prophets, we speak forth; as kings, we command and as priests, we pray.

James 4:7

Therefore submit to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you.

What are we to resist?

We resist all his lies, deception, accusations, condemnation, etc

1 Peter 5:8-9

8Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. **9Resist** him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

The devil will take advantage of the believer who is ignorant of his position and spiritual weapons such as the name of Jesus, the Blood and the sword of the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:22-23

22And He put **all things under His feet**, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, **23**which is **His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Where is the devil? He is under the feet of the saints. Rom 16:20

Romans 16:20

And the **God of peace will crush Satan under your feet** shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

In the Old Testament, they fought in the name of Jehovah Tseboath, the Lord of Host. In the New Testament, we fight from the God of Peace.

Bottom Line: Promises of God for the believer.

2 Corinthians 2:14

Now thanks be to God who **always leads us in triumph in Christ**, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

This is not triumphalism in our mind but fighting in faith.

John 16:33b

in the world, you will have **trouble - trials - tribulations** ... but **in ME**, you will have **PEACE!**

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 11:11-13

11If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Fundamentally, we need to know God is God. We don't teach children to learn through inhumane or insensible ways. God doesn't send cancer nor sickness. He doesn't need to send these to teach us in those ways. He is God. Luke 11 says how much more will He give the Holy Spirit? But what's the condition? It is to those who ask. This is where we fail. We fail to ask and fail to seek God in times of pain. Does God know what we are going through? Sure. However, He cannot help when we don't go to Him, don't seek Him with all our heart and don't approach with faith. Heb 11:6.

End

Questions for discussion

No condemnation, no comparison, no competition but only encouragement...