***Children of God, No.11
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Please open your Bibles to Romans 8. We are looking at verse 14-17. The Children of God, segment number 11.

**Treasures in Heaven**

We Christians, as God's children, we are told here by the Apostle Paul, have a tremendous future inheritance reserved for us in heaven as those who are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. This heavenly inheritance includes the rewards that believers earn with their Christian service activities during their earthly lifespan. These rewards in heaven, therefore, are not automatically part of our inheritance. They are something that are to be earned by our personal efforts. Now, I need not stress to this congregation that we are not talking about efforts to earn salvation, but we are talking about after being saved, efforts to earn rewards.

Therefore, we read in Matthew 6:20 this principle, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor dust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Material treasures placed in such a context that you can never lose them. There is an earthly context in which, in a variety of ways, they can be lost, and they're gone forever. There is a possibility of taking those same treasures, laying them up in heaven in such a way that they can never be taken away from us. That laying up of rewards in heaven is part of the inheritance that is ours awaiting us in Gloryland.

It is amazing, this great doctrine so stressed in scripture, that it is ignored by Christians today and which we hear so little in churches. You can go to churches where you can go practically year after year without ever being alerted to the fact that unless your life is being used to store treasures in heaven, unless you are earning rewards for yourself, you are losing your life. And the tragedy of the judgment seat of Christ is going to be an enormous tragedy. I cannot help but believe that the tears are going to be flowing in abundance as people discover what 1 Corinthians 3 describes as "loss." The great loss to the believer. And that loss that it is referring to is your life. Your breathing in and out. Your physical capacity to do things. Your control over material things. This earthly life -to lose it.

When the believer becomes concerned about things which count with God, he finds his way into divine, good Christian service. But until we become concerned for it, we never do.

And so, the children of God are warned here by the Word of God not to waste their earthly life in the pursuit of merely temporal gain but to sow their lives in God's service and thus to reap a bountiful reward in heaven. Jesus taught that the way to save one's earthly life from being wasted is to lose it in serving Him.

Matthew 16:24-25 put it this way, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, 'If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'" His cross there does not mean "take up your suffering." Does not mean "take up all of the abuse." Does not mean "take up your physical ailments." Does not mean "take up your mistreatments." It has nothing to do with that.

The word "cross" here represents the mission of Jesus Christ. He had a mission in life. His mission was represented by the cross, and when he tell us to take up our cross, He's telling us to find out what on earth God ever gave you a chance to breathe in and out for on this earth. What have you got this life for? What is your mission? Take up your mission as Jesus says He has taken up His mission.

"' . . . Take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life [that is, save it for his use on earth for temporal things] will lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.'" Everything that includes your life which includes everything you are in your gifts, your ability - all that you possess - everything that you have as a physical human being, as a child of God can be saved, you can take it with you. The expression "you can't take it with you" is wrong. A Christian can take it with him. Or, you can indeed lose it all.

And that is the point of the terrible question that God poses to each of us. What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world? And we're talking to Christians there. If you shall gain everything in life potentially that you could ask for, and then you lose your own - not soul, translated the way it's translated everywhere else - lose your own life. You have lost the value of your life. The believer who uses his life to gain temporal things has thereby lost his life in terms of eternal treasures.

Matthew 16:26 says, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" So, what is your life worth? Think of the Christians who have pursued a course of sin, a course of evil, pushing themselves to the point where they've suffered the sin unto death, for God has taken their life. They've lost their lives. And in the process of what they were pursuing, they gained all that, yeah. They gained the pleasure. They gained the fame. They gained the importance. They gained the possessions. But God says, "That's it. I'm taking your life," like the rich fool, the parable of the rich fool in the Bible. How many Christians have lost their lives, and what have they gained for their lives? They have lost it all.

When the Lord Jesus returns from heaven, He will judge what each Christian did with his earth life, and He will reward accordingly. Then, we will find out - each of us - whether we lost our life or whether we indeed preserved it. Matthew 16:27 therefore says, "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works."

It is not without reason that the subject of saving your life through investment in eternity is so low-key in most churches because it would raise a rebellion in the average congregation were you to say that this is where it is all at. Because what the average individual is doing with his life and what he is pursuing is just exactly 180 degree opposite from this.

And so, the preachers tiptoe through the tulips on this one, and they will have a lot to answer before God for it, because if people ever understood what they should be investing for and the potential for investing them in eternity, how they were losing their lives (and it is all because of their ignorance of doctrinal understanding, their lack of being taught the Word of God) there would be such an exodus out of churches you wouldn't believe it. They would not tolerate it for a moment. But this is Satan's great victory. He has caused most Christians to lose their lives.

**Glorification and Suffering**

In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul has been stressing the fact in these verses that we have been looking at that we as Children of God are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Then he interjects, "If so be [and it is the word that means, "yes, you do actually do this"], we suffer with Him." And the reality of Christian suffering is part of being a joint heir with Jesu Christ, because the reality of Christian suffering is part of what affects the inheritance that you have in heaven.

Romans 8:17 indicates that part of the Christian's heavenly inheritance is to be glorified with Jesus Christ. To be glorified with Jesus Christ means to share his splendid brilliance which is reflected by the essence of God. It's a hard concept to understand, to understand what glory means - to be reflecting the brilliant, glorious essence, the brightness that is characteristic of all the perfections of God. And of all things, we are going to reflect that.

Think about the Mount of Transfiguration. That's what the disciples saw when Jesus removed the shield of His humanity, and He let his glory come through. What was He showing them? Dazzling brilliance of His divine essence. So where are we, as Christians, going to go? To reflect that same glory.

But in the meantime, on the road to death, there is suffering. Furthermore, therefore, He says, "As we will be glorified with Jesus Christ, [that is for sure], we will also suffer with Him." The sufferings which Christians share with Jesus Christ as we have pointed out, of course, is that of undeserved suffering. It's not suffering it the way that we deserve but suffering because we are Christians. Suffering for the Lord's sake.

In John 15:25, Jesus says, "'But this cometh to pass, that Thy word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.''" They hated Jesus for no reason. He suffered, and He didn't deserve it. That is the kind of suffering that you and I share with Him. Now, the Bible makes it very clear that if you suffer for your own wrongdoing, that is no honor at all.

So, 1 Peter 2:20 puts it this way, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults [when you suffer for your wrongdoing], ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and [then you] suffer for it, [and] ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." It is no particular credit to you that you take your suffering in stride for something you deserve. But when you take suffering in stride for something you don't deserve to suffer for, that is an honor. And the suffering of believers, we must recognize this part of undeserved suffering is a normative part of this Christian life. Unless you learn this ahead of time, you will not be prepared for when this suffering hits you.

John 16:33 says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." It's very important to realize that in the world, we are going to have suffering. When you understand this, then you are prepared for it when it comes. Then, you will not be whining. Then you will not be folding up. Then you will know how to turn your eyes from the suffering and how to turn your eyes to the doctrine that carries you through.

1 Peter 4:12-13 says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." And the reason we will be glad with exceeding joy is that the degree of our stability in suffering will be reflected in the glory we share, which means that the glory of God reflected by every Christian is not going to be the same in every believer. And there are going to be some dull dudes up there in the Lord's presence because of what they did with their lives.

During the first two centuries of Christianity, Christians were despised and rejected everywhere. Christians today, in parts of the world, such as in pagan and communist countries, still suffer severely. Most Christians so accommodate their lives in our country to the evil world system about us that most Christians are not attacked. Most Christians keep their noses away from the problems and the challenges and the filth and the degradation of the unsaved world. They are not out there being a beacon, being a lighthouse, and therefore, the world doesn't bother him. But the world hates Jesus Christ, and it hates, therefore, and persecutes all of His true disciples.

In John 15:18-20, this principle is laid out for us, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world [that is Satan's world system], the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

And if they're not hating you as a Christian, and if they're not persecuting you as a Christian, it is probably clear that you have toned down what you are, what you believe as a child of God, and therefore, you're not an offense to them. But if you are a person who is standing up as a child of God, then they don't like it when you respond to their dirty stories. Then they don't like it when you don't respond to their deceit, when you don't respond to their immorality, when you do not participate in their debauchery and everything else that characterizes the world system. Your refusal to participate is reason enough for them to hate you. They hate the Lord Jesus, and therefore, they're going to hate us. Can we Christians expect to be respected and well-received by the world if we are standing indeed for what we are as members of the royal family of God?

Matthew 10:24, the Lord says, "'The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for disciple to be like their teacher, and servant like his lord. If they call the master of his house [that is, Jesus Christ] Beelzebul [which is the name for Satan], how much more shall they call them of his household!'"

So that the Word of God says, "The Lord Jesus, they called Him a bunch of dirty names. The Lord Jesus they attributed His very marvelous works to Satan." When was the last time somebody called you a dirty name because of your testimony for Jesus Christ? When was the last time that somebody looked at you and cut you under because you refused to become part of their system? Can we Christians expect to be respected and well-received by the world? And the answer is, "No." And when in our society today a group of people is well-received, looked up to, well accepted, you know that that group has accommodated to evil. The world is not going to like you. But suffering because of your relationship to Jesus Christ and your courage to stand with integrity with what you are as a child of God is a suffering which is a great honor.

1 Peter 4:14-16 put it this way, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this account."

It is an honor to suffer as a Christian, and it something that for which we should actually glorify God. Now, for some Christians, there is very little suffering, and the reason for that in part is because God doesn't trust you. God is not about to place the burdens of suffering upon certain believers because you would very quickly demonstrate how little capacity you have to engage in that kind of flack in the angelic conflict. So, the Lord passes you by.

But when you find the pressures and the demands and the screws coming down on you, not because you're an evildoer, but because you are a godly-doer, consider yourself privileged. Consider yourself honored because you have been chosen as one that God esteems, and that's why he puts the bite on you. You're a Job type, you see. God did not pick Job's stupid three friends to demonstrate a spiritual stability. He picked a man like Job because He knew that Job would not embarrass the living God.

Those who are attacking the children of God, furthermore, are so deluded that you must understand that their zeal is propelled by their confidence that this pleases God. In John 16, the first three verses, we read, "These things have I spoken unto you [Jesus said], that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me."

In our Sunday evening sessions as we now come into the great mass of Gentiles who come out of the tribulation as martyrs as a result of the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, you will be aware of the fact that the time is coming when Christians are going to be slaughtered left and right. That those who are believers of Jesus Christ in the tribulation era will not hardly have a chance. And, the people who are going to be taking their lives are going to be doing it, you must understand, in the name of religion. They will be doing it in the name of representing the mind of God, that this is a thing that pleases God. These people are an offense to God, and so they should be destroyed.

Christian suffering not only originates with the unsaved world, however. Some of the toughest Christian suffering that we will face (and you better be prepared for it by learning it ahead of time) is that which comes from carnal believers. That is where it's tough.

And certainly, the Lord Jesus was no stranger to this. He knew what it was to be misunderstood by His own family and to be ridiculed by them. While his half-brothers were at their unsaved stage, they were downright brutal to Him. He knew what it was to be betrayed by one of His own inner circle of twelve, to be betrayed by one of the twelve in Judas. He knew, as a matter of fact, what it was to be denied by one of the inner of the inner circle of the three in the person of Peter. He knew what it was to be deserted by everybody when He hung in agony on the cross. So that, being deserted by the people that you would expect would stand by you is the suffering that is a real double-whammy.

Psalm 55 puts this to a very poignant way when it observes the agony of the suffering at the hands of those who are fellow believers, those who ought to be companions in the battle. Psalm 55:12-14, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me," the psalmist said, and the psalmist here is David. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hidden myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and my familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

Now, that is very brutal. The very person that you share spiritual things with, the very person who is a companion in God's work, and then he double-crosses. Then, he decides to start shooting at you and to make you his enemy because he thinks he has a cause to which God has called him and to what God cannot straightened out without his vengeance being exercised against you. That is low on a totem pole.

In Psalm 55, drop down to verse 20, "He hath put forth his hands against such as are at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords." What a poetic picture. His words were smoother than butter. That person who is a fellow companion in God's work. Smooth talker. Good talker. Kind talker. Complimentary talker. Smiling talker. And his words: smooth like oil in order to put you off your guard so he can draw the sword.

[Police siren sounds in background.] When you hear that kind of talk, a siren ought to go off in your mind to warn you that danger is afoot. We like to do things dramatically. I told them at 19:40, hit it, and that's just when they did it.

Fantastic how those we can trust can be those that become our enemies. And, it is because they are in the Lord's work that we think this is a confidence we can place in them. But the mature believer, sooner or later (and you may have to get bruised, or you can learn it from the Word of God, you can learn it from our admonition this morning), the mature believer always expects the worst of anything from the best of Christians. Those who have been his most intimate companions in the battle are those that he expects to be the first to stab in the back, to become his opponents, to become those who begin to raise a cause against him. The Lord Jesus knew this lesson. He learned it well. We would be stupid not to follow His example.

In John 2, beginning at verse 23, we have this statement, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which He did." When Jesus here performed these miracles in Jerusalem on the feast day, a lot of people looked at Him, and they were convinced. They did believe. So, what should Jesus do? View them as something different than they were: sinners with a sin nature, sinners with potential to be vipers at any moment? Yes, they trusted in His name. They could have even been believers. They were even disciples. How should he view them?

Here's how he viewed them. You better learn this lesson well. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." Jesus did not look on them and say, "Now, here are people I can trust. Here are people I know will stand by me in the battle all the time." As the Apostle Paul did when he looked with regret on all his associates in prison and said, "They've all deserted me. I'm here alone. One of them has stood by me. The rest have gone their way." And Paul discovered indeed the same thing that the Lord did, that in man is a sin nature. Man is not immutable; only God is immutable. Therefore, man will change, and the oiled tongue and the buttery mouth will become the vicious fangs at a moment's notice. When the sin nature is permitted to take over the life of a Christian and go spiritually berserk.

Verse 25 says, "And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." He knew the nature of man. What a tremendous lesson. And when you learn that, it will help you in the suffering. It's not going to be pleasant when a companion in the work becomes a belligerent of you in the work, it is always sad. It is never pleasant. It is always astounding to see that kind of spiritual deterioration, that kind of reversionism. And it always hurts, but you have to take it in stride, and you make the suffering less if you are prepared to keep your eyes on the Lord and never on people. That's where the mistake comes, when you get your eyes on people. And it's easy to do that. When you're in the Lord's work, the people who are standing by you, they are the companions in the battle, and those are the people that you have a comradery with, it's natural to get your eyes on them instead of keeping it on the Lord.

There are certain rewards that come from suffering. The consequence of undeserved suffering, which is well born, is rewards in heaven as part of our divine inheritance. Matthew 5 puts it this way. Suffering which is well born will be rewarded. Matthew 5:11-12, "'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.'" Consider it an honor. God trusts you. He can let you be abused that way. And the result of your carrying that in stride is going to be to expand your inheritance and your rewards in Heaven.

2 Timothy 2:3 says that we are to bear that as good soldiers of Jesus Christ as the soldier bears the pain of battle. Rejoicing in undeserved suffering make sense in terms of the enormous return in our heavenly inheritance. Suffering on account of our Holy Spirit testimony for Jesus Christ is indeed a great honor.

In Acts 5, Acts 5:40-42, the apostles of the Lord demonstrated this principle, suffering on account of their testimony of Jesus Christ and the consequent suffering was a great honor. "And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles," that is, the Sanhedrin agreed, "When they had called the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

When was the last time that somebody laid a stick on you because of your testimony for Jesus Christ? When was the last time somebody punched you in the mouth, any of us, because you stood firm against evil? When was the last time that people shot daggers out of their eyes, hatred against you, because you opposed their evil ways? When was the last time a twisted mouth spewed out its venom against you because of your confidence that God has spoken and you know what He has to say?

That's what the disciples did, so they beat them, and they let them go, and they said, "Close your mouths, and don't talk about Jesus of Nazareth in this city again. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Now, that is honor. They considered themselves worthy. Why? What do they mean that they considered themselves worthy? And they considered it an honor to be considered worthy to suffer because God trusted them. There were other people that he did not put under this pressure because God knew He could not trust them. He knew that they would not stand up. He knew that they would knuckle under, they would buckle in, they would go for the returns, and they would accommodate themselves to evil to get some benefit from the world's system.

And you as a Christian are constantly going to be told, going to be encouraged, to accommodate, to play ball, in order that you may not differentiate yourself from others. Don't make yourself think that you know what God has said and that they don't. I don't know any place in the Bible that tells you not to do that. Every place I find, everything I find in the scriptures says, "Let people know that you have heard God," because you have the scriptures and you understand what He has said, and that therefore, you can speak with authority.

And therefore, you can also say what you are thinking and what you are saying and what you are doing is out of line with the Word of God. You can keep doing it, you can keep saying it, but you should know that you're going to account for it because it is not the mind of God. The lack of suffering for the Lord may be a sign indeed of divine mistrust, and God is not about to let you disgrace Him.

**The Nature of Suffering**

A few things we should observe about the nature of suffering in general. I think we all should understand that the origin of human suffering is not from God. Man lives in a world today that is filled with pain, with hunger, with starvation, with disease. The Bible reveals, however, that God created a world that the omniscient God could say, "It is very good." Literally, it is truly perfect. But the thing that ruined it was sin. The result of Adam's rebellion was suffering and death.

And when people strike out against God and say, "If there was a God up there, if He was a loving God, why does He let all this suffering take place in the world today," remember that the answer is in Genesis 3:16-19: "Unto the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire [thy subjection] shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.'"

"And unto Adam he said, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'"

That's why there is suffering. It is the judgment upon sin. Now, for the unbeliever, life in such a world of suffering and privation makes little sense. He doesn't understand it. For the believer, there is hope that there is eventually going to be triumph over this kind of suffering because God is going to resolve it.

**Suffering Demonstrating Man's Mortality**

There are certain values that do come from suffering that we should be aware of. Number one: suffering in general demonstrates man's mortality. Material success and good health and youth lead the unregenerate man to think that he is immortal. And even Christians in their youth, and if they have the good life, and if they are enjoying good health, have the sort of attitude without saying it that it's going to go on forever. They just never think of a terminal point.

A biblical example is king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar was a man of great achievement. This man was indeed no slob. He accomplished things that became one of the great wonders of the world in the building program that he had.

In Daniel 4:30, here's how he sums it up, "The king spake, and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?'" That is hardly the statement of a humble man. Nebuchadnezzar said, "I am the king, and I am the greatest. There is no man that I admire more than I do me and all I have done." Well, no sooner were the words out of his mouth than God leaned over a cloud from heaven and said, "Nebuchadnezzar, I've got some BIG news for you. We're going to put all this in perspective to you, for you, in one blow. You think you're immortal. You think it's all under your control, but you're very wrong.

In Daniel 4, beginning at verse 31, "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, 'O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee [I've just taken it all away from you]. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass like oxen, and seven times [that is, seven years] shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.'" The same hour [within the hour that he was praising himself] was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men." Because he went crazy, so they drove him out. In the old, ancient world, when you went bananas, they drove you out. They didn't want anybody without oars floating around in their society, so they shut them out. And so, they drove him out.

".And he did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Some artist ought to draw a picture of that, of Nebuchadnezzar in his degenerate, degraded, bestial form. Now, this man was used to wearing the finery of a king. Now, he's out in a field eating worms and grubs and digging for roots and clawing in the grass, and his nails are long, and his hair is grown out so he looks like he's a bird with feathers. And for seven years, people see the king, the mighty of king of Babylon, out in the field, living like an animal.

In time, the seven years passed, and then God healed this man. And when he was healed, Nebuchadnezzar from this suffering learned the lesson: he was mortal. He is not going to go on forever. He does not call the plays ultimately. There is a God to whom he must account.

Daniel 4, beginning at verse 34, "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me [my craziness left me], and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him who liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest Thou?'"

Nebuchadnezzar said, "God secured my attention, and I listened to Him, and I learned I am mortal. He is the one who is immortal. He is the one who does as He pleases. And He struck me down until I learned that lesson."

One of the values of suffering. And when suffering comes into our lives, one of the reasons is for you and I to remember that there is a terminal point for our lives. How long are you going to wait before you stop losing your life? How long are you going to stay in a spiritual situation, in an economic situation, in a social situation, in an educational situation that is losing your life? How long are you going to keep making promises of something you're going to do some day over the hill on the horizon that's going to count for God? Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the day when you have life. Tomorrow, you may be out.

**Suffering Revealing the Holiness of God**

There's a second value to suffering, and that is that it reveals the holiness of God. It reveals the holiness of God. If God were not holy, then He could ignore sin, and He would not have to impose any penalty of suffering as His justice demands. It is because He is perfect justice as part of His holiness that He cannot ignore sin.

Galatians 6:7 says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God hates sin. He brings personal and natural disaster, consequently, on the guilty. His justice demands that. The current diseases that we're hearing so much about that are associated with sexual immorality and AIDS and herpes and the other venereal diseases, these are sufferings which even the people who have them are being forced to say that God is telling us something. God is making His viewpoint known, and he's making it clear to us that He does have rules and He will not tolerate their being undermined.

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon learned how a holy God deals with the arrogance of man. And Nebuchadnezzar not only learned that he was mortal; he learned that God was holy.

**Suffering Forcing One Into Decisions**

There is a third thing that is a value of suffering, and that is that it forces us to make decisions. Most of us would go along in something that is wrong, something that is foolish, something that is stupid, something that is self-defeating, and we wouldn't change unless it begins to hurt us. It is when suffering comes that we begin to change. It is when suffering comes to a nation that finally rise up against their politician in holy horror and terror and indignation and tear them down and bring them down and say, "Enough's enough. We're changing it." But until people suffer, they'll go along in their foolishness.

Suffering causes a person to harden his mind against God or to obey Him. Classic example: Pharaoh of Egypt. Through the sufferings of the plagues, he decided to harden his heart against God. He resisted God until the death angel swept through the land, then he decided that that was enough. That was more suffering than he wanted to take, and so he let the Israelites go. But soon, the sin nature rose up, and he said, "I can't let them go. I'm going after them." And so, he pursued them, and the result, as you know, was that the great army of Egypt ended up being drowned in the Red Sea. Another intense, national suffering that had to be brought upon Pharaoh before he made the decision to let the people go.

So, people who are experiencing physical, mental, and emotional suffering very quickly lose the feeling of self-sufficiency, and they lose their taste for what they're doing, and they turn away from that. They turn away from self, and they hopefully then can turn to God. Adversity, you see, puts things in perspective so no one can remain neutral toward God and neutral toward the Word of God.

So, there are values in suffering. It teaches us that we're mortal. We have a little timespan in which to save our earthly lives for eternal values. It reveals to us that we're dealing with a holiness of God who will not compromise His integrity, and if we compromise our integrity, then we come under His judgment and discipline. And, it teaches us we have to make decisions. We have to change our ways when the ways require changing. We don't grit our teeth and say, "No, I'm going to keep doing it." If you do, God will remove you from the position of spiritual privilege, of spiritual blessing, of spiritual enlightenment, if you refuse to change to make the decision to line up with God's thinking, He will separate you from your blessing. He will separate you into suffering, and it will mount up on this earth, and you'll carry it through to eternity. What a sobering thing for the Apostle Paul to say.

Yes, it is characteristic that we live in a world of suffering and that we Christians, because of our relationship to the living God, are the objects of that intense suffering. There are values to it, and ultimately, there is the silver lining on the horizon in the fact that all of this is going to change us into being glorified together with Jesus Christ. We will shine with the radiance of God's divine essence, but suffering is a thing we Christians need to learn how to take in stride, how to be prepared, how to keep our eyes on the Lord and off of people, and how to walk one day at a time. One day at a time, and make that day a day we save for eternity.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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