

# From Confusion to Clarity

by Norman Grubb

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*The sermon emphasizes understanding God's sovereignty and the purpose of suffering as a means to achieve clarity in faith amidst confusion.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 33:18, Isaiah 45:7, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

**Topics:** "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Sovereignty"

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## Description

Norman Grubb delves into the profound mystery of God's seemingly contradictory actions, emphasizing the unity in God's purposes amidst the duality we perceive in the world. He explores the concept of suffering as a gift from God, essential for the church's fellowship with Christ and the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. Grubb reflects on the struggles and enlightenment experienced by saints like Martin Luther, highlighting the transformative power of understanding God's ways. He emphasizes that all experiences, whether joyful or challenging, are orchestrated by God for His ultimate purposes, calling believers to embrace both the light and dark aspects of life as part of God's redemptive work.

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## Transcript

What a world of sad and frustrating confusion exists for us while we live in a world where duality governs our outlook. The moment comes to each of us in God's special way for the individual. It is a distorted life of disease and unrest, while we see with double vision. Is God really in charge of affairs, are all things a unity or a duality, for it certainly has the appearance of the latter "while we look at the things that are visible".

What a moment of great release and reconciliation of thought and action was given me when I heard the word that "God caused the light to shine out of darkness." I understood He caused light to shine into darkness, and was ready to applaud that action of God. But for Him to produce one out of the other simply was too good to be true. There comes for us all the moment when the veil is lifted for us concerning the mystery that surrounds the seeming contradiction in God and devil, Light and darkness, suffering and blessing. God says He makes one out of the other and does not have to juggle to keep things in what to us look like a sort of uneasy balance. A great saint and preacher I heard in my youth, Dr. F.B. Meyer, says with clear and affirming faith that suffering is the gift of God to His church and to us each as we "fill up that which is behind of the affliction of Christ," as Paul said concerning His life and ministry.

It is for even the mature to consider the contrary manifestation of God's action in Christ and His church as a GIFT. But the scripture does say that "it is given for us to suffer" as the only way, seemingly, for Christ to eventually "see of the travail of His soul." We are called to receive this gift as a precious life of fellowship

with the Son of God in His continued ministry through the church. It is the fulfillment of God's purpose, the means of deliverance through redemption, operating as a continual process in the church today. God is totally unfrustrated by the suffering, sin, failure and agony of the present order of things as He was concerning His beloved Son when He "by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God had Him taken and by wicked hands was crucified!" Can we compass the immensity of the mystery of God's seemingly strange action? Then He gives this to His church down through the ages as a gift to be received with thankfulness. "Darkness and light are both alike to Thee" means a totally unfrustrated God, declaring His purposes will indeed be worked out, but not without the same seeming contradiction being totally accepted by His church down through the ages.

Thankfully there is much scripture that lights up this whole matter, declaring that "I only am God." What of Job and his intense suffering which he patiently endured which, according to the account was initiated by God when he said Satan should test out His faithful servant. This to the average Christian outlook seems incomprehensible. But it ended by turning the factual realization Job had of the wonders and might of God into the transforming fact of personal knowledge, the living awareness of Him that lifted the mere observer of God to become one of immediate knowledge, and of seeing Him as He really is - and when that happens it means we are of his own nature. We cannot truly see God without it being true that we are of His nature.

How strongly Paul speaks of the difference in the value of his being "caught up into the heavenlies", hearing words that were not lawful to utter, and the account that follows of his unending sufferings in his pursuit of his ministry in the church. The sufferings are what in his sight weighs the most for the extension of the kingdom of God, rather than the special privilege he had of any out-of-the-world experience. Suffering was for Paul that which enriched the church and fulfilled the purposes of God "in his flesh" as he said.

This seeming duality in the ways and acts of God has been the battleground for the faith of many a saintly and devoted servant of God. To my knowledge not much has been written about the battles some have had. The outstanding case to me as I have read through about this of late is that of Martin Luther. His writings and teachings concerning how he came to see the inner truth of the matter are most enlightening. He records how he struggled and agonized at a certain period of his life and ministry and how the enlightenment of the seeming contradiction came clear to him.

The passage in Exodus 33 where Moses besought God to give him the absolute assurance of God's presence, power and purpose, "Show me Thy glory" became the key that unlocked for Luther the somewhat hidden mystery of God's dealings with His people. Moses was told in no uncertain terms that He should not see God's face, but would be given sight of God's back. This, to Luther indicates the dark side of God and the dealings with His people. Luther says that the contrary aspects of sin, suffering and failure and death constituted the raw material which God transforms into His own self in the human heart. God reveals Himself thus, but in contrary form. The back of God is shown to us as it was so painfully to Christ.

As God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, it is given to us to share in the continuance of that ministry, "filling up that which is still behind in the afflictions of Christ" as Paul says in Col. 1:24 - a most striking statement. But in all this it is imperative to see that we are not dealing with ideas, but we are in truth and experience being handled by a Person. One might say we have escaped into God in the redemption but have found that God lives and loves through us in the costly way He did in Christ; we are

His body. Beauty, joy, peace, answers to prayer and such daily deliverances that are given, are to be balanced with the darker side which brings us into the "fellowship of His sufferings".

Therefore all that happens to us is God in action, affecting sometimes known and many times unknown and hidden purposes. In the matter of our Union in Christ, it is clear that it is all He in us and not we working out something by our own understanding and wisdom. Thus we are called to "give thanks in all things." This cannot mean that we are to give thanks for evil as such, but that God is in charge of even the darkest scenario that we call evil, as He was in the ministry of Christ's life and death. The resurrection is the light side of God and His unfailing dealings, but that for us comes later when we shall dwell in the light with Him.

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