

# Benefits of Problems and Pain

by Robert B. Thompson

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*Problems and pain occur in your life as a result of God's discipline and judgment, intended to purify you from sin and lead you to love, joy, and peace.*

**Duration:** 56:37

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:4

**Topics:** "Suffering And Pain", "Gods Judgment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of problems and pain in the context of God's judgment and salvation. The sermon is based on 1 Peter 4, which emphasizes that suffering can purify us from sin and lead to salvation. The preacher highlights that God's judgment begins in the household of God and is meant to save us. However, the preacher also acknowledges that our reaction to suffering is not always appropriate, and it can sometimes make us angry with God. The sermon encourages listeners to seek God's guidance and learn from their pain, trusting that there is something to be gained from it.

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## Transcript

Lord, we thank you for your wonderful goodness to us, Lord. How good you are. How we praise your holy name.

Lord, you have done so much and have been so utterly faithful to us, Lord. And we are so thankful. We pray this morning for each home represented here, Lord.

We ask that your health and freedom from accident, your peace will be with each home represented here, Lord. The angel of your peace be with us and keep us and on the highway. We pray especially for Bob Porcelli, Lord, as he's either in China or on his way to China.

We ask you to be with him. Keep your hand on him and the airplane, Lord, and make him a blessing where he is. Bring him back to us safely, we pray in Jesus name.

He's certainly served you here and we pray you bless his family while he's away. We pray, Lord, for the little children. Lord, you said I am the children who God has given me are for signs and wonders in Zion.

And we know, Lord, that you are doing a great work with the children and we are so appreciative. Bless those who are ministering to them now during this time. And those of us, Lord, help us to express exactly what the Holy Spirit is burdening in Jesus name.

Help us, Lord. Amen. You may be seated.

We'll turn in our Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12. And we're going to read, you can read with us, along with us if you have an NIV, verses 4 through 12 in Hebrews chapter 12.

Beginning with verse 4. In your struggle against sin, you have not resisted to the point of shedding your blood, and 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, because the Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline.

God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 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? 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. 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.

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. It was strong on me last night and this morning that I should preach on this subject, and since I'm preaching on problems and pain, that's what I'm preaching on, I want to start off with a couple of kind of exhortations so that you don't go out of here gloomy and everything.

First of all, when you're going through a hard place or problem, great or small or pain, there's a couple of prayers here that I think are helpful. First of all, when you're going through a hard place, pray, help me to keep my heart right, that is, to respond correctly in my personality. Help me to keep my heart right.

To pray when you're going through pain, the first thing, God, help me to keep my heart right in this, because that's the most important thing, and as we just read, these things come upon us if we're serving the Lord like a father would discipline his children. It's for our good. So that we want to get the benefit from it.

The second thing is, take out of my personality anything that is making the problem worse than it needs to be. Sometimes the thing is bad enough, but we've got stuff in us that makes the bad situation pretty near impossible. So the second thing you pray is, Lord, take out of me, is there anything in me that's making this situation worse than it actually needs to be? The third thing to pray is, Lord, guide me to the solution.

Just guide me to the solution. There's a path to the solution of every problem, whether it takes a day or a week or 20 years, God hears that prayer. That's an honest and prayer to pray, to guide for wisdom, to be guided to the solution.

Pray and then ask the Lord, what can I learn from this? What can I learn from this? Sometimes in terrible, distressing situations, there's great things that you can learn from it. Have you found that to be true? And finally, when you're under that kind of pressure and pain, just keep praying with thanksgiving because he's delivered you in the past and he'll deliver you now and in the future. God doesn't change.

And sometimes we're in trouble because we get too light and flippant with the Lord. We're not praying, we're not doing what we should, and we get problems to make us pray. But it's always correct to pray and

to add thanksgiving.

You don't pray in a screaming fit. You pray and bless the Lord with assurance. Let me mention these again.

First, help me to keep my heart right, that is to respond correctly in my personality to what's going on. I don't want, if we have a great financial collapse or a war or whatever, we don't want to be screaming around like the heathen who have no hope and no faith and no God and no comfort. We steady on.

So we say, Lord, help me to respond correctly to this thing, to keep my heart right, not get angry with God or people or anything else, not the tools God uses. And secondly, take out of my personality anything that is making the problem worse than it needs to be. And thirdly, guide me to the solution.

That's a prayer for wisdom. Guide me so that this can be solved, whether it's sickness or financial problem or family problem or social problem or whatever kind of problem it is. Lord, guide me to the solution.

Then ask the Lord, what can I learn from this? Maybe it won't happen again if I can get it right the first time. And then finally, keep on praying. Jesus said men ought always to pray and not to faint.

And sometimes we panic and we're ready to faint. We want to go hide under the bed somewhere. Well, that doesn't do any good.

You get under there, something's liable to bite you. So you're not safe even home in bed under the kibbers. So you say you keep praying and looking to the Lord.

And according to the scripture, he'll bring you through. And since I'm talking about problems and pain, I want to give you a scripture here to learn. Now this is one to put on the icebox for sure.

It's 1 Peter 5.10. This is a great comfort. 1 Peter 5.10. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. Notice that after you have suffered a little while.

Oh now, God has a funny thing about time. And what to God is a little while. You know, a day with the Lord is a thousand years.

So five minutes to him, you can figure out arithmetically how that would come out. Days divided by a thousand years. So it's true that when you come to the Lord for the first time, or if you have been with the Lord and then get away from the Lord and come back.

Either one of those two situations. Either you're coming to God for the first time, or you've made a stand for Christ and then you fall away. And then you didn't go past the point of no return.

God dealt with you and you repented and you came back. You're most likely going to have a peck of trouble. Now I'm not sure whether the reason for that is because God is testing us to see if we're going to stay, or if it's kind of spanking because of the way we've lived before.

But I've seen it happen over and over. It has probably happened to some of you. You come to the Lord and either return to the Lord or come to the Lord initially and the first thing you know, you've got troubles.

And that, I want to tell you, is entirely scriptural. It's entirely scriptural. If you want to spend a week or two looking in your bible, look up in the New Testament, suffering.

You will be absolutely floored. You'll probably go off to another topic before long because it is a prevailing topic. It's one of the most frequently mentioned topics in the New Testament.

And so we need to understand that this is normal. Our problems are normal. Most crises we go through are relatively minor.

A couple of times in our life we may go through a real heavy time, but they're not every day by any means. Usually it's kind of one thing or another thanks to our foolishness or carelessness or sometimes no fault of our own. Things keep harassing us and we have this problem, we have that problem.

That's normal. But I want you to know, it will come to an end. It will come to an end.

It doesn't go on forever. And when you first take up your cross, and it's a brand new four by four, the edges are rough, sharp. You carry it for a while, you begin to wear a groove in it, and it's near as painful.

Boy, it's irritating as all get out when you start. You think, man, this is the Christian life, whoa. But if you faithfully take up that thing and carry it, you'll find you begin to wear a nice spot that fits right on your shoulder.

And if you just forget about the fact that you're not getting everything you wanted, and you have to deny yourself some of the fervent desires of your heart to live as a lawful, decent person and not to hurt other people. You try to make this earth heaven when it's cursed. In order to do that, you have to break God's laws and hurt other people.

But if you have integrity, and you take the bitter with the sweet, no matter how bitter it gets, there's always some sweet if you don't concentrate on the bitter. Don't keep thinking, oh, this is terrible, I can't bear this another day. It'll grind you to powder.

If you say, okay, this is acceptable, you know, the whole horse put the bridle on me, here we go another time. And look at the blessings of the day. Get your mind off what you can't have.

Concentrate on what you do have, because I'll tell you right now, if you've got two arms and two legs, you're way ahead of a lot of people. You're way ahead of a lot of people. Okay? So be thankful for your blessings.

And you'll make it fine. You can only live it one day at a time. You can't live it yesterday, and you can't live it tomorrow.

You can only live it today. There's always grace for the day. The Bible says, as the day, so shall your strength be.

And there's grace for the day. And you'll make it just fine. But if we're going to make it just fine, we have to remember that it will come to an end.

It will not go on forever. And secondly, that it's normal, and there are things to be learned. All right, as I was contemplating on this, there are at least three areas that problems and pain deal with.

One is, there are four here I have. One is, they purify us from sin. Let's look at that for a minute.

That's in 1 Peter 4, verses 1 and 2. Now the whole fourth chapter of 1 Peter is about suffering as judgment unto salvation. The subject of 1 Peter, the fourth chapter, is suffering due to God's judgment on the sin and rebellion in us that leads, if correctly taken, leads to salvation. And that's why it finishes up by saying, the righteous scarcely are saved, for the righteous are saved with difficulty.

It's referring back to where it says, marvel not at the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened. That's in 1 Peter 4. And it explains, the time has come, the judgment must begin. And it begins in the household of God, according to 1 Peter 4. And the purpose of this is to save us.

We're saved by judgment. We're saved by this fire. And the reason that the last verse, or second to last verse, or whatever it is in 1 Peter 4, says you are saved with difficulty, is because, or scarcely saved, is because our reaction to that suffering is not always appropriate.

And in some cases, it makes people bitter, or angry with God. So instead of learning from it, they have been harmed by it. And that's what it means when it says, the righteous, and we're talking now about righteous people.

Righteous people, when they suffer, they get mad at God, on occasion. Or mad at other people, or mad at the government, or mad at the world, or mad at themselves, or whatever they do. And these, as I told you, you've got to be sure when you're going through pain and problems, that your response is correct.

That you learn from it. Because if you don't, then these chastenings don't do you any good. In fact, they do you harm.

And that's why it says, the righteous are saved with difficulty. The difficulty being between God and the individual, as God tries to release the individual from worldliness, love of the world, finding security in the world, and survival in the world, and the lust of the flesh, and our self-will. And as God deals with these three areas of our personality, worldliness, lust, and self-will, come to the forefront, and they become an issue.

They become an issue. And it's not easy. It's not easy when you're young, and you're full of the fires of the flesh, or with personal ambition, or with the desire to have a lot of material goods, but God looks down on these compulsions and evil inclinations, and he sees that they are harming us.

And they are harming us, believe me. Worldliness is fine so long as the world is sunny and bright. But that world isn't so great for people in Africa right now, or people in Kosovo, or Christians in the Sudan, or in China, or in Peru.

The world isn't so great. And so you have to be free from it, so when trouble does come, you don't go down with your environment. Does that make sense to you? And he sees that the lust of your flesh, to you they feel pleasurable and something you can't live without, but they are a bondage, and they lead to excesses, to disease, to remorse, to the destruction of you and your family, the loss of your respect, and everything else you can imagine when you yield to the passions and appetites of your flesh.

So God looks down on us. He says, hey, you know, this is not good for you. I want to remove that.

But how we perceive the tools that he uses is what makes it difficult. It's difficult for God to work in such a way that he doesn't lose us, and it's difficult for us to respond correctly so God doesn't lose us. And so that's what it means when it concludes that chapter on judgment and suffering.

It says, if the righteous are saved with difficulty, because we don't think of being saved with difficulty. We think, I accept Christ, I do the four steps, and that's it. Voila, I'm heaven-bound.

What difficulty is there in that? The difficulty comes as you try to work out your salvation, and it becomes as difficult as you make it. If you say to the Lord, take the world, take all my desires, take my personal ambition, cause me to love you, and you do that every day, it won't be all that difficult. But we're not always ready to do that.

We give up a few things, and then we come to a sticky one. I don't know about that. I don't think God wants that.

And then, you know, you pray, and finally you're heard. Job says, that which I feared has come upon me. And you finally realize, yeah, it was God speaking to you all the time, and that thing you thought was such a part of yourself, and so absolutely necessary to your joy and happiness and even reason for living, was nothing but a miserable bondage.

And when it goes, you will be relieved, you will have peace and righteousness, and you'll say, what do I ever see in that thing? But while the fires are alive, you don't see with that kind of seeing, because it's getting at things that have moved you for maybe 20 years, or 15 years, or 30 years, and they've become a part of your life, and they're passionate, and you desire them, and you want them. I can't let that go. You know, back to my true romances.

Soul. Soul. All the sitcoms play on that.

Don't watch them. They're poison, and you don't need them. You don't need that kind of stuff going into your personality, because God wants that out, because it's a source of bondage and pain.

That's why it says the righteous, even the righteous that love God, are saved with difficulty. It's because we have a hard time deciding that God knows what he's doing, and that his way is right. Now, don't think for one moment that by yielding up your love for the world, and the passions of your flesh, and soul, and your self-will, that you're giving up anything worthwhile.

You're not. That's the trick that Satan plays on us. You're not.

It's the pathway to what you want, which is love, joy, and peace. And that's what we all want. The problem is, we think the world is going to bring that.

The world's not going to bring that. What we want is love, joy, and peace. That's what we're after.

But these other things short-circuit us out, and we think, well, this passion in my flesh, if I can just satisfy it, it will bring me love, joy, and peace. Forget it. It isn't going to do it.

It's going to bring you nothing but a frantic, fretful kind of thing that operates, you know, it's like fun. It's frantic, and then it's over, and it brings sorrow with it. And as for self-will, we think we know who we are, and what we want, and where we should go, and we don't.

We don't. We don't know what's in us. That's why men, they get up around, they make themselves a success in the corporate world, and they get about 48, and they leave the whole thing and go to Polynesia somewhere and paint pictures.

Because they realize, I've been chasing something that is not getting me what I thought if I had at least three million dollars, then I could go somewhere, I could invest, I could really multiply and everything. And then they get up, you know, and maybe in the process lose their wife and kids, or their health, or whatever happens, and they get to be 48 or 50. That's very critical for men that time.

Women too, but career-oriented men, it's very critical. And they look back, and they say, I'm knocking myself out. I'm a nervous wreck.

I'm anxiety. I'm taking pills. You know, my heart's bothering me and everything else, and what am I doing? This isn't what I want.

This is not what I'm after. I want love, joy, and peace. I think I'll write poetry.

Men do this. Believe me. They do it because that's not the source of love, joy, and peace.

And God's desire is to bring you to love, joy, and peace. He didn't create you to make you miserable. He created you to have love, joy, and peace with Him.

And He looks at you, and He says, well, there's this chain, and that chain, and the next chain. And God goes to gently remove them, and you scream, you know, like a wounded bull charging around, killing everybody in sight, mad at God, while He's trying to help you. It's like a child screaming when the pediatrician tries to give him a shot.

It's the same thing. You don't trust. The child does not trust that man in the white coat.

You just not trust him. He takes one look at it and says, let me out of here. Right? Well, that's what happens when God comes to give you your shot.

He says, no way are you messing with that part of my life. Well, it's just that one's as foolish as the other. So God isn't trying to take anything away from you, but we make it hard.

And that torturous labyrinth of problems we have within us is a long time unraveling before we get to the simplicity that's in Christ, and are at peace with God, and are not frantic. And He brings us to green pastures, and He makes us to walk in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. That's love, joy, and peace.

That's where we're going. The rest of God. Isn't that neat? Whoa.

All you got to do is give up all the passions of your flesh and soul. And after you do that, you're home free. Oh, Lord.

That's difficult, isn't it? That's what it says. You got to be difficult. The Bible says you got to be difficult.

All right. So in 1 Peter 4.1, therefore, since Christ suffered for us in His body, Christ suffered. He came to earth as a man.

Arm yourself. I guess that's what I'm talking about this morning, is a frame of mind. Because if you have the frame of mind that you're supposed to be happy all the time, and not have any pain or problems, you're going to be a person without integrity.

We see enough of that in our country. We see enough of that lack of integrity as people seek their own gain. And we're sick of it.

We need integrity restored. We need it restored to our nation. And in order to have integrity, you have to arm yourself with a mind to suffer, because the world is cursed.

And it's normal. It's just normal. There are three crosses on Calvary.

God was crucified. The saved man was crucified. And the unsaved man was crucified.

Everybody's crucified in this world. And the only way you can get away from it is to, as soon as there's a problem, jump away from it, go to someplace else, jump away from it, go to someplace else. But in the meanwhile, you're leaving a track record of people who trusted you.

And you betrayed their trust. And you'll meet that on your deathbed or in the next world, believe me. They'll be there.

They'll be there, and you'll answer for your conduct. Time wounds all heals. Eventually, these shenanigans will catch up with you.

You've got to make up your mind once and for all. I'm going to take the bitter with the sweet, because that's life, and anything else is not lifelike. The world is not Disneyland.

It isn't Hollywood. This whole thing is based on an illusion. Did you know that motion pictures are based on an illusion? We took one time, Orden and I, a tour through the MGM studios, wasn't it? I think that was the one.

Never go there again. If I ever felt the presence of death, I was in that place. We went into Lucille Ball's dressing room.

I always thought that was an innocuous play, you know, Lucille Ball. It was like death. I'm not trying her or anything.

I'm just reporting to you objectively what I felt. But we were taught there that all motion pictures are based on an illusion, on painted backdrops that simulate something. Here you're sitting in the studio and you're acting like this.

It looks like you're on a bus running somewhere in Spain. The whole thing is an illusion. Disneyland is much the same thing.

It's a great, wonderful world. It's an illusion. It isn't true, and Hollywood isn't true.

If we're going to be real people, we've got to accept the fact that life is both bitter and sweet. There's enough sweet to keep us going and enough bitter to make us in God's image. And if we're willing to do that and live like that with integrity, not betraying those who trust in us, staying faithful, staying constant, we'll make it to the end.

God will welcome us and we'll have people that will rise to greet us and say, thank God for your faithfulness. I'm here because of your faithfulness. Amen? So when it says arm yourself with a mind to suffer, it's not talking about something bad or gloomy.

It's talking about reality. When you say this is the way life is, arm yourself that way. Don't be looking all the time to try to live in Disneyland.

Arm yourself. Okay, Lord, this is the way the world is. I'll take it as it is.

I'll take the bitter and the sweet. I'll be true to those that trust me and not be forever running from problems and betraying God and people. Arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

That's the purpose of it. It's to purify you. We've talked so much about the forgiveness of sin that we forget that most of the New Testament is talking about holiness and deliverance from sin.

The main topic of the New Testament is not forgiveness. It's the new creation. Hebrews talks about the blood of bulls and goats.

They could forgive sin. That's what Leviticus says. But they couldn't take away sin.

So it had to be offered every year. But Christ came to take away our sins. He came to deliver us.

And one of the tools he uses is suffering. Well, it works that way, doesn't it? Won't that tone you up? God yanks on your lead rope? Huh? Boy, I'll bring you right to attention. Turn your prayers into something more than saying nice King James prayers and quit that and go to praying.

As a result of suffering, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires. That's the result of it. It does work that way.

I'm here to tell you. It works that way on me. I'm sure it works that way on you.

But rather, for the will of God. Now, that's what we were talking about when we were reading in Hebrews 12, in the fourth verse, in your struggle against sin. Do you know we're supposed to struggle against sin? Do you know that? Not struggle in the sense of being fretful and trying to do penance or correct ourselves by willpower.

But working with God as he leads us to a knowledge of what we're doing wrong. We confess it. We turn away from it with the help of Jesus.

And then we draw near to God and resist the devil. That's a struggle. That's a struggle.

And these Hebrew, these Jewish Christians were getting a little disenchanted with things. And so the writer says in your struggle against sin, you haven't resisted to the point of shedding your blood. They had lost their property.

You haven't been martyred yet. And you've forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons. This is a word of encouragement.

When you're in problems and pain, it's a good thing to know that God is there. And it's not something unusual. It is something for your good.

It helps. It's encouraging. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline.

See, this is talking about that suffering that cleanses from sin. Do not lose heart when he rebukes you. Now, see, that's one of what makes it difficult.

Some people's response is to lose heart. They say, I can't do that. I just can't live it as a Christian.

I just can't do it. There are people like that. Not everybody's like that, but there are some.

If you're like that this morning, I want you when I'm through here to come to the because I'm here to tell you the Lord will put you through. He will put you through. All he's asking is that you keep a good heart to him.

Don't look at your circumstances. Look at God. Keep your eyes on him.

He will put you through. He's not asking you to do some superhuman thing. And if they get to the place where it looks like you're on the bottom looking up, the end of the world has come, then nothing has changed.

God's word does not change. He will put you through. You'll have to quit.

Where are you going to go if you quit? To the tender mercies of the devil? You want to know where Satan is? You want to know where Satan is? He's on his belly eating dust. See, that serpent in the beginning, the Garden of Eden is allegorical. Okay? Eve wasn't tempted by a snake.

Doesn't the New Testament say it was Satan that tempted Eve? Was the devil that tempted Eve, wasn't it? Or was it a gopher snake? Which was it? Here comes that old gopher snake. And he rears up and he says, Eve, eat that apple. Forget it.

It's allegorical just like the tree of life is allegorical and the knowledge of good and evil is allegorical. An allegory is teaching us something. There's only one tree of life and that's Jesus Christ.

It isn't a peach tree or something growing out here. Well, do with that as you will. You say, well, he's not conservative or fundamental.

Listen, I'm as fundamental as your grandmother. All right? But God didn't say to a rattlesnake or something else, go on your belly and eat dust because they don't eat dust to this day. They're on their belly, but they don't eat dust.

He's talking about Satan who was cast down, put on his belly on the earth, and he's forced to eat the dust of people. He can't get away from it. He's entangled with a desire and a lust for flesh.

That's why when people get on dope and other things, the first thing you know, they're into sadism and masochism and the end of it is cannibalism. That's where it goes because the demons are on flesh of people. Whether it's an abortion or whether it's in the molesting of young children or whatever it is, they've got to have that flesh because God cursed them.

He says, you're out of here. Go on your belly. You'll bruise his heel, but he's going to crush your head.

And Romans says, 1620 says, my God shall crush Satan under your feet. That's because he's already down there. So if you leave Jesus because you feel you can't make it, there's somebody on his belly who

has to eat dust after you.

There's only two great powers in the world, God and Satan, and you can't live neutral to leave Jesus to default to the powers of hell. There's nothing in the middle because the Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Oh, great.

God's going to punish me. Cool. Yeah.

Revelation three, whom I love, I rebuke and chase. While the Lord loves you, as he rebuked and chased you, the Lord loves you. Endure.

He punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship is discipline. Hardship disciplines us.

And we won't die from it. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? He's disciplining you as a father, not as an angry Lord who's cracking the bullwhip over you.

We get that idea sometimes. Oh, God is up there and he hates all people and boy, if I move, he's going to catch me with his whip. He's your father.

Your father doesn't treat you like that unless he's got a mental problem of some kind. He loves you. And when he disciplines you, it's for your good.

Is that right? But even then, God is tempered with his own wrath and indignation. But God's wrath is not tempered with his indignation. OK, it's cold, warm, pure, loving kindness towards you.

All right. If you are not disciplined and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate. You're not a true son.

So we don't want that. 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 spirit to live? 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. So in a sense, holiness is Christ and is attributed to us because of Jesus Christ. But in this sense, holiness is something that is wrought in us through God's discipline, through hardships.

So the things of the Bible, such as righteousness, peace and joy and love, are not imputed to us. It's real righteousness, real joy, real peace, real holiness. There is a time when we first are saved when we have to have imputed righteousness because we have nothing else.

But the point of that is not to be a new way of God dealing with man. It's to give us a leg up so we can start on the program of salvation. And the program of salvation is one of bringing us to love and joy and peace and holiness.

That's what salvation is. It's a change in what we are. It's a new creation.

And the new creation is not imputed to us. It's created in us. Work out your salvation.

You have to work it out. And part of it is discipline. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.

Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace. Genuine righteousness, genuine peace, not imputed peace or imputed righteousness, but genuine righteousness and genuine peace. Imputed righteousness has no relationship to our suffering.

It's a legal maneuver that God uses so we can approach his throne and get help because of this transformation. Does that make sense? Kind of doctrinal, but it'll be on the tape if you have problems with it. For those who have been trained by it, that's the purpose.

That's why I said one of those things you pray is, God, what can I learn from this? Help me to respond correctly. There's something in this pain for me. And I want to wring the last bit of juice out of it.

I want to get everything that's in this pain and this problem possible. I think God loves an attitude like that. When you're teaching children, it's wonderful to have a child that's eager to learn.

That's a pain in the neck to have a child that doesn't want to learn and sits there with his head down and won't pay attention. That is not pleasant. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

In other words, stand up straight, make level paths for your feet so that the lame may not be disabled but rather healed. Now, what's that saying is that the kind of example you set affects other people. When you're a Christian and people are looking to you, and we Christians are looking to you, and all I see is complaints and how hard it is and how you can barely make it.

How do you think they feel? They say, well, this is nothing I want. I've got enough problems. I don't need to add to them.

I'm becoming a Christian. So, they're not healed. So, you don't feel like standing up straight, but you do it for other people.

So, problems and pain purify us from sin. They teach us obedience. We pretty well covered that.

I'm not going to drag this out here. A third thing they do is found in Philippians 3.10. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. It's a death of humility and denial and pain and everything.

But you notice that he doesn't say the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings and the power of his resurrection in that order, which we would expect him to do. We would not expect him to put the power of his resurrection first. And then the sharing in his sufferings.

And the reason for that is, that's why God starts us off with a portion of eternal life. And eternal life is resurrection life. And God starts us off with a portion of that, which enables us to serve God.

Then as we enter into the life of cross carrying obedience, every time we give over to the cross, out from that comes more life. And then that life enables us to pursue Christ further in the cross. Then out of that comes more life.

What's that? First of all, you must understand that eternal life is in degrees. It's not a state of existence. It's a kind of life.

And our goal as Christians, in fact, the antitype of Canaan, is life lived in the fullness of the power of the resurrection. Now that's not even comprehensible to us at this time, because we're all bogged down with

physical life. Now you don't realize that so much when you're young, unless you work hard and you're tired.

You know what that's like. Or you get sick and you're weak or hurt. You know what that's like.

But as you get older, your spirit stays young, but your body then becomes a tremendous handicap. Which has its good side, because it keeps you out of mischief. But the desired thing is to be alive in the indestructible, incorruptible life of Jesus Christ.

Blood's out of it. That blood is a mortal... You know, if you take your blood out and you leave it somewhere for three or four days, it begins to stink. Because it is corrupt.

There's corruption in your blood. Is that right? Where's all my nurses? Isn't that right? Doesn't blood have to stagnate and everything? It's not a very attractive thing. And that's what we're trying to live by.

It is corruption. At its best. But incorruptible life, life means the ability to move and speak and think and imagine and make war and serve God and whatever you want to do.

And there's more than that too. There's multiple presents and all kinds of things ahead of us. But the main thing is life! Life! Life! We're in the pursuit of life.

We're dead and we don't know it. Romans 8, 10. If Christ be in you, your body is dead because of sin.

And this that we're trying to struggle around, you know, and you get older and Don can appreciate this and Hal can appreciate and June and some of us, Audrey and me, some of us that are older, I mean, you're trying to do what you're trying to do. And June, he said he's a triathlete. He is watching the television, drinking beer and eating pizza.

A triathlete. I told you that they used to say, you know, the Surgeon General used to want people to do pushups, ride bikes, jog. Well, it didn't work.

So they got it down. They said, if you just move. Well, they've gone past that now.

The latest thing is just fidget. Getting you. It's in the paper.

Egypt totally immobilized people because why? We're tired. I'll tell you, most people in the United States are tired and they're looking for vitamins or pills or something so they won't be tired. And everybody said, Hey, well, in resurrection life, it is eternal.

It is incorruptible. There is no tiredness. There is no sickness, no pain, no death, nothing but life, life, life.

And that's what Jesus came to bring us. Should not perish, but have eternal life. And that life comes out of the cross.

I'll finish saying this in 2nd Corinthians 1.9, I believe. The whole book of 2nd Corinthians, the theme that runs through it is death. It starts off with 1.9. We have the sentence of death that ends up talking about Paul's affliction.

The Lord said, live with it because my strength is coming forth through it. And you'll keep finding this in the 4th chapter, all through 2nd Corinthians. So bowed down with pressures and fears and dread, he said, we have the sentence of death in ourselves.

And we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. And then he tells us how that as God raises him up, there's an overflow and reaches out and it touches other people. And I'm telling you, all true ministry and all true fruit bearing comes from the cross.

Because God brings you down and then he lifts you up and there's always some left over for other people. Hallelujah. Shall we stand? Oh, hallelujah.

Father, your ways are wiser than the wisest of men. They would have us philosophize, but Lord, you bring us to the cross. They would have us make a lot of money or invent something or do something spectacular.

And we're a long time seeing that, Lord. We're a long time as the Adamic personality withers in us because of the death of the cross. And we finally, as Paul says, if I will glory, I will glory in the cross by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.

Now, Lord, help us to have that in ourselves because we know it's the only source. Hallelujah. Lord, we want your life.

You are the tree of life. The tree of life. And we want to eat of it every day.

So, Lord, give us a mind to go your way and not try to do it ourselves. But go the way of God with the way of discipline, the way of arming ourselves with a mind to suffer because the joy is there in the valley, hallelujah, with God. We know this world is a charnel house that's becoming worse every day.

In Africa and other places where they're chopping people up and doing these things, we can't even imagine it. Now, Lord, since we have this space of time in America, before the world catches up with us, teach us not to trust the world or to live in the bondages of our fleshly passions and appetites or to be so fixed with our personal ambition that we can't present our body a living sacrifice. We want the old paths.

We say, Lord, where are the ancient paths? We're here this morning and the altar is open. Stan, we need some music. If you're here this morning and it's touched you, I want you to come.

Now, don't wait till later. Now, please, come. If you need Jesus in these terms, you have a problem, especially if you decided to quit.

Hallelujah. You're not bound with the flesh. Am I right? I let you out of here, which I'm going to do.

I'm not going to hold you. Then I have to trust that you're doing it right. I know that's what the Lord wanted me to preach on.

He started last night. He usually waits 30 minutes before I come here and actually starts speaking to me last night. What is this? This must be important.

I'm not a cliffhanger today. I actually knew from last night what I'm going to preach on. What a blessing.

Lord, these are your people and you don't want them bound with death. You want them alive in you. And I've told them what you said, Lord.

We have to go the way of discipline and endure hardness. So, Lord, it's up to you and the Holy Spirit now. I can't do any more.

I've done what you said. Hallelujah. You need to come.

This is the time.

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