

Why the Struggles?

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon explores the purpose of struggles in our lives as a means to draw us closer to Christ and fulfill God's greater plan for the church.

Duration: 1:07:15

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Personal Discipleship", "Gods Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the idea of God waiting for his army to establish his will on earth. He emphasizes the importance of individual preparation and running the race that God has specifically designed for each person. The speaker encourages the audience to focus on their own journey and not be distracted by others. He also highlights the brokenness and corruption of the world throughout history, pointing out that despite various promises and efforts, humanity has not been able to bring about lasting peace and justice. The speaker suggests that God has a plan and purpose for each person and calls them to lay aside their own lives to fulfill that purpose.

Transcript

Lord, as we come unto you this day, it is with great praise and thanksgiving. Lord, we are very appreciative of your goodness to us and the many deliverances, some of which we know, most of which we don't know. But we do appreciate, Lord, your faithfulness, your watching over us, your care in bringing us through many dangers, toils, and snares.

Lord, we appreciate your goodness. And we pray for each family here, Lord. There will be a resolution of difficulties.

There will be peace, Lord. Do that which no one can do but you. Lead your help, Lord.

And we ask for it in the name of Jesus. Lord, we ask for it. We pray that you will be with the Children's Church, Lord, and bless in those of us here that hear the tape, Lord.

I pray the Holy Spirit will minister to the needs and bring Jesus to us. In whose name I pray, Amen. You may be seated.

All right, I believe I know what the Lord wants me to talk about today. Let's see. We'll have our reading first in Hebrews 12, 1 through 4. Hebrews 12, 1 through 4. Wow.

Here we go. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down, who endured such opposition, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet 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. All right, now, I wrestled with the Lord this morning trying to get clarity on what he wanted me to talk about, and I believe I finally broke through, but I'd like to give a little prologue before we get into what the Lord has laid on my heart, is the discipline and the problems that come on us because we're serving God.

This morning, but the prologue, this morning, as Stan and the musicians had a wonderful militant sound that always lifts me up from 10 until 10, I could picture the Lord so clearly coming as a commander, and I realized why all this is going on among God's people in the preparation is because you can't just yank people out of the world and have them ride behind Christ and establish God's will on the earth, so the Lord is waiting for his army, and we've talked about Joel 2, that they don't trust one another, and they walk in their paths and so on, which is not true of baby Christians. They don't do that, and so the idea, the Lord wants an army. He's going to have an army, and the point is this.

As I was watching the young people, and we were singing the song, I give you all my hopes and dreams and ambitions. Now, kids have hopes and dreams and ambitions, and here they are saying they give to Jesus all their hopes and dreams and ambitions of marriage and a home and a job and whatever it may be, and I thought, I wonder do they understand why the Lord would require this? I mean, where is this going? It isn't to escape hell. We're not going to go to hell unless we reject Christ or live a real wicked life.

God isn't going to put decent ordinary people in hell unless they reject Christ when he's presented, so that isn't the purpose of all this, all my hopes, dreams, and ambitions, so why are we saying this, or why do we think the Lord requires this if it's not, its purpose is not to bring us to heaven? What is its purpose? What are we saying, and why are we saying it? Are you following the question? Why? You know, why not just live an ordinary life and go to church and be a good person and raise a family and do some good in the world and die? I mean, what is all this, Lord, I lay everything in ashes at your feet, what is all this about? Because it's not to escape hell and go to heaven, it's not its purpose, so what is its purpose? Does God just like to deprive us of things we want, is that what it's about? What it's about is this, the church, I don't mean the building, I mean the people call out from the world, represent a small minority of earth's peoples, and not everybody is called. I know that's undemocratic, but it's true. The church, like Israel, has been chosen out of the world, not because we are better looking, or we happened on the gospel, or something else occurred and we were noble and we made a good choice, or whatever, that isn't the way it works.

We know from the story of Sammy Morris in Africa, how the Lord reached down and called to Sammy when there was no missionary, nothing, he was just being prepared to die because another tribe had caught him and trussed him up, and so the Lord came, so God calls whom he will, when he will, how he will, where he will, we have to do our part of course, but basically the church, it's not talking about people that have been called out to escape hell and go to heaven, that's not what it's about.

It's like in the song we sang, and we'll rule with him forever, if you are in the church, and I don't think you'd be here in this room if you weren't called to be in the church, I don't believe you'd be here, then you are not a part of the majority of mankind. You have been called out from the world, not because you were raised in a Christian home, but something God had in mind before ever you were born, and so we're not talking about heaven or hell, we're talking about God has something that he wants you to do, and in order to do that, you have to lay aside your life, it's as simple as that, and his plan, how many know the world is not doing so hot?

You know in 6,000 years, the record has been of people slaughtering each other, the earliest artifacts found by archaeologists are swords, spears, and a little later in the period, bows and arrows, those are the earliest artifacts of man, along with a few clay dishes, the record of the world has been a record of war, and insanity, greed, corrupt government, but it's never changed, it's true today, it was true 3,000 years ago, the world was messed up, and every generation brings forth philosophers and savants, teachers, politicians and others who promise an end to war, or food for everyone, or something else, but it never happens, and another generation comes up, just like now we have, that the stated purpose of the world bank is that no one will ever go hungry, 2,000 years ago, the same

thing, the development of the public school in America was for the purpose of removing all crime, because crime they said was based in ignorance, we're going to teach everybody, the last man is long dead, and crime goes on, and nothing changes, now put yourself in God's place, this isn't his idea of creating people so that they could cut each other's throats, brutalize each other, that's not his plan, and nobody's going to change that, sin is too great, the devil is too powerful, it's just going to continue, but there is a solution, and that solution is going to happen, there's somebody coming to the earth called the prince of peace, and according to the bible he's going to rule and bring peace and justice to the nations, he could have done that 2,000 years ago, but he intends to have a

company with him who will share in the battle, and share in the spoil, and the spoil is people, I don't know how soon the lord will come, but I do know that when he comes that's why he's coming, but it's not to take his church to heaven in spite of the traditions, it is to take care of this mess that the earth is, isn't that nice, rather than bringing all the salt into heaven, he's going to straighten out the earth, I think myself it's a much better gospel, also it is scriptural, which helps a great deal, whereas the other doesn't have a shred of scripture to support it, that he's coming to take his church to heaven, not one but numerous passages, in the old testament particularly, in Psalms and Isaiah, and other places that the lord is coming to establish justice on the earth, here's the

catch, he's not going to do it alone, according to the scripture he's going to do it with a company of saints, called the church, people called out from the earth, and because we cannot just be good people, and not beat our wives, and raise a family, go to church, that's not enough to ride with christ, because when you're faced with the battles that will be required to cleanse the earth, and the selflessness that will be necessary, if people are going to find christ in you, and find justice and peace, there's no place there for self-seeking, or personal ambition, or fear, or pride, it cannot be in christ, or in those whom he brings with him, does that make sense? therefore, since you have been called out from the ranks of mankind, and the spirit of god opened up your understanding, so

that you could perceive the atonement made on the cross, and receive the forgiveness, and receive the holy spirit of god, which is the anointing of the priesthood, you are a minority, a small minority, most of the people in Escondido, and Poway, and other places in San Diego county, most of them don't have a clue,

oh they may go to church, but they do it, as was said this morning, to put in their time at Easter, but they don't really have a clue as to why you represent a minority of the earth's people, if you have the holy spirit of god, and you have understanding of the scripture, and so the spirit of god is saying to you, you must, you must lay down your hopes and ambitions, why? so that the lord can give you better hopes, better dreams, better ambitions, trading your threadbare raiment

for the robes of the king, like Lillian Trasher, who gave up her boyfriend, and her family, and went to Egypt, and inherited several thousand orphan children, better family, better life, more significance, he isn't going to take from you one thing that will bring you eternal joy, he's just saying give me your old stuff, i've got something better for you, i've called you out from the earth, from the ranks of mankind, that you might belong to me in a special way, and be known for eternity as my bride, and my church, and the expression of my person, my helper, suited to me, my counterpart, that's what i want, and so in order for you to come into my palace, and share in my wealth, and my glory, and my power, and my prestige, you must lay aside the lesser, that you may have the greater, that's

why you raise your hands, and say all my hopes, and dreams, and ambitions, i give to you, not because god wants you to go through life destitute of everything desirable, but because he has a much higher plan for you, than just to live an adamic existence, grow up like a dandelion, flourish, then wither, and die, he has something so much better for you, so a little faith on your part, and a little cultivation of the romance, a little attention paid to jesus, and you'll do just fine, i thought it might help, that's the prologue, and as we take up the subject that the lord has laid on my heart today, it will help you to realize that the reason that god sends afflictions, and tribulations on us, is because they if they're taken correctly, they drive us to christ, and they form christ in us,

and that is the greatest thing in life, that can happen to you, is to have christ formed in you, first corinthians the third chapter talks about wood, hay, and straw, and it says every man, wicked and good, every man's work shall be tried by fire, if it's wood, hay, and straw, it will perish, if it's gold, silver, and precious stones, it will last, did you ever wonder what the gold, silver, and precious stones are? they are, and the only thing that is important, is the forming of christ in you, and your assistance, in the forming of christ in others, now you conceivably could do it working with orphans, or feeding them, and clothing them, where you don't directly see that you're building christ in others, but if you are being guided by the spirit, the one thing, the gold, and silver, and

precious stones that god is after, is not institutions, it is people in whom christ has been formed, and that is the fruit, first in ourselves, and then in others, if your life is dedicated to that, you will be rich, because when you die, it will go with you, not only what has happened to you, to warrant a place in his kingdom, which would not be true, had christ not been formed in you, but also you will have the great joy of seeing people throughout the ages to come, that are there, and prospering in god, because you laid down your hopes, and dreams, and ambitions, now that's what it's all about, and because we are essentially in nature, foolish, basically foolish, and self-seeking, fleshly, and god sees, oh that's what we want, my brother thompson is talking about that's what we want,

we don't want our life to be wasted on something insignificant, some advancement in technology or something, next year will be obsolete, because certainly by the time you die, it will be, the stuff that's on the drawing board today will be model t stuff, and you'll realize, i spent my life on that which is passing away, but if christ is formed in you, and god has used you to form christ in others, boy, you are to be envied, when you die, it won't be the end of anything, but the beginning of untold marvels, and so he says,

all right my child, by faith, give me your hopes, dreams, and ambitions, and i'll give you something that's not even comprehensible at this time, we only have one chance, so we're in hebrews 12, therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, now,

we are surrounded with them, we literally are surrounded with them, and we have learned from their experience, as recorded in the bible, and also have made, we have increased and been blessed, because of the labors of saints that are not in the bible, but who were faithful to god, and brought the gospel to us, or to our nation, or to our antecedent nations, whether they're england, or in the mediterranean, or in south america, they're all witnesses, they lay down their hopes, and dreams, and ambitions, and they can look down and say, boy, i had a little part in those young people sitting there in mount zion, in april of the year 2000, i had a little part in that, and so they're profiting from the fact that i lived on the earth, i did not live to myself, but i lived for god, and

consequently for other people, and now what are they going to do? what are they going to do? how can i profit from them? they will profit from you, see, because we're all going to be made perfect together, according to the last verse in hebrews 11, we're all going to be perfect together, and so they're up there, they want to return to the earth, they're waiting for the lord to come, and establish his kingdom, and to be reunited with life on the earth, and they know that we are the key, in the last days, we are the key, all they have done is to build us to the place where we can go for the summit, and so they're looking down, they're saying go for it, go for it, go for it, go for it, and brother dahl used to say, you can picture yourself in an arena, and on one side of the angels, and the

other side of the demons, and when you make a decision for god, the saints and the angels all stand up, and worship god, and the demons boo, and when you make a decision for sin, all the saints, the angels are quiet, and the demons are laughing, and clapping, and rejoicing, oh yes, it's true, it is absolutely true, we are surrounded with a great cloud of witnesses, and because of that, you see, he says because of that, therefore, let us throw off everything that hinders, and that's just what we do, and when you can feel some hindrance coming on your life, before it gets entrenched in you, and grows into a tree, throw it off, trees are easy to handle when they're saplings, after they're 100 years old, it gets more difficult, throw it off, Billy Graham said there's no problem with birds

flying over your head, as long as you don't let them make a nest in your hair, throw it off, throw it off, you have the ability to do that, in most every instance, most every instance, you can throw it off, not in every instance, and the sin that so easily, easily is an adverb, modifying the verb entangles, easily, i'm saying that to impress it on you, not to teach you, easily entangles, sin easily entangles us, makes it difficult for us to run, we trip, we fall, we push around like we're in a jungle, it's not easy in this world, and God knows that, and let us run with perseverance, you don't quit because it's difficult, you just don't quit, the only mistake you can make is to quit, run with perseverance, the race, it's Christianity, it's not a belief system, it's a race, it's a life that

is lived against innumerable obstacles, and temptations, and it's not a head trip, it's not a belief system, religions are belief systems, Christianity is a race, that you run, and I don't know how many of you in here are runners, probably a lot of people in the jog-a-thon, I used to do a lot of running, run can be a very painful thing, if you're a serious runner, it gets painful when you're really pushing yourself to the limit, the race, mark out for us, it isn't a random thing, it isn't an open-ended thing, and I think, the people, the reason people don't run the race, is first of all, they don't know there is such a thing, and they don't know there's a finish line, well i'm telling you right now, without a finish line, nobody runs very hard, and they

don't even know there's a track,

they think it's up to them to, well Jesus saved them, so they ought to be nice and do good, that's not the way it is, there's a track that you run on, and there's a finish line, Jesus said I finished the work that you gave me to do, it's helpful to know that when you're running, there's a place when you quit, okay, so it isn't open-ended, it's specific, it's highly specific for you as an individual, there is a place there that you are to run, it's not my track, it's your track, as a saint, as a future member of the army of Christ, as someone who's going to bring justice to the nations, first of all, you have to be prepared by running the race that God has designed for you specifically, so don't waste too much time looking at your neighbor, he may put his stone in the wall crooked, just

leave him be and work on your own stone, oh that's good preaching huh, thank you, wear yourself out fretting about because your neighbor got his in the wall crooked, amen, wonderful, the race marked out for us, let us pitch our eyes on Jesus, now that's something that you do, how many know it's easy to get distracted, how many know it's easy to get distracted when you first get out of bed in the morning, is your head like a tree full of birds, you know, you get a tree full of birds and shoot off a shotgun and they all fly off in every direction and then if you don't do anything else, they all come back and settle in the tree, that's the way birds do and that's the way our mind is, something happens boom and off goes our mind in every which direction, so it's good to have a kind of a

mantra to borrow a Hindu term, something that you can say the minute you get up that doesn't require any thought, can be I praise you Lord or I love you Lord or I want to do your will Lord or whatever, get a little thing going, don't make it elaborate because by the time you get halfway through, if you're like me, you'll forget what you were saying because your mind is like this, maybe you're not that way, it's very easy for me to get distracted, so it's good to have a when you see that your mind is on unprofitable things, it's not going anywhere, then get out to your man to just say I love you Lord, I love you Lord and keep on doing that till you get your mind back on focus, ethical, try it when you wake up tomorrow morning, first thing you got out of bed you've got to have your mantra

ready before you go to sleep, then when you wake up just start writing, get a hold of your mind before you spent half an hour worrying about the meltdown or whatever it is you're worrying about, now it says fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith or literally the author and the finisher of our faith, so there is a beginning to your faith and there is an end to your faith, it's not open ended, it is going somewhere and who for the joy set before him endured the cross, now it's very difficult to take up your cross and follow Jesus unless you have joy set before you, and if God has given you a cross at this time don't focus on it, don't focus on what you can't have or can't do because it will kill you that's all you'll think about is what I can't have and my cross and

oh it's terrible I can't understand it, you won't stand it, you'll go down, Jesus didn't spend all his time thinking about how terrible it was he was going to be crucified, he was a cheerful person, well if you don't have any joy set before you today, ask God for something, ask God for something because you're not going to endure your cross if you don't have joy set before you, it isn't going to happen, psychologically it's too painful, you're going to quit, I've talked to young men on occasion that God was requiring something of them and the cross was very heavy and I said don't concentrate on this issue, develop a hobby, do something, go out and lift weights, build model airplanes, get something going and don't focus on what you can't have, in other words you might have a boyfriend or a

girlfriend and God broke it up and you know it's not right, but you're love-lorn, past all hooping so just get your mind off this that you know is not God's will and find something that you do enjoy and get your mind on it and if you can't think of anything in the world that's pleasant ask God to give you something and he will, but don't focus on what you can't have, can't do, always pray, always pray about your hopes and dreams and ambitions, always pray about them and everything with praise and thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God, always do that, but the bottom line is, Lord it's your will and not mine, you can survive that way and Lord I'd sure like something happy to think about, well, not very practical, all right, we got this far, um, who for the joy that is set

before him endured the cross, scorning it's shame, now there is a shame that's associated with the cross and whenever God moves there's always a reproach, now one time there was a reproach on baptism by immersion, later on there was a reproach on Wesley and his holiness and then there was, they call them Methodists, which was a disparaging term because they were so methodical and then there was a, and there was a tremendous reproach because that's not where the fire is, where the fire is now is in coming to know the Lord and suffering and taking up your cross and following the Lord and when you talk about that other Christians you'll find out that they will scorn you and you just have to stand up real straight and tall and praise the Lord because they're just out of line, because that's

where the fire is right now, is on obeying God and coming back to God and doing works meet for repentance, that's where the fire is, and that's where the scorn is, that's where the reproach is, so if you come among the average church member and say well it's not enough to say we're saved by grace, we've got to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, you're going to have scorn, they'll say oh you're just talking about being, you're just a Pharisee, you're just a legalist, you're just talking about works, there's a reproach there on that, not in tongues any longer, that's pretty well accepted, so Christ scorned the shame of it, he scorned it, you don't want it, fine, that's your problem, Jesus was very much that way, somebody say something to him, he'd say you said it, and they

didn't want to hear that, you know, when he talked to Pilate, everybody he talked to, he was real, boy, he's like a lychee, like you know, that's your problem buddy, I'm the king of the world, what's wrong with you, that's the attitude he had, I said well that's not very much like Jesus, read your bible, alright, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, no wonder he was not too concerned about people's opinion, consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart, now you can tell from the text of Hebrews that these Christians were losing heart, they were sick and tired of being sick and tired, they were sick and tired of struggling against sin and sinful people, and so he's exhorting them to press on past Pentecost and the

rest of God, he said, so you will not grow weary and lose heart, that's a problem in the Christian life, is growing weary and losing heart, because it goes on and on and nothing's happening and there's no excitement and nothing and nothing and it goes on and on and on year after year, the big problem then becomes boredom, weariness, losing heart, you have to keep on going, you have to remind yourself in the morning who you are and do it and do it, well you ever see one of these things on television where they're trying to portray in a drama the passage of time, so they have a calendar and the pages begin to flap like this, you ever see that, and it goes through February, March, April, May, and they're telling you the time has passed before the next

scene, well life is like that, life is like that, it seems like it's so long, but it is not, I'm telling you the pages just flip and the first thing you know several years have gone by and nothing has happened, but you're still

in there, just like the day you first made your consecration, I'm in for the duration, I'm not quitting, when you join the Marine Corps it's very interesting, when I enlisted, I enlisted for the duration plus six, that meant until the war ended plus six months, DNE plus six, and the interesting thing is once you, once the man in dress blues, the lieutenant stands up with a sword and you take the oath that brings you into the Marine Corps, you don't get up in the morning and figure out, you know I'm sick of this, I think I'll go in the Army, the Navy, I'd rather be

a civilian or you know, this is old, some guy coming in telling me my bed isn't made right and breaking me out, you know, I've got to spend the rest of my life in bed, you know, but once you make that oath, there's no changing, I mean it gets uncomfortable if you change, you know, so that's the way it is with the Lord, he doesn't have somebody there, a drill sergeant, everybody else telling you what you're going to do, he just leaves it up to your character, I said, I took my oath, I'm in this Army, that's it, period, for the rest of your life, the duration plus, all right, all right, in your struggle against sin, now I've heard a lot of preaching that we don't have to struggle against sin, but the Bible says in your struggle against sin, I mean there's a lot of preaching that says, I saw

a picture once in a Christian magazine of a man who was sitting on the floor with his back against the wall, petting a dog, and what he was illustrating was there's nothing you have to do, you're saved by grace, struggle against sin, I remember we saw a missionary film about two years ago, and after these natives were baptized, they were told, there's nothing else you have to do, whoo, that error pervades the Christian church, nothing else you have to do, you struggle against sin, and you don't struggle hopelessly and helplessly, that isn't the way the struggle works, you put sin to death, when God makes it clear to you that something is sinful in your life, you confess that thing, renounce it, denounce it, and stay with God until you get the victory over it, that's what it means to

overcome, and overcoming is a struggle, but it's a victorious struggle, it's not an endless hopeless struggle against a wicked nature, it's a victory, we are more than conquerors, hallelujah, and that includes every sin in your nature, I don't care what it is, and if you think God isn't strong enough to straighten out your personality, consider the heavens, he can certainly work on a little bit of dust like you and me, oh yeah, he's kind of powerful, and real smart, amen, in your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood, now in the Roman Empire, many people did, they resisted the sin in their, like every year having to offer three grains of corn to Caesar as God, when the local notary public came along, you had to do that, it was sinful to

worship the emperor as God, and to not do that was to invite death under some of the emperors, or torture, and he said that isn't your case, you haven't resisted that much yet, so what are you bellyaching about, you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons, now he's telling them why they were afflicted, why they were having problems, they were righteous people, it's not a question of sin here, it's the afflictions that come on the righteous, now if we as a Christian sin, we're going to pay for it sooner or later, that's another issue, this is the chastening that comes on every true child of God, and it's for a good purpose, and if you avoid it, you're going to have to break your integrity, you're going to have to do things that are unlawful, leave your wife or

husband, or cheat, or steal, or do something else, to stay with the chastening of the Lord requires integrity, but it will come on you and me for our profit, so I think God wants me to say that because this is the burden that I prayed through about this morning, because some may be in it, or are going to go through it, or have gone through it, and this is the reason, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose

heart when he rebukes you, and nothing wrong with being rebuked by the Lord, we don't realize sometimes the message that the Old Testament has for us, but I want to call your attention to, because I'm going to show you an illustration of this rebuke of the righteous in the Psalms, but first I want you to be oriented toward it properly, so if you look at 1 Corinthians

chapter 10 verse 6, you will see that we are really one with Israel, I mean the things that happen to them are for our benefit, they're the witnesses, and so everything that's written in the Psalms applies to us, and on is what he says, 1 Corinthians 10 verse 6, now these things occurred as examples to keep us Christians, happen to the Jews, from setting our hearts on evil things as they did, do not be idolaters as some of them were, as it is written that people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry, we should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did, see they were examples to us, and in one day 23,000 of them died, in one day 23,000 of them were struck down by God because of sexual immorality, see that's the damage that dispensational thinking has done,

we don't think that these apply to us, they apply directly to us, that's God's attitude toward immorality, we should not test the Lord as some of them did, that is complaining, complaining, and were killed by snakes, and do not grumble as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel, these things happen to them as examples, they're witnesses, and we look back to them, and we're supposed to be learning from the Old Testament, there's no such thing as a dispensation of grace, it doesn't exist, Paul used the term speaking about grace that was given to him to preach, he didn't preach a dispensation of grace, he received a dispensation, he says the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me toward you, meaning his ability to preach, but he did not preach a dispensation

of grace, in fact when Paul preached, as you'll see in Acts 28, he preached Christ from the Old Testament, and all of the Old Testament is an example to us, so there's no such thing as a special dispensation, it's all one dispensation of God toward people from the day Adam was created, that's important because that's a monstrous error in evangelical thinking, alright, these things happen to them as examples, and were written down as warnings for us so we could ignore them because we're in a dispensation of grace, oh well anyway, they were written down as warnings for us on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come, so it's like ascending up to the top of Mount Everest, the Israelites were all base camps, bringing us higher, bringing us higher, now we're at a place where we can make an

assault on the summit, and so that makes sense, alright, I'll go on, even though, well I'm sure it does, now, what I'm talking to you about is the afflictions on the righteous even though they're righteous, and if you'll turn back to Psalms 44, I see something there, you need to see this because this is an example for us to learn from, okay, starting with 44 verse 9, but now you have rejected and humbled us, remember what it said, don't faint when you are rebuked, you made us retreat before the enemy, our adversaries have plundered us, you gave us up to be devoured like sheep and have scattered us among the nations, you sold your people for a pittance, gained nothing from their sale, you have made us a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision of those around us, you have made us a

byword among the nations, and this has happened to Christian people throughout the centuries of the Christian era, for example, the Huguenots in France, the Protestants, alright, you have made us a byword, my disgrace is before me all day long, everything that has been part of the Christian life, it is, it is, and my face is covered with shame at the taunts of those who reproach and revile me, did that happen to Jesus, yes or no, you bet, and we are called to share the sufferings of Christ, right, Philippians 3.10, alright, now, because of the enemy who has been on revenge, Satan's been on revenge, all this has happened to us,

now notice, though, though we had not forgotten you, or been false to your covenant, so it is talking about people who are afflicted by the Lord, and yet it was not

because of their sin, it is the way God deals with his elect, okay, our hearts had not turned back, our feet had not strayed from your path, but you crushed us, right, these things happened to them for examples, and so the teaching today, this no longer applies to us, is of the devil, it is thou shalt not surely die, it is the old lie, yes it does happen to us, and it will happen to you, and it will happen to me, but it is for a good purpose, but you crushed us and made us a haunt and covered us over with deep darkness, now the old saints have talked about the deep darkness and the cloud of unknowing and the midnight of the soul and so on, because it is the Christian experience, now look what he says in Hebrews 12, do not, we're back in Hebrews 12, do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

because the Lord disciplines those he loves, he loves Israel, and that's why he crushed them, and that's why he did those things, and it doesn't make sense, it'll make sense to you if you'll follow the Lord, you'll thank God and praise him forever, because you're troubled after you're through with it, he punishes everyone he accepts as a son, oh Lord, that's why I started off with my prologue, to get your mind up on the glory, okay, because it's going to have a happy ending if you don't quit, you don't realize what it's about, endure hardship as discipline, endure it, just hang in there, it's not all going to be a bed of roses and it isn't all going to be a rack, God is treating you as sons, if these things happen to you, 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, now we might not have at the time, we might have been mad and said you don't love me, but in our heart we know that God has just made us that way, that we know when our parents love us and discipline us, we know that it's a form of love, even though at the time we may yell bloody murder, and we respected them for it, how much more should we submit to the father of our spirits, and live, the consequence of it is life, our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, I like that, because sometimes just because they were irritated, it wasn't with a scheme in mind to correct us, but just

because they are sore, so that's alright, they did what they could, but God disciplines us for our good, so when God disciplines us, it's not because he's irritated, you kid, you make me sick, you're always doing that, he doesn't approach us like that, he's not upset, he sees what we need, if we're going to be part of this army, part of this church, part of this bride, part of this holy city, that we may share in his holiness, now holiness and righteousness are two different things, and they should be made clear to us, though sometimes they overlap, for example adultery involves both righteousness and holiness, now by and large, righteousness is our conduct toward other people, like love, friendliness, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, mercy, these are not holiness, these are

righteousness, what we do toward other people, and how we treat them, if we are upright toward people, truthful, dependable, faithful, then we're a righteous person, that's righteousness, holiness has to do with the cleanliness of God's person, God is holy, meaning there are no unclean spirits in God, see now lying goes across the two, lying is an unclean spirit, but it also affects other people, so some of these impact both in the areas of holiness and righteousness, now the tabernacle of the congregation was not righteous, it was holy, now I've noticed that in the charismatic move, we often see almost no understanding of holiness, even among people who are righteous, and who are gifted, they have never known real holiness, now one evidence of that is that charismatic people will go to

the movies, now I'm not down on movies, and we watch VCRs, and I've been to movies since I've been a Christian, and I'm not all hung up on movies, to me it's neither here nor there, that's not the gospel, don't go to the movies, but I want you to know in early Pentecost, you went to the movies, and it could have been Shirley Temple, or Luke Gibson, or something, you know, whoa, you are hell bent brother, sister, well the charismatic move rebelled against that, against the long hair, and no cosmetics, and hair in a bun, and going to movies, and all this stuff, they rebelled against it, and they went too far, they went so far that our current generation of people do not have, in many instances, a real good feeling for God's holiness, and so I don't go to the movies anymore, I haven't been

to a movie theater, and I can't remember when, I think the last one we went to was the Sound of Music, and we will watch a VCR from time to time, if there is a good one, we enjoyed The King and I, for example, we watched that together, but in most movies, as in most modern books, there is an abundance of steamy sexual scenes, and vulgar language, profanity, four letter words, an abundance, abundance, and even though that is true of most modern movies, and most modern books, you get down to the Christian, and in many television shows, I understand about the late night shows, which, that don't bother me at all, because I am long asleep at that time, and let me say for the benefit of the young people, this is wrong, it is wrong, it is wrong, and it is not holy, it is not holy, and I will

stand up and be counted on that, now you say, well how can I tell, if you would be uncomfortable, if Jesus were sitting next to you, get out of there, get out of there, because you can sense the Lord's holiness, sometimes it really helps to think about heaven, because all of us have a feeling about paradise, which we call heaven, which now is in the spirit realm, used to be on the earth, nonetheless, paradise is where God, and the holy angels are, and the saints, right, I mean you can get a picture of feeling for that in yourself, now if there is something that you are going to do, that would not be done in heaven, and this is where you intend to go, what are you saying, now you say, well you just ruined my day, well let me tell you, the movies are going from bad, to cesspoolian, and this

latest thing, the American Beauty, is one long social statement about the normality of homosexual behavior, this is the movie that won all the prizes, so that tells you where our culture, it is, because if it wasn't accepted, it wouldn't have won all the prizes, so a Christian, a charismatic person will say to you, well I can go and watch the American Beauty, because to the pure, all things are pure, and I'm thinking pure thoughts, what you are doing, brother, sister, is playing games with yourself, it is wrong, wrong, it's the fires of hell, I don't know that anyone in here has gone to see the American Beauty, I haven't heard that you are, and I'm sure that you wouldn't, but I'm telling you, that is the trend, that's a trendsetter, that's a trendsetter, when the Nickelodeon first came

on, they call them that because the movies cost a nickel to go to, there was no, they didn't even say hell on the thing, I mean there was no kind of profanity, much less a steamy sex scene, well I have lived through the subsequent years and seen the decline of morality in America, which I'm not railing about, I don't care, if everyone wants to go see it, fine, go live in the cesspool if you want to, that's your privilege, but it is my duty as a pastor to tell you that God does not accept profanity, He does not accept Lord's sex scenes, He does not accept it, it is not acceptable, and He chastens us that we might be partakers of His holiness, so maybe if His hand is on you, and you go into one of these movies showing these things, which have a good storyline, maybe a historical storyline,

maybe something that is good, but it still has its profanity, and it still has its Lord's sex scenes, and you come out of there with hepatitis C, don't be surprised, capiche?

Now why does He chasten us, why do we suffer, why do we go through these things in life? Young people haven't experienced most of these, but some young people do, at two years of age, or three years of age, they have some dreadful cancer or something, and kids can go through things, kids can go through things, but God says, for our holiness, and that means we resist that which is unclean, and coming from unclean spirits, then He goes on to say that no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful later on, however it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace, now we're talking about the other arm, 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, in other words, if there's a real weak Christian or a non-Christian, sees you going into the movie, and the movie's unclean, he'll think to himself, he'll stumble, he'll figure out there's nothing to it, because worldly people know intuitively what is right and what is wrong, now I hope you know I said all this thing in love, if that will help, I'm really saying it out of a spirit of rejoicing, because I know it's for your good, and that you're going to go through it, if you stay with the Lord, and that He's going to make you righteous and holy, but I thought that this might give you some understanding, shall we stand?

Anyway, that's what the Lord put on my heart this morning, oh hallelujah and all that, Lord, just look up to the Lord right now, and ask Him in your heart, is that guy preaching the truth, or is he a crank, or what in the world? Lord, our God in heaven, and Lord how oft as the psalmist says, and Jeremiah said, and others, Lord you bring us down, Isaiah says we receive double for our sins, and Peter says that we endure fiery trials that are a judgment on us, so we might be saved, and Lord I know that we all need to grow in righteousness and holiness, I know you laid this on my heart this morning, that much I know Lord, and I'm sounding the trumpets by your grace, and I pray Lord that you will just enlighten each heart, that they may come to love your fire, just love it until they live in it, so that they cannot be hurt by the greatest fire, which is the second death, they can't be hurt by it, because they've learned to live in that holy fire, hallelujah, and I know Lord that you are looking for soldiers for your army, I'm ready to march in the army of the Lord, oh God help us, do not delay the program, Lord with the snares of this world, and sin, and Satan with all his you see this, everybody's doing it, all the Christians are doing it, I'm saved by grace, or whatever the blather is, to be with you Lord, in peace and purity, hallelujah, it's health to our bones, and sanity to our mind, praise your name Lord, wonderful, wonderful, while we're praying here, I'm going to ask the musicians to come, and maybe this morning something touched you, this is the place, and this is the time, and in Jesus name I invite you to come, and if you've been having a problem with some of these things, why don't you come, and ask the Lord to strengthen you, and to give you joy, I want you to have joy, you've got to serve the Lord with joy, and come into his presence with gladness, and I don't mean for these things that

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