

(Suffering in the Christian Life) 4. Suffering as Testing

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the glorious position of security of the child of God, and the call to sufferings as a mark of apostleship and a testimony to faith.

Duration: 56:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 4:9, 1 Corinthians 4:13, 2 Corinthians 11:23, 2 Timothy 1:8, Hebrews 1:8, Hebrews 2:10

Topics: "Testings"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the challenges and trials faced by the apostles and Christians. He emphasizes their role as fools for Christ's sake, contrasting their weakness with the strength and respect of some Christians. The preacher shares personal experiences of betrayal and the importance of relying on Jesus in difficult times. He then shifts the focus to Jesus himself, highlighting his sufferings and temptations as a qualification for his role as a merciful high priest. The sermon encourages listeners to find comfort in Jesus' understanding of their trials and to trust in his ability to help them overcome.

Transcript

Suffering in the Christian life. Before we go further and think about suffering and its meaning and its benefits, etc., etc., we must state one thing very clear and positively, and that is the glorious, unassailable position of security of the child of God. And that nothing touches him but what is permitted by divine foreordination.

I'm going to read you just a passage to sort of set at the head of what we shall say. Romans 8, 28, And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. To them, their loving God isn't so important as this.

To them who are called according to his purpose. You've been called according to his purpose, not according to the choice you made at a Billy Graham stadium, thank God for that day, but it must be up before that. According to his purpose, for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son.

Not merely to be conformed to go to heaven, but better to be conformed to the image of his son. The process is going to begin now, and it's going to be completed in glory. Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, and all of them bearing the family likeness of the son.

They're conformed to the image of his son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, then, in time, he also called. You can tell the story, but it began before that.

And whom he called, then, he also justified, declared the completely and utterly right with himself, although in themselves they may see themselves to be wrong in many matters, but if they confess them, they're as right as the blood of Jesus can make them. Whom he called, then, he also justified. And whom he justified, then, he also glorified.

In God's mind and purpose, you're in glory already. A lot goes between being justified and being glorified in the realm of time, but in God's purpose, you're utterly secure. What's that wonderful hymn? It talks about getting to heaven, more happy then, but not more secure than when glorified with him in heaven.

Then, whom he justified, then he also glorified. What shall we say to these things? Yes, when the times of darkness, suffering, whatever it may be, come upon us, what shall we say to these things? Are those things altered? No, not for a moment. If God before us, none can be against us, and we'll go through what he's permitted with that blessed assurance, God is not against me, the worst thing that I can ever suffer is never an indication that he's against me, or holding something against me.

The fact that he gave his son for me is the proof it's otherwise. Nothing then can give the lie to the fact that God's on my side, that he loves me, and everything is happening according to a beautiful purpose. And what God does is beautiful.

God is the happy God, the blessed God. He's got happy days ahead of us, and though your earthly days may not always be as happy as you like, they're only your earthly days, it's a little tiny portion of your existence. Those happy days that await us all in glory, when glorified with him in heaven.

So I think we need to lay that down, because as we talk about sufferings, you may lose sight of that fact, but this is the basis of everything. This is the confidence in which you and I are called to go through all sorts of things, even that final step. My brother wrote a book called *The Gentle Step*.

He's taken that gentle step, glorified with him in heaven. And these facts are facts right through that, and beyond indeed. God sees us already glorified with his son in heaven, and he's not going to leave you until he's done that which he has spoken to you of.

But there's a lot that takes place between being justified and being glorified. And it's very important, and when you're in the middle of it, it's certainly important and inescapable. There is perhaps no other in the Bible, in the New Testament, who suffered more than the Apostle Paul.

Have you ever regarded Paul as the great sufferer? There's only one greater, I think, almost, though it's difficult to compare, isn't it? Human with human, and that's the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And Jesus has sanctified and made glorious the path of suffering by choosing that path for himself. It is the way the master trod, should not the disciple tread it still.

And that way has been made glorious, he's chosen it for himself, he's sanctified it. And you're not going one step out of the way as you go through it. It is his way, and it was certainly the way of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul.

Indeed, he was told it was going to be so at the very beginning. If you turn to Acts 9, verse 16, we're reading where the Lord appears to Ananias in Damascus to tell him there's a man who's blind, groping, praying, it's Saul of Tarsus, the arch enemy of the Christians. But he's seen Jesus, but he doesn't know quite where he is.

He's got to be given the assurance of his salvation. And verse 15, Acts 9, verse 15, But the Lord said unto Ananias, Go thy way, he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And he certainly suffered them.

I'm surprised to discover that. I must confess, until I was engaged in thinking about this study, I never realised how great a sufferer was the Apostle Paul, and how like Jesus he was in all that he went through, the greatest sufferer of all. I tell you, you're left breathless when he does take time out to recite what he's been through.

Will you turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, 2 Corinthians chapter 11. Sometimes poor Paul has to do something he doesn't like to do. He has to defend himself and his ministry and his apostleship, not because he wanted respect due to himself, but because of the gospel that he was proclaiming.

And he couldn't bear to see that gospel diluted by any other false teachers. And therefore he has to go into bat, so to speak. It looks almost on his own behalf, he said, I've become a fool in glory.

I ought not to be saying this, but it's for your sakes I do it. And in verse 5, comparing himself with other teachers who were bringing another gospel and denigrating Paul's ministry, he says in verse 5, I suppose, I was not a wit behind the very chiefest apostles. And then he goes in verse 23 to tell us the marks of his apostleship, the marks that showed him to be God's man.

And he doesn't quote the number of important pastorates he's held, or the big great crusades he's conducted. He rather lists the whippings he's received as the marks of authentication of himself as apostle, of himself as a disciple of the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. I don't know if you've read it recently, but really it's a terrific list.

Look at verse 23, referring to the others that would challenge his great message of grace, he says, are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more. What shows that, Paul? Well, yes, listen. In labours, more abundant.

In stripes, above measure. In prisons, more frequent. Nobody was in and out of prison more frequently than Paul, apparently.

He excelled them all in the number of occasions when he was incarcerated. He was quite familiar with the inside of prisons. Indeed, the last we hear of Paul was in a Roman prison, and some of his greatest epistles were written from prison.

And he always introduced himself as the prisoner of the Lord, for you Gentiles, there wasn't much prison reform in those days, I imagine, and he went through it all. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes,

save one. They had a rule, if you were going to beat a criminal, have one little bit of mercy, don't go beyond thirty-nine stripes.

And so they kept to the rule, thirty-nine stripes. Thrice was I beaten with rods. We aren't told of all these incidents in the Acts.

Apparently much more happened than is recorded there. Once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, you didn't go by jet, they're not too comfortable, I can assure you.

Not because they're not beautiful, but there are too many people packed in these days. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, I'm a bad sailor. I'm glad I didn't have to do what Wesley Whitfield did, go across to America in a sailing boat.

And Paul did that often. In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, highwaymen. In perils by mine own countrymen, the Jews dodged his steps, they hated him because they felt he was giving something that made nothing of their religious privileges.

In perils by the Gentiles, as well as perils by the Jews. In perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren hardest to bear, people professed to be Christians but they were working against him. In weariness and painfulness, oh yes, he had his share of straight down the line sickness.

In watchings often, in hunger and thirst, he went without meals sometimes, there just wasn't the provisions. In fastings, necessary fastings often, I don't think he regarded sort of seasons of fasting for prayer as all that special. We do.

Oh, if you have a fast, you let it be quietly known. No, no, they would fast him because he just didn't have any food. In cold and nakedness, beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches, I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Oh, there are other places. Let me read you another passage where he lets us in on how it's been with him. Very easy, I find, to sort of slip over certain parts.

1 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 13, no, verse 9, chapter 4, 1 Corinthians 4, verse 9. For I think that God has set forth us, the apostles, last of all, as if we're appointed to death. We're made a spectacle unto the world, to angels, to men. We are fools, for Christ's sake, but you, some of you Christians, you're getting on and you're well respected, you're wise, not so us.

We are weak, but you are strong. The one to whom you owe everything, he never gets invited on to be a JP or something like that. Some of you have.

They wanted men of integrity. But the one to whom you owe so much, he's a tramp preacher to this day. Ye are honourable what we're despised, even unto this present hour.

We both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and of no certain dwelling place. A tramp preacher in very real deed, right to the end. And we labour.

We don't look even for support from the churches which we've founded. We labour, working with our own hands, being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we endure it.

Being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world and are the offscoring of all things unto this day. I write these things, not to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you, for though ye have many thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I begotten you through the gospel.

And if any of them were cherishing the hope of being important, if some of them were feeling hurt that they're being passed by, having this picture of the one who was their spiritual father in this state of nakedness, it'd shame them. He never had a mitre on his head. He never was called reverend.

He was never a bishop. And it's very interesting to see how in East Africa it worked out the same way. At first the revival was greatly despised and resisted and criticised by even church authorities.

But when eventually they wanted African clergy and especially African bishops, the only men of integrity capable of doing it, were to be found among the ranks of what are called the belocali, the saved ones, the revival brethren. And thus it was they came to positions of honour and leadership. But God's strategy was this, that the one whom he had used more than any other was never even ordained.

Indeed, he was turned out of the theological college, William Lagenda, now glorified with Jesus in heaven. And they recognised it, loved and honoured by all. And because of God's strategy, it made nothing of the high pretensions of the church or man.

And the very man who might be the archbishop probably owed his conversion to this one, who right to the end of his days was never given any position but loved and honoured nonetheless. And he didn't want it, he didn't need it. Exactly I see that to be the same with the Apostle Paul.

It helped them the better to pour contempt on all their pride and all the vain things that charmed men most. Yes, he was the great sufferer. And I want to turn you to another thing, another passage, 2 Timothy 1.8, 2 Timothy 1.8. And here he's talking to Timothy, his own child in the faith.

And of course you know where he's writing from. His address at the top of his letter was, dirty dungeon in a certain street in Rome. And from that place he writes to Timothy, who's at large still, very effective, a young man with a wonderful life of service ahead of him.

And he says in verse 8 of chapter 1, 2 Timothy 1.8, Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. Now, you may not be ashamed of Jesus, but you may not want to be identified with certain Christians that have been awfully criticized by some. Don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner.

Let the reproaches that have fallen on me, fall on you too. And then he goes on to say, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel.

And what we've read is almost entirely the afflictions of the gospel. I don't think all were afflictions of the gospel. Sounds where those that were common to humanity.

He suffered in the ordinary ways, very severe, but there were many a thing that suffered. He suffered because he was a preacher of the gospel. And he was willing to go to all lengths and hold nothing back to get that message out to the Gentiles for whom he felt he was a trustee.

God has put me in trust of the gospel for them, and as a trustee I go to all lengths. And he says to Timothy, be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. You might need that.

You might be called to service which is going to be costly. Young people may be called perhaps to forsake home, prospects and job, and go to distant parts and it's not going to be easy. There are dear children of God behind the iron curtain.

What's happening to them? They have become a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. And the extraordinary thing is this, that gospel is increasing and running, more there than here. Marvellous thing.

And Jesus doesn't scruple to send his dear ones into places of great suffering. He's been there himself. It costs him everything to bring the gospel to us.

And he doesn't scruple to ask his servants to suffer in like manner. You may not be called to such a thing, but there's plenty of scope to becoming a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. Even in our respectable society, this vile world is no friend to grace.

And you may well spoil your prospects, you may pull a point for promotion, because you do not pull the flag down. You stand for Christ and holiness and righteousness. This is the way the Master trod, this is the way Apostle Paul trod, should not we tread it still.

Now let me tell you what I'm getting to, because I'm working progressively through aspect after aspect as far as I can. We're thinking about suffering. Now the sort of sufferings that we've considered the Apostle Paul endured, again I say they weren't all directly associated with his testimony.

He had his times of sickness. There's a place, I ought to have found you the text, where he said, I despaired even of life. There was a time when he was so down, he despaired even of life, pain, straight forward sickness.

And it was the coming of Titus to him from another part that was such a cheer to him. All right then, what are these sufferings? What's the divine intention of them? Now we have already thought at length that some sufferings are to be regarded as the chastenings of the Lord. No child is without chastening, neither is there any saint that is without chastening either in circumstances or in body or because of his testimony, yes even persecution may be regarded as chastening and we don't want to waste our sorrows.

We want to suck honey out of the rock and get what blessings going for us. We've tried to talk about that already. Now, can we regard the sort of list of sufferings we've looked at as chastenings? No, I don't think so.

And they're not so called in scripture. In the New Testament they are so often called temptations. I was going to bring up my young and little concordance, it's a bit big.

I carry it with me round the world. I don't know if you're a preacher, you must get a young's analytical concordance in India paper so it isn't too heavy. My original young's was tremendous but in India paper it's possible and I just get it in for the prescribed limit of weight.

I'm talking about the airplanes. And there is every word of the Bible. Of course if you want this beautiful, beautiful, indispensable volume I'm afraid you'll have to go to the authorised version because no other version has got the equivalent of young's analytical concordance.

Anyhow, it will do you no harm. To become familiar with the authorised, I'm not suggesting you should discard whatever version is your favourite one, but never forsake forever the authorised. It's part of the English language for one thing.

You won't realise that turn of phrase where it comes from. That's a very small thing. There are other great advances but anyway it's good.

Just as in Switzerland they are bilingual, French and German, so the saint of God today in England needs to be bi-version. He's got a modern version but he also loves his old version too. I'm not suggesting, I'm trying to get you to persuade to change but don't forsake this great, very much a word-for-word translation.

It's a difficult bit too but anyway, this great young's analytical concordance which I nearly brought with me, it has every reference to tempt, the word tempt. Every reference to word temptation. And the different words in the original, then you can turn to the back and it'll give you that word and it'll say six times it's translated this, seven times it's translated that.

And by the time you've finished you end up with as good a knowledge, I feel almost, of Greek and Hebrew as those who've studied it. Now I am innocent of those two languages. I wish I hadn't done French and German at school.

I wish I had done Hebrew and Greek, though I don't think we did have a Hebrew teacher. And I never went to theological college. So you're very much favoured, those of you who've had the opportunity of learning those.

Anyway, there are these wonderful aids and even people like ourselves can acquire various sensual knowledge. This word temptation, there it is, lists it. And I want to tell you, when you look at the word temptation, it occurs more frequently in the authorised version than in the other versions, for reasons I'll mention in a moment.

You can see that the word temptation is used in a different way than we use the word in modern English. For us, temptation simply means solicitation to evil. That's right, isn't it? Solicitation to evil.

Only occasionally can the word translated temptation carry that meaning. There are certain texts which it can't mean solicitation to evil. And it's used in another sense.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction. And it's used in another sense.

The new versions, the RSV and the NIV, have changed it to another word. But not always. In fact, they've been a bit puzzled in which sense the word temptation is used.

Sometimes they use this other word, which is the word, what it really means. And others, they go back to the traditional word temptation. It really means trials, testings, troubles, sickness, opposition.

All of them spoken of as temptations. I only wish I had brought it up with me. I could have read off the text from you, where Paul says, you knew my tears and humility and temptations that were in my flesh.

What does he mean, temptations that were in my flesh? Trials, testings. And that is much more, and more frequently, the meaning of the Greek word translated temptation. It's trials.

For instance, you know the Lord's Prayer, lead us not into temptation. I've really been a bit puzzled about that. Would God lead me into temptation? And even the new versions have stuck to the old words.

But in the Church of England series 1, 2, 3 or 4, whatever it is, they have a modern English version of the Lord's Prayer and it says, lead us not to the hour of trial. Now, I thought it was a bit clumsy, what does it mean? But they're right. It's the word temptation, but there it's obviously used in the sense of testing.

Lead us not, spare me, Lord, testing. I'm so weak. If I was put in a place of testing, I might not be able to bear up under it.

And so this is the great thing. And I would say that the sufferings that the Apostle Paul went through could be called temptations. Indeed, he says, you know my temptation.

I could quote you place after place, where the word is in you, you know my trials, you know my testing. And so, not every suffering is to be regarded necessarily as a chastening. If you've got an open heart, God will show you.

I'm purpose your goal to refine. I purpose to get at something new in you. Go on then, Lord.

Let me cooperate. Let me say about anything you point to, oh God, you're right, I'm wrong. And the greater is my blessing.

On the other hand, there are many things, many sufferings that are not to be regarded necessarily always as chastenings, but rather as testings. Testings! You know my testings. Why, Jesus himself said, you are they which were with me in my temptations.

That wasn't solicitations to evil. I find it difficult to conceive of Jesus having a real temptation as we might understand it. There was nothing to which the devil could appeal.

But he was tested. You've seen what I've been through. You've heard my groaning in the garden.

You are they which have been with me in my testings. Yes, take the case of the Lord Jesus. There's the famous verse, Hebrews 2.18, for in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

He suffered being tempted. Does that mean he sweated it out? There was an awful solicitation to evil, to sexual impurity. Oh, what a suffering it was even to contemplate it.

I don't think that's the meaning. He himself suffered being tested. Being tested.

My, what tests! He's able also therefore, having gone that path himself, to succour you when you are tested, when you're wracked with pain, or when you are wrongly accused, whatever the suffering is, it's testing. In Hebrews 4.15 you have the same recurrence, 4.15 We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points, listen, tempted as we are, yet without sin. It means he was in all points tested as you are.

There's not a trial. There's not a sorrow. There's not a hurt.

But he went through it. And for that reason he's qualified to become that merciful, faithful high priest touched with the feeling of his infirmities. And it says yet without sin that might think as if it was a

solicitation to evil.

There are two ways in which that could be translated, sin apart, says one translation. Or it may mean that whereas these tests are not immediately in their character, solicitations to evil, they may in a sense become a solicitation to evil in this sense, that under those tests you may have self-pity. You may give in to self-pity or resentment or rebellion.

Not so him. I don't know which is the right and true interpretation of that scripture but this I know. He was tested in all points like as you are.

Oh, when the doctor gives that solemn verdict of his diagnosis and you begin to feel the symptom. This way went the crucified. He was tested.

And he's able to be with you in your hour of sorrow and difficulty and tempting. He had no certain dwelling place. The Apostle Paul comforted himself.

This way went the crucified. The birds of the air had dwellings but he had none and none of my law but hallelujah law we're in it together. This way went you and I'm willing to go in the same steps that you did.

Tested as we are. And then look at 1 Corinthians 10 13 to see another meaning. Of course you will find in the RSV and NIV that they have put trials where the AV puts temptation.

They're right but I believe there are some cases where they put temptation but I just wonder if it shouldn't have been trials there too. Yes, there are some places where the word is used, I must confess, as solicitation to evil. But the great majority of cases it's testings, testings.

And I've heard brethren talk about all sorts of what testings they've had. Yes, what a story. Yes, it may be physical illness, it may be lost, bereavements, all sorts of things, testings.

And I believe as I say that that is the case. Now take, look at 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13. This is how it reads in the authorised versions.

There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able but will with the temptation make a way to escape that you may be able to bear it. Now as it stands, I've never quite been able to understand that last phrase, that you may be able to bear it.

Is temptation, solicitation to evil, something you bear or something continually, conceivably? Dear old Joseph had to bear it. That woman who all the time was trying to tempt him to commit adultery. There's a rule.

It's a moment. It isn't necessarily something continuous. And therefore I don't think that we're being taught about how to handle solicitations to evil.

We're being taught to, something a little different, there hath no trial taken you but such as is common to man. This is part of life. Trials like you are enduring.

It's a comfort to know you're not being picked on as someone to endure something unusual. This is not unusual, whatever your trial is. It's a test that is common to man.

But God is faithful who will with the trial, will not suffer you to be tried above that you're able. Now that's nice. You're not going to be tried above what you can bear.

He says so. God's faithful. But he will with the trial make a way of escape.

Ah, blessed way of escape in the hour of trial. Back to Jesus. Back to my great high priest who suffered this and more for me.

Back to my high priest who's there in heaven for me, who's sending help from the sanctuary that I may be able to bear it. And so it is. Here's a whole classification of sufferings which cannot be classified as chastenings, but they should be classified as testings.

Now what is being tested? What is being tested? Well, several things. First and foremost, that which is being tested by God is your faith. 1 Peter 1 verse 6 tells us 1 Peter 1 verse 6 that the testing it talks about you being in heaviness through manifold temptations, through manifold trials.

They were having a hard time with the Christians of those days. That the trial of your what? Your loyalty? Not firstly. Your faith.

And in the hour of trial the front that the devil attacks on is always the faith front. He attacked me on my faith front. He gave me all sorts of mournful thoughts, I'd never get better.

My ministry was ended. Everything was over. And yet I saw all those promises of mercy.

I saw myself a child of God by eternal decree. And I had to take hold of that great truth summarized in that well-known couplet. Not a shaft can hit to the God of loves he fit.

But I was inclined to doubt it. I went down and the Lord had to minister me again and again on the faith front. You know when I got through to faith I felt better in the old body.

The old pelvis wasn't giving me so much trouble. And this is the great thing. And what God is allowing to be tested in you is your faith.

Your faith in his grace. Now that's important. Because the devil says you're not good enough.

And if you don't understand grace you'll be of all men most dejected. But grace is for those that aren't good enough. Therefore that is wrong.

And I've got to see that my very lacks, if I acknowledge them, are my qualification for that marvellous grace of our loving Lord. But it's a battle. And as I lay in bed, that was the battle.

On the faith front. The testing of your faith. The testing of my faith in the promise that all things do indeed work together for good.

To them that love God. To those who are called according to his purpose. Now this is what some sufferings are.

And it's in order that that faith in himself and in grace might grow. Because it says tribulation worketh endurance. Sticking it out.

Sometimes the suffering may be such as to encourage you to quit. Give up being a Christian. And the Lord has to minister to you on that front.

Cast not away your competence. Which has great recompense and reward. Go through it.

Not only is it physical, it can be something else. You could perhaps avoid much of it if you were prepared to compromise. Don't cast away your competence.

And you're being tested. These sorrows, these difficulties are so often to be regarded as being tested. In order that that faith might grow.

And in that coming day be found unto glory and honour. Now I want to suggest to you that your first reaction in any situation are not going to be the right ones. The first ones are not going to be the right ones.

Unless you're very unlike me, you're always going to react in the wrong way. But there's always this beautiful privilege of repentance. And I don't think, I can't see any saint of God going through a time of testing without much repenting.

Repenting of doubting. Repenting of fearing. Repenting of believing the worst.

For the devil always tells you the worst. Repenting of self-pity. Repenting of wishing for something other than what God has allowed.

This is the reason why it's so important. Don't waste your sorrows. Find in them occasion to get back into this right attitude again.

That's what they're designed for. They're testings. And they're not only testings of our faith.

What I might call, well, shall we call it brokenness. If the opposite to brokenness, if the brokenness can be defined as the bowed head, bowing your head to the will of God, unbrokenness is a stiff neck. Why should it happen to me? They shouldn't say those things.

You're not willing to bear it. You want to go into action. And the Lord says, I want you to be willing to bear it.

Sometimes I've had my mental arguments with people who've opposed me or criticised me or something like that. Can't think of anything in particular at the moment, but we've all had our share. And I've been arguing, lying in bed, and of course I win every argument.

And the Lord says, you don't need to repent of anything else, you need to repent of that attitude. And what the Lord has often said to me, he said, listen, if you can't take that, what else can you take? For there's plenty more coming. Come on, he said, you take it.

And oh, whatever that form of suffering is, it tested my willingness to bend my neck and accept it as the will of God. Something God, he didn't actually send positively, but he allowed it to come. I'm in the centre of a circle.

The circle is the will of God. And no matter how an incident begins, someone's malice, if it reaches me, it's passed through the circle of the will of God. If it hadn't been God's will, God wouldn't have allowed it to

penetrate it.

But if it's come, it's passed through God's permissive will. And I've got to accept it as such. And oh, you know, suffering is not so acute when we're prepared to accept it that way, as coming from a loving Heavenly Father.

You don't accept it that way to begin with. All right then, go back to that place to which you've been so often, that open fountain filled with blood, where sins are washed away, the sin of resentment or what anything else it may be. And I believe this is perhaps what God designs with our sufferings of various sorts.

My temptations, said Paul. My tears, my humility, my temptations, my trials. Oh, I had some hard ones.

It wasn't easy to have a dear Christian betray me and go back into the world. I felt like hitting his head off but oh, I couldn't do it with Jesus by my side. And it emerged, having learnt some new lessons.

How are you getting on with your trials? Are you still got a sting in your heart about this or that? Get it right this morning. There's a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's face. Sinners plunge beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.

Now I've got something a bit more, and it's a wet day, so we're not in a great hurry to get out into the sun. I want to turn our eyes supremely to Jesus himself. Turn to the epistle to the Hebrews.

Chapter 2 verse 10. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 10. It became him, or as in the other versions, it was fitting for him for whom are all things and through whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Ah, this is the realm where Jesus is unexcelled. Jesus is a peer in the realm of suffering, and he had to endure it in innumerable matters because otherwise he wouldn't have been adequate, fully equipped to be the file leader of our salvation and therefore he had to be made perfect or fully equipped to be the file leader, that's the Greek word there, of our salvation and it was only through suffering himself. It would be most unseemly for him to say, now you go that path and just watch us from afar.

There's no file leader of our salvation. He went that way himself. And it goes on in verse 17 to say, wherefore because he had to be made perfect adequately the captain of our salvation through suffering wherefore in all things he had to be made like unto his brethren in how many things did he have to be made like unto his brethren in all things? All their troubles, all their trials, all their humanities made like unto his brethren in order what? That he might be listen to this, a merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for the sins of the people for in that he himself suffered being tested, tempted, tried he is able to succour them that are tried.

I like that phrase, a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. He's merciful to you. He sees your misery and man he's going to fly to your relief again and again.

He's going to appear in that hour of suffering. He's going to comfort your poor old heart. He's going to speak as one who's gone that way himself to you.

And he is going to give you help from the sanctuary to bear what otherwise you couldn't. He's going to be a merciful high priest. He's attracted to misery.

He's drawn to it. Mercy is the misery and he's full of mercy and he knows what it is. But he's not only going to be a merciful high priest he's going to be a faithful one.

And the next chapter says who was faithful to him that appointed him as was Moses in all his house. Jesus is a faithful high priest. Who is Jesus faithful to? No, it's not saying he's faithful to you.

That's taken for granted. He's faithful to him that appointed him. God has appointed for you that you, that I, should have before his throne a high priest who's on our side who not only has suffered what we have suffered but he's borne what we have borne.

His powerful blood did once atone. But now he pleads before the throne he's merciful to you and he's faithful to God. In spite of all that may go wrong with you he's never going to break his appointment by the Father.

God's appointed that the feeblest saint is going to have a high priest who's going to spread his wounds and show his hands whose powerful blood is going to be enough for every last thing about which you can accuse yourself. In the process of your trial you may well fall. You may well go down at a terrible self-pity or hardness or resentment but as you confess it hallelujah I've got a high priest.

My name is Graven on his hands. My name is Graven on his heart. I know the world in heaven.

He stands. No tongue can bid me thence depart. And even in the times when I've got so low I've only got to acknowledge that fact being plain straight honest and I see it anticipated and finished in Jesus and his blood and his wounds at the blessed mercy seat pleading for me my feeble face looks up Jesus to thee and though Lord I've been anything but the saintly submissive Christian I should have been in this very situation I've had a strange peace and I'm right with God I've got God on my side I'm receiving help from the sanctuary and this is going to be the blessed privilege for all of us.

Oh yes this epistle does tell us that he suffered what we have suffered in chapter 5 verse 7 Who in the days of his flesh when he'd offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears and to him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared though he were a son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered he learned to bend his neck he had occasion to nevertheless not my will but thy and this one's going to be your high priest he's going to send you help from the sanctuary and where you get wrong and you be well do is the way back that powerful blood now pleads before the throne God looks upon that sprinkled blood it is your only plea and you cannot be more restored to God than that blood restores you when you say oh Lord I've been so wrong and so there it is and so there's another aspect then of suffering a very general one any form of suffering that's not been alluded to here in these meetings can be classified under this the testings which are common to man and very specially common to the saints and so you make your way singing as you go to glory and that will lead us onto our subject tomorrow glory and I also want to deal with another matter this question of what is called divine healing what's its place and what about the people who never get healed in the greatest stirrings of divine healing whereas all sorts of people get healed there are all sorts of people who don't and they've got no reason to be downcast as we shall see indeed glory is going to be a little sweeter for them than for others Amen let us pray Lord Jesus we hardly know what to say to thee except we're so comforted to know that before the throne of God above we have a strong a perfect tree a great high tree whose name is love whoever lives and prays for me Lord we want to thank you for this and oh may we have often frequent recourse to thee and may we often have course to praise thee for that powerful blood that powerful blood that's enough that it once atoned and now and now right to this day pleads before the

throne and Lord give us wonderful experiences of grace in whatever experiences of difficulty, trouble or sorrow we're in now or are called to go in in coming days and now may the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore Amen

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