

Why God Allows His Children to Suffer

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen explores the transformative power of the New Covenant and the importance of understanding suffering in the Christian life.

Duration: 58:08

Scripture: Romans 8:28, Ephesians 3:10, Hebrews 8:6, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:2-4, 1 John 2:6, 1 John 4:17

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "New Covenant Living"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, highlighting the need for believers to understand the shift in God's ways. It challenges Christians to grasp the truth that the Old Covenant has been abolished, leading to a defeated life for many who fail to realize the freedom and power of the New Covenant. The speaker delves into examples from the Bible, showcasing the struggles and victories of Old Testament figures compared to the suffering and obedience seen in New Testament saints, ultimately calling believers to a higher standard of living like Jesus.

Transcript

We've been thinking about understanding God's ways and we see that there's a lot of difference between the way God dealt with Israel in the Old Covenant and the way God deals with His people in the New Covenant. As I've traveled around different countries and met Christians in different denominations, I'm absolutely convinced that 95% of born-again believers don't have a clue that the Old Covenant was abolished and that we are in a New Covenant. And that's why their lives are so defeated.

That's why their lives are up and down. In the Old Testament, your life had to be up and down. Every Old Testament person was like that.

You know, Abraham would trust God sometimes and not trust God, then trust God. He would say that his wife is his sister and then he would repent of it and again go and say his wife is his sister a second time. Or Noah, wonderful work for God and then he would get drunk and lie naked in his tent.

Or David, man after God's own heart, would end up marrying eight wives and commit adultery with somebody else's wife and kill the husband and marry her. Elijah, great prophet, would go sit under a tree depressed and say, Lord, I'm fed up with my life. Take away my life.

It was like that with all those people. You read Jeremiah, one of the great prophets, and he would complain against God. Like saying you're like an unfaithful stream, oh God.

Imagine talking to God like that. And people go there to the Old Testament and find comfort for their defeat, for their depression, for their up and down life, for their failure by saying these great prophets were like that. That's what I say.

Ninety-five percent of believers don't know that we are in a new covenant. People turn to Hebrews chapter 11. I never get tired of saying this.

Hebrews 11 is called the great chapter of faith. And I say if you read Hebrews chapter 11, never forget that the most important verse is the last verse. You know what the last verse of Hebrews 11 is? All these wonderful men who live by faith, at the end of it, it says, but God has provided something better for us.

The book of Hebrews is one of the most unpopular books among believers. They hardly ever read it. And that's why, that shows their spiritual condition.

In Hebrews 5, he says that there's this strong meat we want to give you, but you're still drinking milk. The book of Hebrews is one of the books that's really gripped my life. I mean, if you have noticed in the 70-hour CD through the Bible, 70 hours to go through all 66 books, many of you have already heard that CD of mine.

I spent four of those 70 hours on Hebrews. It looks a bit disproportionate because it's a pretty small book, but it's one of the central books of the New Covenant in the New Testament, and I think about 12 or 13 times you find the word better, better, better, better. Here's one of those.

So don't read Hebrews chapter 11 and say, boy, I want to live like that. God has provided something better. And that something better is written in the next four verses.

Whenever you read the Bible, the two things I tell you, don't read fast, read slowly. Be more interested in the Bible going through you than you going through the Bible. You going through the Bible is knowledge.

The Bible going through you is life. Like in the garden of Eden, you have knowledge and life. You can go through the Bible 50 times and get the knowledge of good and evil, and it'll only bring death.

But if the Bible goes through you once, you'll get life. The Bible can be the tree of knowledge of good and evil to you or the tree of life. That depends on how you go at it.

You can go to it for knowledge, you can go to it to produce sermons, or you can go to it to let it go through you and bring life. And so when you read the Bible, don't read fast, read slowly. It doesn't matter if you take 50 years to go through the Bible once, but make sure that the Bible goes through you in that time.

The second thing is, remember that chapter divisions were made by men for convenience. So just, it may be convenient to read a chapter a day, but by the time you go tomorrow to the next chapter, you'll forget the connection. So very often, don't stop at the end of a chapter.

At least read the next three, four verses of the next chapter, then stop. Just a simple bit of advice. Many places you'll find, like John chapter 7 and chapter 8, there's a connection there.

Many other chapters, Matthew chapter 11 and chapter 12, there's a connection. After he spoke about, come to me and I'll give you rest, in the next chapter he speaks about the Sabbath, what he did on the Sabbath, there's a connection. And you'll miss that connection if you don't read continuously.

The same way here, God has provided something better for us. What is it? By faith, in the Old Testament, it is by faith, Enoch, by faith, Abraham, by faith, they all did external things. And then the last is, by faith, Jesus.

You miss that, if you don't see chapter 12 verses 1 to 4 as actually the last few verses of chapter 11. What is this better thing God has provided? He's shown us the way Jesus lived by faith, who never split the Red Sea, who never pulled down the walls of Jericho, who never did things like shutting the mouths of lions or destroying his enemies, but loved his enemies. The Old Testament people destroyed their enemies by faith.

Jesus loved his enemies. This is the better thing. You know that it's better to love your enemies than destroy them? I don't think many Christians have understood that.

If you're happy that your enemy is suffering, you're in the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant, you do not rejoice when your enemy falls. Even in the book of Proverbs it says, do not rejoice when your enemy falls.

So, what I'm saying is, it's not that the Old Testament is unimportant. We see God's dealings, but he was preparing people. We can say the Old Covenant was like kindergarten.

Is kindergarten unimportant? How can your child ever learn anything if he doesn't go to kindergarten and learn ABC and 1, 2, 3, 4? So we don't say the Old Testament is unimportant, but we must remember, like the difference between kindergarten and college is the difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant. Now, if you want, you can sit in kindergarten for 50 years. That's up to you.

But God wants you to move on to college. He's provided us something better. And the reason why, just like a person who sits in the kindergarten for 50 years won't know anything about geography or history or science or mathematics, a lot of believers are like that.

They're happy with ABC, and I know how to read, and that's good enough for me. But then there are other people who pressed on in the same period of time and got a Ph.D. spiritually, who come to a victorious life, and who can say, like the Apostle Paul, thanks be to God, who always, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, leads us in triumph in Christ, 2 Corinthians 2.14. Or like Paul can sit in a rotting Roman jail and say in Philippians 4.4, rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice, and sitting in a rotting Roman jail, not knowing when he'll be executed or released, he says be anxious for nothing. It's one thing to say be anxious for nothing when you're living in your comfortable house.

It's quite another thing to say be anxious for nothing when you're sitting in a prison waiting to be executed. That's when Paul wrote that letter. He was not like Elijah saying, oh, please take away my life.

Was Paul better than Elijah? I wouldn't compare the two. But Paul had resources that Elijah didn't have. He had the Holy Spirit within.

Elijah had the Holy Spirit upon him. All the Old Testament people had the Holy Spirit upon, because it says in John 7.39, the Holy Spirit was not given to dwell inside man until Jesus was glorified. That's why things can be better for us.

That's why I don't have to get depressed like Elijah. I don't have to commit adultery like David. And I don't have to go to the Old Testament to find comfort for any of my sins.

I don't have to behave like Abraham, who tells his wife, it doesn't matter if the king rapes you, but let him not kill me. Just say, you're my sister. And imagine a man allowing his wife to be raped to protect his own life.

He's a man of God. But you know, Abraham could have been a much better man than you and me, because he didn't have the Holy Spirit within. So don't find comfort in your telling lies by saying Abraham said or Rahab told lies.

Anybody who goes to the Bible to find comfort for his sin will find comfort for his sin. And God will allow him to be deceived because God sees this person is not interested in being saved from his sin. He's only interested in finding some excuse for his sin.

And you'll find a hundred excuses for your sin if you want to find it in the Bible. God himself will help you to find it because he sees that you are not interested in being saved from sin. God sent Jesus not to give us excuses for our sin.

He sent Jesus to save us from everything that is unchristlike, everything that is displeasing to God in our life. Do you think God is displeased with your being depressed and gloomy and your living up and down life? You accept it. And because you accept it, you live like that forever.

If a day comes in your life and say, I will not accept it because the Bible says I'm supposed to walk as Jesus walked on this earth. See two verses. Let me show you.

And I want you to keep that in mind. Always. First is one John chapter two.

A lot of you are new and many of these things you have said many times, but you have not heard it. And I want you to hear it. One John chapter two and verse six, anyone who says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same manner as he walked or as the living Bible says, anyone who says he's a Christian must live like Jesus Christ lived.

Just take that one sentence. How many of you can say that you have even tried to say, Lord, that's my goal. If it takes me 50 years to get there, I'm going to get there.

Do you, do you have a goal at least? I'm not saying you reach there overnight, but do you have a longing and saying, Lord, I want to get there. This is not a suggestion. Do you know that the Bible has got no suggestions, only commands.

If you say you're a Christian, you must live as Jesus lived. And one John chapter four says, verse 17, the last part, as Jesus is, so also are we in this world. Just think of that statement.

Read it slowly. As Jesus is, so am I in this world. That's why the devil is scared of me.

Is the devil scared of you? Before I ask you that question, let me ask you another question. Is the devil scared of Jesus? You have no doubt about that. The devil's scared of Jesus.

I think when he walked on this earth, the demons would say, Hey, he's coming. He's coming. Let's, let's be careful.

Now he's going to do something to us. It was scared of him. When he came to Galilee and the demons could all get all worked up.

The demons possessed man sitting in the synagogue for 30 years. The Pharisees preached all their boring sermons and the demon possessed person was not disturbed. But this moment Jesus came and opened his mouth in one sentence, that demon possessed person would get all worked up.

That's the difference. When Jesus came, the demons were scared. And it says, as Jesus is, so am I in this world.

You say, no, no, no. Well, according to your faith, be it unto you, you will not be like that. But think of some brother or sister.

Maybe it's somebody much younger than you who says, yes, I believe God's word. Not because of what I am, but because of what God is. He has said in his word, as Jesus is, so am I in this world.

I will be like that in this world. Demons will be scared of me. How many of you can believe that you can come to a life where the demons and the devil himself would be scared of you? Because this verse says, as Jesus is, so am I in this world.

But, you can't be as Jesus is if you don't surrender everything to him. I mean, if your goal in life is to make money and live for yourself and get honor and just get some honor in the church as an elder or some preacher or something like that, but your life is not totally committed, you're not totally surrendered, every area, all your money and possessions and ambitions and everything is not on the altar, then I tell you, you will not be like Jesus is in this world. There was a reason why the demons were scared of Jesus.

They knew that there was no area in his life which was not committed to his father. But when he looks at many of us, he knows all our private plans and ambitions and our love for this and our love for that in the world, and he says to you, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you? I know all about your private life. Think of the dishonor and disgrace we bring upon the name of Jesus Christ because we hold back something in our life from him, and you may not know till you reach eternity what you have missed on earth.

I often am gripped by this truth, Lord, I will never get another chance to live this life. I've got so, one life is so little, and do you realize that? Do you want to spend all this life in a wrong way? I mean, you may go to heaven, I don't want to just go to heaven. I want to go to heaven having pleased God in my entire life on earth.

That's how I want to go. I don't want to go just living for myself on this earth and somehow get to heaven at the end. I want to hear Jesus saying, well done, good and faithful servant.

I want to ask all of you, hundreds of people sitting here, do you really have that passion that Jesus will say to you when you enter the portals of glory, well done, good and faithful servant, or will you have to say, oh, you managed to make it here, is it? I never thought you'd make it. Is that what he's going to say to you? What do you want him to say to you? Oh, you scraped by and made it. And you see all those people there in heaven who sacrificed their lives and lived for him.

And I'll tell you, you'll feel ashamed of yourself. You'll have to go and sit in some corner when you see person after person after person who lived totally for God and how God could do something in their life.

And here you are seeking honor and position in the church or somewhere else, and there were areas in your life that were not surrendered, and you just try to give everybody the impression that you were very surrendered and very committed and very spiritual, but your life was up and down.

You never made an effort to make your home life godly. You blamed your wife. All the problem was with your wife.

She's not spiritual, and that's why you don't have a good home life. Or you blame your husband. He's not spiritual.

That's why you don't have a good home life. Instead of saying, if Jesus is with me, how can I ever let the devil come into my home? Do you think Jesus can, the devil can live in the same home? All these foolish preachers who say that a believer can have a demon. There are some people who believe that.

Can you imagine people believing that Jesus takes half of your heart and the devil takes half of your heart and Jesus says, okay, let's live together in peace with each other. I'm amazed that Christians can be so stupid to believe this type of preaching that a believer can have a demon. I'm absolutely amazed.

Or this other teaching that Christians can have a generational curse, that my great, great, great, great grandfather worshipped some idol and saw some curse comes down to me. Yes, it comes down to me if I'm not born again. Because once upon a time I was in the tree called Adam, and I was connected not only to my great grandfather, I was connected all the way to Adam.

The curse that came on him came on me too. But there was a day in my life when the Holy Spirit cut me off from that tree and placed me in another tree called Christ. Who's in my generation now? Not my father or grandfather, Jesus Christ.

Which curse is there now? He took my curse. But there are so many foolish believers who believe all these teachings that come from America of generational curses. And they say, how is this, how this particular believer had a generation curse? The guy was not born again.

He just said some magic words, Lord Jesus come into my heart. He never surrendered all his life to Christ. He remained in the tree called Adam.

And he said, Lord Jesus come into my heart. And he stayed there. He didn't surrender all his life to Christ.

That's why he's got a thousand generational curses. But show me a person who's really repented, cut off from Adam and surrendered to Christ. There is no curse.

There's no demon. There's nothing. It's only every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

That's our position. That's our birthright. Don't let the devil rob you.

God's ways are perfect. We need to understand that. And in the new covenant, there are certain things that God allows his children to go through.

Nothing that Jesus did not go through. Jesus is a forerunner. That's another title of Jesus which 95% of Christians don't know.

Forerunner. One who ran the same race in front of me. If he got depressed one day in his life, I'm permitted to be depressed one day in my life.

At least one day. Because I said Jesus was depressed one day in his life. He never was.

On the last day of his life, nine hours before his crucifixion, or a few hours before his crucifixion, he went around telling the disciples, I have so much joy in you, John 15. My joy I give unto you. Can you imagine if you're going to be hanged tomorrow morning, that you spend your day going around encouraging all the other believers around you? That is a true Christian.

That's the way of the Christian. He's not disturbed. So what if I'm going to be hanged tomorrow morning? Nothing can happen to me without the Lord's permission.

Are you disturbed? By what can happen tomorrow or the day after? Many of us are disturbed. What will happen to my children? What will happen to this person? Jesus was not disturbed about anything. When he said don't worry about tomorrow, just take care of today, that's how he lived.

Because he knew that his father would take care of tomorrow. And his father would never allow something to come tomorrow to him, which is too much for him to handle. We have so many wonderful promises in the Bible.

In the next 50 years, if I live that long, nothing can come to my life which I cannot handle. I believe that. There may be tough situations.

That's just like saying in the 10th standard, I get tougher examination paper than in the 1st standard. Do you want your children to get the same easy question paper in the 10th standard? That they get in the 1st standard? Then they will remain in 1st standard forever. If your child comes to you and say, Daddy, my question papers are getting tough this year compared to last year.

You say, son, that's good for you. Do you understand the same thing in the Christian life? That every year God gives me tougher tests? If you're failing the same old test you failed 20 years ago, you're getting angry just like you got angry 20 years ago. My brother, you're in the kindergarten.

When are you going to get out of it? I'm talking to you just like you would talk to your child who's sitting in the kindergarten for 20 years. You wouldn't hate him, but you say, Son, when are you going to leave the kindergarten? You've been sitting 20 years. Isn't that enough? And that's what the Lord says to you.

When are you going to get out of the kindergarten and get rid of your anger and your unforgiving spirit and your gossiping? These are all kindergarten lessons. When are you going to get rid of it? The Lord is greed. He'll never allow us to face something Jesus never faced.

But because we are sinned so much and there's such a tremendous temptation to pride in us, Jesus could get victory from day one. He wants to give us victory from day one, but he cannot give us victory. And I'll tell you why.

Because he sees that if he gave you victory from day one, you would get so proud that you'd look down at other believers. If many of you are honest, you have to admit that even though you don't have perfect victory in your life, you still look down on other believers. Isn't that right? I have met believers in our churches who have come out of Roman Catholic churches.

All they do is criticize the Roman Catholics and look down on the Roman Catholics. I don't agree with Roman Catholic doctrine. But I'll tell you, I don't look down on them.

Because Job 36.5 says, God is almighty, but he despises nobody. I don't despise the Muslims. I don't despise the atheists.

I don't despise the Hindus. Because almighty God, my father, despises nobody. I disagree with a lot of people, but I don't despise them.

If you despise a person, you need to be born again. You need to get another life. And if you say you are born again, you better check up your salvation.

Because your heavenly father despises nobody. Do you despise somebody because they don't understand the truth like you do? Do you despise somebody because they don't have victory like you do have on some area? That's why God has to allow us to fail and fail and fail and fail. Many people wonder, why is it I'm not getting victory over sin? This is one of God's ways.

God's ways is allowing us to fail 10,000 times or 100,000 times if necessary, until, when does he stop? He will stop when you are convinced that you can never get victory. Then he will give you the victory. I'll tell you my own experience.

I cannot count the number of times I failed after I believed that sin will not have dominion over me. I failed and failed and failed and failed, but I kept on saying, but sin will not have dominion over me. The devil would harass me and say, Ah, see you got angry again, and you did this again, and you had some bad thought again.

And I say, yes, I agree. But one of these days, I'll get victory. I will not be like this.

Sin will not have dominion over me. I kept on saying that for years, even when I was down in the dumps. And I know why God allowed me to fail and fail and fail and fail and bring me to rock bottom.

Do you know the result of that today in my life? Two wonderful results came as a result of that total failure in my life. One is, I don't even feel that I can get victory without the Lord's help every day. If grace is removed from me today, I can fall into adultery.

I can murder people. You may not think that I can ever do that. Let God take His grace away from me, and I will commit the most horrible sins.

I can be like Osama Bin Laden, a terrorist. I don't know whether you believe that. Do you believe that if the grace of God is taken away from your life, you could even be a suicide bomber or a terrorist? If you don't believe that, you have not yet come to rock bottom.

That's why you're still not getting victory over sin. I've already come there. But I came there through repeated failure, where I said, Lord, I cannot live this victory.

And even after knowing the Lord so many years, I know if God takes His grace away from me, I will get depressed tomorrow. I'll be discouraged and gloomy and in bad moods from morning till night. And I will stand here and I'll bore you.

In two minutes, I'll bore you. It's the grace of God, and I cannot take credit for it. That's the first result of failing and failing and failing and failing and failing.

That you can never imagine that you can do anything without the grace of God. Now theoretically, we all say that. But practically, we think we can do a lot of things without the grace of God, and I'll tell you why.

Because you have not failed enough. You need to fail some more. That's... God waits.

God waits till you come to a zero point where you say, Lord, I can do nothing. It's one of the greatest lessons that Jesus wanted to teach His disciples is in John 15, verse 5. Without me, you can do zero. Now you know the verse, but I don't think you know the reality.

That when the day comes in your life, when you realize this, not as John 15, verse 5 in scripture, but you know it in your life, without Christ, I can do zero. I cannot preach for one minute in the way God wants me to preach. Without Christ.

I cannot live even five minutes without lusting and hating and being bitter without Christ. Some of us may think, well, I've lived a pretty good life till now. Well, you've got to go a long way, brother, before you get victory over your sins.

You'll have secret sins that you'll never get victory over, which you can conveniently hide from other people and pretend that you're an overcomer. But you know in your life, you're defeated in your thoughts. And the reason is, you have not come to a zero point.

When you get victory over sin, let me tell you, even your health will become better. Doctors will tell you that disease, that if you're worried in your mind, that can give you ulcers in your stomach. Is there a connection between mind and stomach? There is.

Even a doctor will tell you that. That if you've got a bitterness and an unforgiving spirit against somebody, you can get arthritis, you can get migraine, you can get asthma. All these things, there's a connection between bitterness and asthma.

A doctor will tell you that. Unforgiving spirit can cause sicknesses in your body. It happened to me.

Many, many years ago, before I got married, I remember I had to go to a hospital for a little minor surgery. But in order to do that, they put me under anesthesia, general anesthesia. Well, a small little thing.

It was over and I came out. But a few days later, I found a severe pain down my hand, a very nerve type of pain. It just didn't seem to go.

Day and night. So I consulted a top neurosurgeon. I said, what do you think is the cause of this? And I told him, I had been through a little surgery.

He said, it's not a surgery, but during general anesthesia, when they lifted you from the table and put you on the bed or something, your neck may have twisted in some way. Because you were under anesthesia, you didn't feel any pain. If you were awake, you would have done something about it, but twisted in some way and something got happened here to that nerve or whatever it is.

And he says, it really can't be cured. You just got to live with it. I became so bitter against that doctor.

I was born again, but I had no understanding of victory. And I really wrote him a stinker of a letter. He was a believer.

Some of you think Brother Zach had victory from day one. No, I didn't. I was more defeated than you.

But this didn't get any better. Till the Lord one day said to me, forgive him. And you know the worst part of it is I was going to get married in a few months.

I said, Lord, I wrote to this doctor. I said, is this the wedding gift you've given me? This thing in my hand. You know you can write some really strong letters when you're not a Christian, when you don't behave like a Christian.

And the Lord said to me one day, forgive him. He didn't even do it deliberately. Even if he did it deliberately, you must forgive him.

I said, Lord, I forgive him. Doctors make mistakes. I was healed instantly.

Never had a pain more than 43 years. No pill, no injection, no surgery could have healed it. Forgiveness healed it.

Do you have some sickness? Try forgiving people. Stop criticizing those people of other religions and other denominations. You may get healed.

Forgive those people who did a lot of wrong to you and who speak evil about you. You may get healed. Those are God's ways.

We need to understand God's ways. Many years later, again, a doctor made a mistake with me. But this time I had learned my lesson.

Forgiveness was instant. No problem. I could love the person, forgive him, even if I have to live with that problem all my life.

It doesn't make any difference. Have you ever faced a situation where a doctor gave you the wrong medicine or treated you wrong or did some mistake in the surgery and because of that you are suffering? I want to ask you, do you love God? Well, then do you believe that God makes everything work for your good, even the mistakes that doctors make or the mistake that somebody else makes? Maybe you suffered because of somebody else's mistake in some way. I don't know what.

It could be a legal document or something, something was done wrong and because of that you are suffering. If you love God and you are called according to His purpose, it doesn't matter what another person does to you. It will work for your good and make you Christ-like.

But if you react in bitterness and unforgiveness, you'll become more like the devil, that's all. That's your choice. I decided years ago I want to be more like Jesus.

I've had enough years living like the devil. I don't want that anymore. I want to be more like Jesus.

I'm just telling you God's ways are forgive. Many of our prayers are not answered because we don't forgive. Many of our prayers are not answered because we blame somebody else.

All the problem in my home is because of my wife. Brother, you can keep saying that. You will not understand ABC of the New Covenant.

Learn to forgive. Learn to take the blame upon yourself. What is the difference between Adam and Christ? The Old Testament is the history of people who followed Adam.

The New Testament is the history of people who followed Jesus. I see this one big difference among many other differences. Adam committed a sin.

He opened his mouth and ate that fruit and he blamed his wife. He couldn't take the blame for his own sin. Those are the followers of Adam.

They blame others. Always. Look what that person did.

Look what the other person did. Look how this person treated me. Look what this person is saying about me.

It's all false. Look at this. Look at that.

Look at that. Look at the other thing. Of course, I'm holy.

I'm pure. That's Adam. How is it with Jesus? When he hung on the cross, he took the blame 100% for other people's sins.

He never sinned. He took the blame for other people's sins. That is New Covenant.

There was a great saint of God many years ago in Europe called Henry Susso. And just to help you get rid of your prejudice, he was a Roman Catholic. He was a godly man.

More godly than many Protestants and Charismatics and everybody else. He was a man who was He was a single man. He wanted to be like Jesus.

He prayed, Lord, make me like you. And he prayed more passionately than many CFC believers to want to be like Jesus. He was living in a street in one little house in an open street where house after house after house next to each other.

One day a woman came with a baby in her arms and knocked at the door. And Henry Susso opened it. He had never seen this woman in his life.

And she shouted out, Here is the fruit of your sin! And dumped the baby into his hands and went away. You know, she was some prostitute who wanted to get rid of her baby and thought the best person to dump it on is this saintly man who lives on that road. He will not complain.

But everybody in the street heard it. And they said, Aha! Now we know what this chap has been doing in secret. Giving us the impression that he's a very holy man and all that.

And this is what he did. He was shattered. His reputation was gone in a moment.

He took that baby and knelt down in his room and said, My lord, you know the truth. I don't even know who this woman is. I've never seen her in my life.

What shall I do? And listen to the word of Jesus. Do what I did. Suffer for the sins of others.

What a word! Suffer for the sins of others? By the way, that's a PhD class. Those in second standard, third standard won't understand it. Don't worry.

You won't be tempted like that. You don't get such tough question papers in second standard and third standard. When you get to PhD level, you'll get those things.

So don't think, don't be afraid that that will happen to you next week. But I tell you, if you want to get to the PhD level, this is part of the price you may have to pay. Where you get blamed for what somebody else did and the lord says, Shut your mouth.

He was blamed on the cross for other people's sins and he shut his mouth. He took it. That's the highest, almost the highest level of becoming like Jesus.

Most people don't want to get there because they're always justifying themselves. No, no, no, I didn't do that and this, that and the other. Jesus said about the Pharisees, You are those who justify yourselves before men.

But that is an abomination before God. Read that in Luke 16, 15. To justify yourself before men is an abomination to God.

That's because you want to prove that you're a holy person when you yourself know you're such a rotten old sinner inside. Well, he brought up that baby as if it was the fruit of his sin. Brought up that child and many years later that woman got convicted of her sin and came into that same street and proclaimed to everybody I had told a lie.

That's not his child. But God had accomplished in Suso what he wanted. In those years he had made him like Jesus.

And that had been his prayer before the woman came to his door. Oh Lord, make me like Jesus. So when you start praying that prayer be careful.

Do you really want to be like Jesus? Do you really want to take the blame for the sins of others? Be careful what you're praying. What you mean is I want to walk on the water and I want to feed the 5000 with 5 loaves and those type of things. No.

You want his ministry but you don't want his life. But you don't realize the ministry comes out of the life in the New Testament. In the Old Testament you could have ministry without life like Samson.

The guy could live in adultery and have a fantastic ministry. Not a ministry of changing souls but a ministry of killing lions and philistines. I don't want to kill lions and philistines in any case.

I want to change souls. Jesus didn't come to kill lions and philistines and if you want the ministry of killing doing external things that's you can be like Old Testament people but Jesus had the ministry of changing people and for that we have to suffer. See Hebrews in chapter 5. If you want to understand God's ways look at Jesus.

He's always our example. In the Old Testament they never had an example. They only had commandments.

But in the New Testament we have an example. Hebrews chapter 5. We read here about Jesus. An amazing word.

See if you can understand it. Because I'll tell you why I say see whether you can understand it because it says in verse 11 we've got a lot to say about Jesus in this matter but it's very difficult to explain because you become dull of hearing. You're dull of hearing because you don't want to go the way of suffering and self-denial.

But try and understand this verse. Verse 8. Although he was a son he learned obedience from the things which he suffered. You know there are two types of commandments.

Commandments in which we don't have to suffer to obey and commandments which you have to suffer to obey. Let me give you an example. When you break bread and drink the cup there's a commandment which says do this in remembrance of me.

You find it a great suffering when you come to the Lord's table on a Sunday and take part in the bread and the cup. No suffering at all. It's enjoyable thoroughly.

That's why a lot of people who don't come for other meetings come for the breaking of bread. But there are other commands which involve suffering. That guy who has destroyed your testimony and robbed you of your family property forgive him.

Love him. That requires a little bit of suffering. It's like children.

There are commands which are easy for them to obey. Like you tell your child come on eat up that ice cream. Is that a difficult command for children to obey? Or eat up that chocolate quickly.

They'll be delighted to obey it. They'll say I'll obey some more mommy. But when that child is playing cricket outside and say come come come here I want you to do some work.

Then obedience is difficult. There are commands in scripture that are easy to obey like eat the ice cream eat the chocolate. And there are other commands which cause us inconvenience.

And if you carefully honestly examine your life you may discover that you're only obeying those chocolate ice cream type of commands. You say I'm obeying the Lord. And you've conveniently left out the other commands which require self-denial and suffering.

And that is the reason why we remain in kindergarten or first standard all our life. Because you always want easy question papers. I like question papers which just ask me questions like how much is 2 plus 2 and how much is 4 plus 4. Mommy I like such question papers.

I don't want all these tough things like trigonometry and geometry and algebra and all that. I like these. You take that attitude to the Christian life you'll always be in the kindergarten.

You'll never progress. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered even though he was a son. Now in the Old Testament people suffered if you were disobeying God.

That's what God told Israel. If you disobey me I'll give you this suffering that suffering the other suffering. Your enemies will overpower you they'll kill you.

But if you obey me you will kill your enemies. Let's come to the New Testament. Jesus was perfectly obedient and his enemies killed him.

Paul was obedient and his enemies chopped off his head. Peter was obedient and they crucified him. And like that with all the apostles Thomas came to India and he was obedient to God.

Imagine coming to India to a heathen country all by yourself to preach the gospel with the supernatural power of God and establishing a church down in Kerala that has lasted for 2,000 years. Can you imagine that? There are Christians today in Kerala whose ancestry goes all the way back to the first century down to the first person whom Thomas converted. But the man was killed finally.

He tried to preach here and there and down he went to Chennai finally and they speared him to death. All the apostles were like that but it wasn't like that with these Old Testament saints. Elijah was just taken up to heaven with chariots.

The New Testament is different. Jesus was crucified. Why does God allow his greatest saints to suffer? Even old people I've heard that in the second century there's one of the disciples of the Apostle John who was the elder brother in the church of Smyrna.

His name was Polycarp. He was converted when he was four years old and he spent many years with the Apostle John. And when he was about 90 years old the Roman people who ruled the country sent to capture him because he refused to bow down to Caesar and refused to say that Caesar is Lord and was bringing people to Christ.

And they went to capture him and he was so gracious and nice to the people who came to capture him they felt almost ashamed to capture this old white haired man white bearded man. And they said sorry we got to do it. We don't feel like doing it but we got to take you because our boss told you to.

And they brought him before the ruler the Roman ruler and he said listen I don't want to kill you. Just say Caesar is Lord and deny Christ and I'll let you go. Just say the words.

Just say the words. It's enough. You can live as you like.

You know his testimony was 86 years I have served my savior and he has only done me good. How can I deny him? You can do what you like. Jesus Christ is Lord.

They burnt him. Why does God allow? In the Old Testament when they put them in the fire Daniel's friends they came out without any smell of fire even on their hair. But in the New Testament they are put into the fire they get burnt.

In the Old Testament Daniel was thrown into the lion's den the lions wouldn't touch him. He was hale and hearty playing around with the lions those hungry lions. The next morning he comes out and the king was so angry with the people King Darius with the people who criticized him that they said hey this is a man of God I'll throw you into the lion's den and you know what it says there? As they were thrown down before they reached the ground the lions caught them in the air itself and ate them up.

They couldn't touch Daniel but when Christians were thrown to the lions in the 2nd century and 3rd century you know what happened? The lions ate them up. Not a single Christian escaped like Daniel. They would sing praises to God and the lions would eat them up and that would speak to the heart of some Romans

sitting there in the stadium watching this convicted he would say I'm also a Christian and they would throw him also to the lions and the lions would eat them up.

Why did God allow that? Why did God allow his early apostles to be treated like that? Why did God allow Wachmanee to be imprisoned for 22 years the most faithful servant of God in China at that time? You need to understand God's ways. God's ways are not our ways. He wants to demonstrate you know one of the things it says in Ephesians is Ephesians chapter 3 I don't know whether you have read this verse God how does God reveal his wisdom to the angels? That's the question.

God's got such a lot of wisdom many colored many sided wisdom and he doesn't make the angels sit down in a class and say let me explain my wisdom to you angels. Listen to me. No.

Listen to this verse. Verse 10 The manifold wisdom of God manifold means many sided. It's like many many aspects of God's wisdom is made known to the rulers and authorities as the angels and powers and the heavenlies including the bad ones and the good ones through the church.

It's through the church that God is revealing his fantastic wisdom to the devil his demons to the angels in heaven. Like God says come Michael I'll show you my wisdom. Look at that servant of God mine down of mine over there.

See how he's being ill treated? See how they all tell lies about him and slander him and spit on him and see how he loves them? That's my wisdom Michael. And Michael says Lord what about that other believer who's complaining and grumbling all the time even with a small little mosquito bite? Well he is ignorant Michael. He doesn't know my wisdom.

What about you? Can God show you to Michael and Gabriel and say look at that child of mine. The manifold wisdom of God this is new covenant life I consider it a tremendous honor if God uses me as a teacher for Michael the Archangel. You know the angel Michael the Archangel never goes through the suffering that we go through as believers.

And it's also a testimony to the devil like he pointed out Job but the sad thing is God could not continuously point out Job to Satan. In the first chapter he could. And in the second chapter he says see you killed his children Satan.

I allowed you to do it. You took away his property and see he's still holding fast to his integrity. And the devil says I know what men love more than anything else.

They love their own life more than even their children and their property. Touch his body and let's see whether he stops complaining. Whether he doesn't complain and and God said okay go ahead.

And initially Job said this is wonderful but afterwards he started complaining in the book of Job and it's not written there but I can imagine the devil going to God and saying God didn't I tell you didn't I tell you that Job would not remain the same. See how he's complaining. See how he's saying criticizing you.

God could not hold up Job except at the end in the last he said oh Lord I'm sorry I take back everything. Then he could point out Job again. But now in the new covenant do you want to be like Job? That the devil can God can point you out to the devil one day but not the next day? Like the devil can point you out and say see how sweetly she lives with her difficult husband? And the devil says wait till tomorrow I'll just cause a little problem there and let's see how sweet she is.

And the next day she's not so sweet to her difficult husband. And the devil says to God see I told you. I just pinch her a little bit and she's complaining.

Where can God find people whom he can point out to Gabriel and Michael and Satan and everybody? Do what you like to him. Do what you like to her. And you'll see that they'll behave like Jesus Christ.

Boy when it says the father is looking for worshippers that's what it means. This is what it means to be a worshipper. Worship is not singing praises on in Sunday morning.

That's praise and thanksgiving. Worship is something completely different. I told you yesterday Job worshipped when he lost everything.

He's the first worshipper in the Bible. That's worship. Not singing songs comfortably sitting in a chair or standing and raising hands and with all these different parts they sing with.

That's just praise. It's good singing but it's not worship. Worship is when you go through suffering and trial and misunderstanding and all types of problems and you say God you are right.

I praise you. Everything God is on his throne and everything is okay. Consistently every day till the end of your life.

They say that watchman me after 22 years in jail and the communists tried to brainwash him like anything at the end of 22 years he was saying my heart is full of the joy of the Lord. That's a testimony. That God could say look at that man my servant and the devil says let me try.

Let me put him in a communist prison and brainwash him and let's see. God says go ahead try it. Put him, put him.

One more year Lord let me try it out one more year one more year another 20 years one more year one more year two years two years till the end he was praising the Lord and God could say to Satan did you succeed with him? Did you succeed with watchman? No. He died praising the Lord. What a testimony that was.

We wonder why does God allow these people to go into these prisons? Because he is manifesting his wisdom. When Peter was being crucified he said to the people I am an unworthy sinner I don't deserve to be crucified like my savior was. Please turn the cross upside down.

So they put the cross upside down and hung Peter upside down because he didn't feel he was worthy to be like Jesus hanging on a cross erect. And that God could look at the devil and say did you succeed with Peter? Yes you succeeded with him years ago before he was filled with the spirit. You made him deny me three times I know that but now have you seen him now the last 35 years? See how he is willing to die for me? The manifold wisdom of God.

You have a little problem in your life and you think that's a big problem. It's a mosquito bite compared to what the apostles went through. What a lot of feeling sorry for ourselves we are.

Let me give you a verse from scripture to follow Jesus and say to people don't weep for me weep for yourselves. We sang a song just now I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene. There is one line one or two lines in that song that speak to me many times.

He had no tears for his own griefs but sweat drops of blood for mine. Jesus had no tears for his own griefs and sorrows but he had sweat drops of blood for my griefs and sorrows. And every time I sing that song the Lord tells me do you want to follow me you got to be like that.

You must have no tears for your own sorrows and griefs. I may not have sweat drops of blood but tears and heartaches for the sorrows of other people. I say Lord many years ago I said Lord I want to be like that and I can say before God I've had no tears for my griefs or sorrows for many many many years.

I have no complaints against anybody. Everybody in the world is working for my good. How can you complain that everybody is working for your good? I mean even if you have ten people in Bangalore working for your good you'll be happy.

I've got seven billion people in the world working for my good. Did you know that? If you don't know it go to Romans 8 28. It's written there.

Only because of one reason I love God. I have no ambition in my life. God is my witness.

I have no ambition in my life except to fulfill God's will and build this church on the earth. No other ambition. Zero.

And therefore because I love God and I'm called according to his purpose all seven billion people in the world and not only they all the billions of demons in the heavenly place are also working for my good. They try to harm me but they make me more like Jesus. What a life! As Jesus is so are we in this world.

This is new covenant life. I invite all of you welcome to the party. Come up higher.

Don't live in that low kindergarten anymore. Let's pray. Let's bow our heads before God and say Lord will you just pray one prayer Lord I want your very best in my one earthly life.

I don't want to waste this one earthly life. I want to follow Jesus and I want to follow every godly example like Paul, Peter, Polycarp, John and any other living saints you have met who are following in Jesus' footsteps. Lord I want to follow them like they follow Christ.

I realize now that's the only life worth living on this earth. No tears for my own sorrows and griefs. Did people speak evil of you? Do you believe God is almighty to make it work for your good? Then give thanks for it instead of complaining oh somebody spoke evil of me.

Did somebody do harm to you? Do you believe that God is almighty to make it work for your good? Stop shedding tears then but praise God with a cheerful heart and a cheerful face. God is on the throne. He is making everything work for my good and He is making me and teaching lessons to the angels through my life.

Say Lord I'm sorry for all the times when you could not teach the angels a lesson through my life. I failed but it's not going to be like that anymore. Fill me with the Holy Spirit so that your wisdom can be manifested through my life.

Heavenly Father thank you. I believe there are a number of people here who have been gripped today and whose lives will no longer be the same. Thank you.

In Jesus name. Amen.

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