

## The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.13

This evening we will continue in a series on suffering. And I am excited to do so!

It would be strange to be excited about this series if it were not for the *deep* and *profound* revelation the Lord has given us!

We can be excited to talk about suffering, not because we are some sick, twisted and deranged people, who get some kind of kick out of being sorrowful!

Instead, we can and should be excited about suffering because we *know* God, who He is to us AND we *KNOW* what He is accomplishing in and through our trials!

And what God is doing in this series is giving us, “suffering-proof” faith!

Another way to say this is that God is producing within us a *stubborn faith!*

- A faith that *refuses* to bend or break beneath the weight of a trial!
- A faith that *refuses* to doubt God, but insteads sees Him as the good and great God that He is!
- A faith that is *resolved* to give glory to God in the midst of the storm!
- A faith that *is not afraid* nor avoids trials!
- A faith that *does not flinch* in the face of suffering!

This is what God is doing, but you only get this when you make it your aim to *know* God and to *know* what He has revealed in His word!

You must know that God is sovereign!

That He has complete, thorough, total, absolute, comprehensive, unfiltered, unmixed, full, control over all things, including suffering.

This means that if suffering is occurring it is happening under the direct oversight and supervision of God!

Remember the new words the Lord gave us to think about this which were *Assigned* and *Administered*!

Suffering is assigned by God and administered by Him.

By assigned, I mean, that God purposefully, strategically and directly picks and plans the suffering you will endure.

Your trial comes as a result of God deliberately deciding and determining when you will suffer, how you will suffer, the duration of your suffering, the intent of your suffering and the extent of your suffer!

This then means that there is no element of your suffering that is not touched by God!

So, whatever happens to you as a result of your trial was supposed to happen!

That's what I mean by God assigning your trial!

And by Administers, I mean He enforces the suffering.

He stands over your trial; seeing to it that the weight and measure of your trial is brought to its completion.

I mean, in a real way, that God signs His name on the dotted line of your suffering!

Your suffering is backed by His authority! (Let that percolate in you mind for a moment.)

This means that God is the Doctor with the scalpel doing the operation.

Certainly there are other things and people God uses, but all of it has the divine signature!

This is what is meant by God administers your suffering!

Now, I have to take a moment and give space to those who have suffered brutal things at the hands of people.

As your brother, I am sorrowful for some of the things some of you had to endure!

The trauma, the pain, the sorrow, the agony, the grief, the anguish, the travail, the hurt that you experienced is real.

And I do not want to dismiss nor ignore the fact that some of you have suffered greatly!

Yes, the trials you experienced were severe trials of affliction.

Some of which I am sure you are still trying to get over and have been for years!

AND yet you, yes you, need to hear and understand that the suffering you endure was assigned and administered to you by God!

Of course, God is not responsible for the sins of people, HOWEVER that does not deny that God *can* and *does* direct sin to accomplish His will!

(And if you think this is some crazy nonsense, there are a couple of examples that make this clear.

**Remember Joseph.** Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery.

What is Joseph's conclusion of the matter, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good!"

Slow down and listen to it again, “As for you, you meant evil against me [this means that the brother conspired against Joseph. Catch this: the *planned, purposed, determined and intended*]evil, but God meant it for good”

What is the “it” in the passage? Please do miss this: It is the *planned, purposed, determined and intended* evil of the brothers!

What they meant for evil, God meant for good!

God then, assigned and administered that trial for Joseph.

If you still are struggling with the thought of this...

**Remember Jesus.** The greatest injustice in all the universe was the murder of the Lord Jesus.

Please do not fail to remember that Jesus was executed!

Do not fail to remember that Jesus was *unjustly* executed!)

And although God is not responsible for the sin of the executioners, He certainly used their sin to accomplish our salvation!!)

So, yes, God *can* and *does* use sin to accomplish His purpose!

We cannot deny this reality.

To do so would be to deny and reject what is clearly revealed in Scripture!

I must remind you, what I am telling you is not an uncommunicated reality!

It is not as if God has hid the reality of suffering and how He uses it in some obscure, hard to explain passage of scripture!

He has made this abundantly clear!

Get this point: The more we feast upon the reality of suffering, the more God will make this truth clearer to us!

And by God making it clearer, we are being positioned to bring the Lord maximum glory when we enter into a valley of deep darkness.

TRANSITION:

As we have been considering the subject of suffering and suffering unto the glory of God we have been examining the life of our elder brother and Lord, Jesus.

The reason for this is because not only did Jesus suffer, but we are told that how He suffered provides an example to us on how we are to suffer and therefore bring God glory!

This truth is revealed in 1 Peter 2:21, where Peter writes “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”

So, this bears repeating:

**The degree to which you look at Jesus and follow the example of how He suffered will be the degree to which you will glorify God in the midst of your suffering! (2x)**

Because what we know is this: There is no one who brought more glory to God in their lives than the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, if we pattern how we suffer after the one who is the perfect sufferer we cannot do anything but bring God glory.

Let us then, turn again, to the greatest moment of suffering outside of the cross for our Lord Jesus. (Turn to Matthew 26:36 read ),

As we looked at this passage over the last few weeks, there have been several insights that we gleaned.

**Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)**

**Insight #2: You must Not Suffer in Isolation.” (v. 38)**

**Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)**

**Insight #4: You Must Make Your Requests Known to God (v. 39, 42, 44)**

Just by way of review:

**Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)**

This insight revealed that the starting place for rightly engaging a trial is being honest and aware about how the trial is effecting you emotionally.

The reason this is so important is because casting our cares upon the is essential if we are going to endure a trial successfully.

The suppression of emotion is not godly, in fact, as we discovered, suppressing emotions is actually arrogant.

We are called to humble ourselves by casting our cares upon the Lord.

And you cannot cast if you are not honest about where you are emotionally and you are suppressing those emotions!

Again, by way of reminder, there is nothing wrong with confession the true state and condition of your heart and mind!

It is not you being faithless, instead you are dealing honestly with the God given emotions you have!

## **Insight #2: You must Not Suffer in Isolation.” (v. 38)**

This insight revealed the central importance of suffering or enduring trials within the context and confines of the body of believers!

God intentionally created His people to be an interdependent people, who thrive within the fellowship of the saints!

So, a purposeful isolated Christian is a contradiction in terms!

To be a Christian means you are adopted into a family where the term “isolation” is a foreign and unwelcomed concept and reality!

Yet, as we examined before, if you want to add sorrow to your trial, endeavor to suffer through your trial alone and you will certainly do that!

Remember we talked about the three parts of the trial:

1. The trial
2. Your feelings about the trial
3. And how you handle the trial

If you want to add weight to the trial, determine to not express your emotion and suffer in isolation and you certainly will do that!

But because I know you do not want to do that it is imperative that you have honest assessment of your emotion state and that you do not suffer in isolation.

## **Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)**

Reminded us of the fact that we must suffer “Corem Deo.”

We must suffer in the presence of God!

We must suffer as it were with our faces toward God and not with our backs toward Him!

We must always remember that suffering is never neutral or both and, it always either or...

Either you are suffering with your face toward God OR you are suffering with your back toward God!

You must direct your suffering to God!

**Insight #4: You Must Make Your Requests Known to God (v. 39, 42, 44)**

This insight reminded us of our need to pray to our Father!

And we pray we are to be direct and persistent!

We are to be specific with our request and it is ok to be consistent with our request!

We see this with the Lord!

He is specific: "Let this cup pass for me..."

He is persistent: "He prayed three times..."

So, in our suffering we must make our request made known to God!

The fifth insight we are going to consider this evening is this:

**Insight #5: You Must Prioritize God's will Over Your Own (vv. 39, 42 and 44)**

We see this in Jesus by the way He prays! (read)

We see Jesus more preoccupied and concerned about the will of God being accomplished than He is about His personal comfort!

He was so locked in on God's plans and purposes being fulfilled that concern for Himself is removed!



Remember that a few moments ago in the passage Jesus was just saying that He was sorrowful unto death and now we see Him praying, “Not my will but as you will!”

Now, please catch the force of this: Jesus was so preoccupied with bringing God glory by accomplishing His will, He said in effect,

- **“If my pain results in your praise, give me pain!”**
- **“If my grief results in your glory, give me grief!”**
- **“If my sorrow results in salvation, give me sorrow!”**
- **“If my death results in you being exalted, give me death!”**

He says, “not my will, but your will be done!”

Beloved, in order for you to pray this you must believe that **God’s plan for your pain is better for you than your comfort!**

For you to pray this you must be thoroughly convinced that **God’s plan for your agony is better for you than your relief!**

To say it another one: To pray this, you must believe that God’s plans for your suffering is not only better for you, but that it is best for you!! (2x)

You must be decidedly clear on who or what means the most to you!

You or the glory of God!

To pray this, you must love God and His glory more than your personal preferences!

You must decidedly consider God as more significant than yourself!

And this is exactly what Jesus did!

This the significance of Philippians 2;3–8

**3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup> **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>[b]</sup> **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,<sup>[c]</sup> being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Listen: Jesus is the only man who loved the Lord His God with all His heart, soul, mind and strength!

And please hear this:

- **This love caused Jesus to embrace sorrow**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace agony,**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace pain,**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace discomfort,**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace scorn,**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace rejection**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace grief,**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace misery,**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace affliction,**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace heartache**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace suffering**
- **This love caused Jesus to embrace death!!**

And when you and I to get to the place where we love God this way, we will say, with tear filled eyes,

- “Come in Suffering, be a welcome guest!”
- “Come in Trial, be a welcome guest!”
- “Come in Misery, be a welcome guest!”

In other words, when we love God this deep, we will never reject His plans for our suffering, but instead willingly embrace it!!

You will, like our Lord Jesus say, “not my will, but you will be done!”

Let’s pray!