

The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.14

As a younger man, when I first became a parent I was disciplined to discipline my children under what I call “a one and done” method of parenting.

The “one and done” method of parenting is when you tell your child to do something once and if swift, immediate and joyful obedience is not forthcoming that will in the child receiving the rod.

To some, this makes sense. I mean, after all, if a child doesn't do what you tell them to do then that is sin and sin needs to be disciplined!

I was following this way of parenting until the Lord showed me that that is not how He Fathers us (or, if you like, that's not how He Shepherds us.)

Before discipline comes God is pleased to warn, correct, instruct, teach, counsel, counsel some more, teach some more, instruct some more, correct some more and warn some more!

In other words, when the Lord desires to get your attention and help you get a lesson, He will tell you repeat it until you are where He wants you to be.

A flowing stream will, over time, smooth out the rough and sharp edge of rocks!

In like fashion, God's repeated instruction is like a constant, flowing stream that over time makes the sharp and rough edges of your life and theology smooth.

What's the point of this introduction, you ask?

The point is this: We have been learning, developing and examining theology of suffering for two months now.

God has been pleased to have this subject on repeat!

Beloved, pleased, I encourage you, do not tune out and think that you do need to hear this and that you know everything that needs to be known.

Because one of the dangers places to be is to be in a place of presumption, where you assume things and are not certain things.

In this series God is making you certain you can answer the questions we started out this series with, “Who He is God?” and who is God to Me?”

That was a brief introduction to hopefully provide focus!

Now, last few weeks we have been examine the life of Lord Jesus as He endured imaginable suffering!

We are told in 2 Peter 2:21 that Jesus left for us an example that we should follow in His footsteps!

So, God, being full of grace, mercy and love sent Jesus not only to be a Savior who suffered, but and example to follow!

Jesus’ suffering not only saves your soul, but also instructs your life!

So, we have been taking our time considering the life of our Lord and studying how He suffered, so that we may indeed follow in His footsteps and thereby bring glory to God!!

Because that’s what this is all about, honoring God and bringing Him maximum glory!

(If you have your copy of God’s word...Matthew 26:36) (READ)

The Lord has been pleased to reveal some insights from the suffering of Jesus that teaches us how we should suffer when we enter into a valley of deep darkness!

So far, we have looked at **5 Insights.**

They were:

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)

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

Review:

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

This insight instructed us to deal truthfully with what and how we are feeling in the midst of trials!

But to take it a step further, we must not only know what and how we are feeling, we are to confess those feelings.

This is what God commands us to do by casting our cares on Him.

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

This insight instructed us on the importance of not suffering in the valley alone.

As creatures made in the image of God, we are created to live within a community!

To have close fellowship with other

(Even God lives within a community and has close fellowship in the Godhead.)

So, when you suffer in isolation you are cutting against the grain of your humanity, thereby torturing your soul and adding to the suffering you are enduring.

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

This insight instructed us on the necessity of suffering “*Corem Deo*” (suffering that is forward facing to God!)

We said that we are to suffer with our faces toward God, not our backs toward Him.

We must make it our every intention to suffering with the car of faith in drive, not reverse.

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

This insight instructed us that as we direct our suffering to God, we must also ask God for that which we desire!

We are to approach God, the Father, as the loving, kind and good Father that He is and ask Him for what we desire.

We learned that the way we do this is by being **direct** and **persistent**.

By direct, I mean, not beating around the bush. Make your prayer plain!

By persistent, I mean what Jesus taught us about asking (and keep on asking), seeking (and keep on seeking) and knocking (and keep on knocking.)

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

This insight instructed us on the need to embrace the will of God as not only **better** for us, but as **best** for us!

And we must remember and hold with a firm conviction that the thing that is better and best for us will include valleys of ***deep darkness!***

When we see God’s will as better and best we will humbly submit to and joyfully embrace the valleys.

What this means is that we must get to the place where we fully and **acknowledge** and **accept** and then **pursue** the will of God, as if it was our own! (2x)

And by *pursue*, I mean, that we seek to align our affections and actively proceed along the course that God has assigned and administered for us!

Beloved, that line about pursuing the will of God as our own is the part that many of us struggle with.

But when we truly know God and truly know that His purposes are always good, better and best we will choose the will of God over our own; we will seek to try our heart to eagerly prefer God's will.

Because when we, like Jesus, say, "not my will, but your will" we are really saying is, "Lord, I choose and desire to do what you desire over what I desire!"

Sadly many do not get to this place...they continually push against what the Lord is doing! They prefer their will over God's!

But what the Lord is doing through this series is softening our hearts to willingly embrace His will for us whatever it may be.

Now, we need to press further into this insight. There are a few things to consider.

When we consider giving priority to the will of God over our own we must know and understand that there will be times where God answers, "No" to our request.

Now, you know this, but let's try to leave no stone unturned: There are at least three answers God gives to every request that is made to Him.

1. "Yes!"
2. "Yes, but wait!"
3. "No!"

The two answers need little explanation, but the answer "no" needs to be explained.

When it comes to prayer we read such things as 1 John 5:14–15,

“**14** And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. **15** And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

The phrase that is really important to understand is this: “if we ask anything *according to His will* He hears us...”

This means several things:

1. The most obvious one is that God answers “yes” to prayers that are according to His will.

God grants the requests that are consist with what He desire to accomplish.

That’s the obvious one!

2. But the second thing this means is that it is possible to pray for things that are not according to God’s will.
 - There are times when we ask for things that are not aligned with His plans, purposes and desires of God!
 - Please note, to pray for something that is not according to God’s will is not sinful, it is just not according to His will!
 - Remember we are considering Jesus, who asked God “to remove the cup.”
 - Now, we know for sure that that request was not God’s will because Jesus was crucified; He drank the cup!
 - SO, Jesus actually prayed for something that was not according to God’s will.
 - Again, it's not sinful, it just wasn't according to God's will!

But when this happens, the answer to that pray will always be, “no.”

We need to know and understand this!

Now, the question I want us to answer is, “How do we cope or deal with God saying, “no” to our request?”

I want to put before you five realities that must be true in order for you to handle God saying, “No”, in the midst of your trials.

(The first three realities are the same, and I am not joking...)

1. YOU NEED TO KNOW GOD!!
2. YOU NEED TO KNOW GOD!!
3. YOU NEED TO KNOW GOD!!

And by know God, I mean there are a few attributes of God you MUST know and believe to the core of your being!

1. That God is good!

By good, I mean God always acts in accordance to what is right, true, just, pure, noble, and commendable.

God cannot do anything that is not good!

The reason why this is essential for you to get is because if you don't, you will be suspicious of God and His methods!!

And the heart that is suspicious of God does not trust God!

You can be suspicious and trusting at the same time!!

So, here is what you need: YOU NEED TO MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT on passage concerning His goodness!

Here are several for your notes:

Psalm 23:1,

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psalm 34:8,

“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Psalm 31:19,

“Oh, how abundant is your goodness,

which you have stored up for those who fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in you...”

Psalm 100:5,

“For the LORD is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.”

Psalm 107:1,

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,

for his steadfast love endures forever!”

Psalm 119:68,

You are good and do good;

teach me your statutes.

There are more text, I could give, but these are a good starting point!

You need to feed your soul with these passage, especially in times of a trial!

You need to know and trust God’s goodness!

2. The second attribute you know and cling to is His wisdom (or knowledge)

God has comprehensive knowledge of everything both possible and actually!

What this means is that if God thought it best for you to suffer then that is the best thing for you!

Let me try this angle, “who knows you better than anybody?” God!
“Who knows what you need more than anybody?” God!

So, if God knows you and knows what you need, then you must rest in the fact that if He determined for you to suffer, then that that is the best possible option for you!

Now, of course, there are other attributes that we could consider, but I think by trusting God’s goodness and wisdom we will be able to prioritize the will of God over our own.

There is a fourth reality that must be true in order for you to deal with God saying, “No.”

It is this: God’s glory is behind Him saying, “No.”

Think of it this way, God *always* does what brings Him glory!

This means, and you have get this, *there has never been a time nor will there ever be a time where God will sacrifice His glory for your comfort!* (2x)

This means that when God says, “no” that that, “no” and the consequences of it brings Him glory!

Look at it through the example of Jesus!

Jesus, the perfect, spotless, lamb of God was executed because it brought God glory!

Jesus was ordered, by God, to drink the cup of divine wrath because it brought God glory!

This sometimes doesn't make sense to us, but who cares if it does!

It makes perfect sense to God!

This is why Paul can exclaim, “**33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

35 “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”**36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

God does all things, at all times to give Him all the glory!

5. The fifth and final reality that must be in place to help handle when God says, “No.” is to remember that even though He said, “No.” He has not abandoned you.

In other words, when God says, “no”, it is not like He says it then walks away; it not like He says, “no” then leaves and forsakes you!

God is still very present even when He says, “No.”

I have in mind what our Brother Paul told us concerning the thorn in the flesh that he had.

He said he prayed three time for it to leave, but the Lord told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

What this shows us it that when God says, “No” He will send attendant grace!

Another way to say it is that God's answer of, “No” is never alone, it comes with sufficient grace to assist you in whatever trial you are in!

We will end here, but just to recap what we examined.

You must prioritize God's will over your own. This means that you must deal with God telling you "No" to some of your requests in the trial!

What will help you deal that this is:

1. Knowing God, particularly His goodness and wisdom!
2. Knowing that God does ALL THINGS for HIS GLORY!

And

3. Knowing that when God says, "No" that "No" is chaperoned by sufficient grace!

Let's pray!