

SALT AND LIGHT TELEVISION

Series 3

THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

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2. In redemption I stand before God as a slave in the market place and through the spilt blood of Jesus I receive freedom by ransom.

The story is told of a slave auction where a certain farmer kept on bidding until he won the auction and became the owner of the finest slave at the auction. He paid the highest price that day. Walking away with his new purchased possession, and watching and feeling the hate gleaming out of the slave's eyes, the farmer gently said to him, "I didn't buy you to make you my slave, I bought you to set you free! That's what Jesus did for us at Calvary!"

3. In forgiveness I stand before God as a debtor and through the poured out blood of the Lord Jesus I receive my discharge.
4. In reconciliation I stand before God as His enemy and because of His precious blood I am led to peace.
5. In adoption I stand before God as a stranger and through the sacrificial blood of my Saviour, Jesus Christ, I receive sonship.
6. If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His son continually cleanses us from all sin. If I confess my sin, He is faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

he pronounced a blessing which told the multitude that the blood offering had been accepted by God. He called out, "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you His peace."

Rom 5:9 "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."

Eph 1:7 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

Heb 9:22 "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

Col 1:20 "And through Him, to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth, or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."

Rom 8:15 "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"

1 John 1:7 "but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

1. In justification, I stand in the dock before God as the accused and through the shed blood of Christ, I am declared free.

John Bunyan dreamed that Satan came to him and told him to write down all his sins, which John Bunyan duly did. After a full page of writing the devil asked, "Is that all?" Bunyan continued, page after page after page until finally he felt there were no more. Then taking another pen, he dipped it in the red ink well and scrawled across each page "Cancelled by the blood of Jesus."

The Purpose of Suffering (Part 1)

We need a theology of suffering. Luke 9:23-24 "Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.'"

The problem of continually thinking that God is like the genie of the lamp, portrayed in Aladdin's Lamp, is that Christians have not been prepared for suffering and calamity. Psalm 73:1-28.

We all believe in divine healing, miracles, the Lord prospering us financially, and the Lord delivering his children from evil. But what about the other side of the coin?

Hebrews 11:32-38 but highlighting verse 34 "Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection."

Blessings do not keep us close to Jesus. The disciples who walked with Jesus saw the miracles, three of them saw Jesus transfigured. But they all forsook Him and ran for their lives. Peter denied Him and Judas betrayed Him.

Aaron and the children of Israel could see the shekinah glory of Jehovah, yet they made a golden calf, worshipped it as a god and said that it had delivered them from Egypt. God's visible presence was right before their eyes.

God's people are not immune from trouble. In fact, the opposite is true. However, quite a lot of our troubles are self-inflicted.

How a husband regards and treats his wife determines whether his prayers are answered or not. 1 Peter 3:7 "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

Our health can be seriously damaged if we despise and humiliate other members of the Body of Christ. There were many sick people in the church in Corinth. No matter how much faith they had or how much they prayed they remained sick, in fact some even died from their sickness. Why? Because they failed to show love to their brothers and sisters in Christ.

The context of this is found in 1 Corinthians 11:21-22 "For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!"

And verses 33 and 34 of the same chapter: "So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment."

Right in the middle of these two sections Paul issues this grave warning:

1 Corinthians 11:28-30: "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep."

There are tormented people who no amount of counselling will help because they refuse to forgive someone who has offended them. All these are self-inflicted wounds and have nothing to do with the way of the Cross. However, the people who refuse to forgive could be set free from torment if they were to forgive from the heart and then embrace the way of the Cross.

I want to show, that:

- Suffering is a normal part of the Christian experience. That suffering on earth, properly handled, is linked to the believer's reward in heaven.

The Blood of Jesus

Tom Butler, a Methodist evangelist, who was preaching on the shed blood of Jesus being the only basis for a sinner to receive God's forgiveness, was approached by the church organist who said, "I can't stand how you preachers keep talking about the blood, it is so nauseating. It doesn't belong to our civilised society." Tom Butler replied, "Your sin is so nauseating to a holy God that the only answer to you being cleansed is through the nauseating shed blood of His pure Son."

From Genesis to Revelation we find a theology of sacrificial blood.

It actually starts before time began, because we find Jesus being described as the "lamb slain before the foundations of the world."

But on the planet, Adam and Eve, having sinned by disobeying God, clothed themselves with fig leaves. But God slew one or more animals and clothed them with the skins of those animals.

The next were the offerings of Cain and Abel. You may remember that Cain took the fruit of his labours and made them an offering to God, whereas Abel took a lamb and offered it as an offering. His offering was accepted, Cain's was rejected.

God's covenant with Abraham was sealed with the sacrifice of animals and birds: a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon. The animals were to be cut in pieces, but not the birds. Very specific.

The night of the Passover they were to kill a lamb and take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the house in which they ate the Passover meal. When the angel of death passed over the land to destroy the firstborn, wherever he saw the blood he passed over that house and they were safe.

On the annual day of atonement two goats would be selected; one for the Lord which was the sin offering, and one for the scapegoat, which would be released into the wilderness. The first goat would be killed and its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, which covered the ark of the covenant. When Aaron came out to the people from the Holy of Holies,

These bolts and bars above,
 To Him whose purpose I adore,
 Whose providence I love;
 And in thy mighty will to find
 The joy, the freedom of the mind.
 (Madam Jeanne Guyon)

2. **By seeking to walk in the Spirit, yoked to Jesus, sharing in His life.**

Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

3. **Meditating on God's Word.**

Ps. 1:2-3 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does, prospers."

Conclusion:

Are we preachers and broadcasters presenting both sides of the coin? In other words, is there an imbalance in our preaching and in our pastoral care and counselling of people?

If there is, what do we need to do to redress the matter?

- God's anointed people do die from sickness. 2 Kings 13:14: "When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die..."
- God's people do have sicknesses from which they do not seem to be healed. 1 Tim 5:23 "No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."
- God's people do suffer persecution and deprivation. 1 Cor 4:11 "To this very hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated." 2 Corinthians 4:8 "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing (God's silence); persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 11:23-28:
- Longsuffering (a fruit of the Spirit) implies that we suffer a long time.
- For God to wipe away all tears from our eyes in heaven means there had been tears on earth.
- For God to be the God of all comfort requires us experiencing pain, loss, disappointment and sorrow.

ELEVEN REASONS WHY A BELIEVER EXPERIENCES TROUBLE:

1. Cosmic encounters in heavenly places.

What was really happening in the story of Job? What cosmic drama was unfolding outside of the human understanding? Philip Yancey in his excellent book "Disappointment with God" calls it a wager between two cosmic powers.

- Job was probably written before Genesis. So the trials of Job happened fairly early in the history of mankind.
- The seduction of Adam and Eve by Satan.
- Job 1:8-12 "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.' 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread

throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.' The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.' "

- God is responding to Satan's temporary victory in the garden. Job is the first down payment of God's ultimate victory over Satan through the death of the man Jesus. Job's persistent clinging to God's character and righteousness in spite of his horrendous suffering could be seen as a shadow of the substance yet to be revealed at Calvary and continued on in His Body, the Church. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
- Ephesians 3:10: "That the manifold wisdom of God might now be known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

2. To bring us back from the brink.

Job 33:19, 29-30 "Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, and with unceasing complaint in his bones. Behold God does all these oftentimes with men, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he might be enlightened with the light of life."

Psalm 119:67. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word."

3. To equip us to be more effective servants to those in any sort of trouble.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for

prisoner of the Lord. Eph 3:1 "I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus..." Eph 4:1 "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord..."

Three times in Genesis 45:5-8 Joseph tells his brothers, "God sent me..." Remember what his brothers did to him! Finally in Genesis 50:20 he says, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

Madam Guyon, whilst unjustly put in prison, wrote the following poem:

A little bird I am
Shut from the fields of air;
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases Thee.

Naught have I else to do;
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom most I love to please
Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
But still he bends to hear me sing.

Thou hast an ear to hear,
A heart to love and bless;
And though my notes were ne'er so rude,
Thou would'st not hear them less;
Because thou knowest, as they fall,
That Love, sweet Love, inspires them all.

My cage confines me round;
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of my soul.

Oh, it is good to soar

The Purpose of Suffering (Part 3)

HOW DOES A BELIEVER GROW TO LOOK LIKE CHRIST

1. **By making Christ-like responses to every negative experience he or she suffers.**

First response is silence. Henry the 6th of Germany used to say: "He that knows not how to be silent knows not how to speak."

Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that is silent before his shearers, so he did not open his mouth." Ps 39:9. "I have become dumb, I do not open my mouth.

This silence is not a stoic silence that says: "I'm not going to say a word, even if it kills me." This silence is not a defiant silence that says I'll show them they can't scare me. I'll not give them the satisfaction of hearing me complain. This silence is not a sullen silence, like King Saul brooding over the dishonour he felt when he heard the crowd shouting, "Saul has slain his thousands but David his ten thousands."

This silence is a restful, submissive silence, because it comes from the strong conviction that nothing happens to the child of God by mistake. Can Satan do with me what he pleases because Jesus and my guardian angels were negligent? If I thought that, I would be so filled with fear, I would never get on a plane.

I must look beyond the secondary causes of my trouble to the primary cause, which is God. God did it, either by initiating the suffering as in the case of Job, or by allowing it to happen. Isaiah 53:4 "Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Ps 39:9 "I have become, dumb I do not open my mouth, because it is thou who hast done it."

Why could Paul be so restful in prison, even to the point of singing out loud at midnight? Because he knew he was the

you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort."

4. **To sensitize my heart towards the Lord.**

Job 42:1-6. "Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear now and I will speak: I will ask thee, and do thou instruct me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.' "

5. **To help me make a proper response towards the Lord.**

Psalm 119:71 "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes."

6. **That we may share in his holiness and yield peaceable fruits of righteousness.**

Heb 12:10-11 "But He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruits of righteousness."

7. **To prevent us from trusting in ourselves.**

2 Cor 1:8-9 "For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead."

The Purpose of Suffering (Part 2)

CONTINUING THE ELEVEN REASONS WHY A BELIEVER EXPERIENCES TROUBLE:

8. To produce more fruit and much fruit.

John 15:2: "Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit." John 12:24. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

9. That suffering, if I make the right response, is producing for me a fantastic reward that will last for all eternity.

2 Cor 4:17-18 "For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

10. To keep us from exalting ourselves.

2 Cor 12:7-10 "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

11. To conform us to the image of His Son.

Romans 8:28-29 "For we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are

called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son."

Gen 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Heb 1:3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being."

Heb 2:10 "In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering."

Col 1:24-25 "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church."

The work of the cross! Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

The way of the cross! Phil 3:10-11 "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."