

A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

THE INEVITABILITY OF OUR SUFFERING

- At one point or another in this life, we will all face profound adversity, heartbreak, or catastrophe
- Suffering is a normal part of the human experience...thus we must not think it to be strange to our existence
- Suffering is the price of discipleship...to be a believer is to experience some of what he experienced

John 15:20 ~ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also"

John 16:33 ~ In the world you have tribulation

Acts 14:22 ~ strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'

Philippians 1:29 ~ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake

2 Timothy 3:12 ~ And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

1 Peter 2:21 ~ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps"

1 Peter 4:12 ~ Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

- These passages remind us that we are not to be "surprised" by suffering or consider it "strange" to our human existence
- We are not to think of it as foreign to the Christian life...we are not to be bewildered or astonished by the presence of trials
- Suffering and trials are a normal part of our lives
- We should be in no way taken aback, astonished, or bewildered when hardships and trials come our way
- Like a soldier who enlists in the military knows that suffering will be part of following the commander, so too does the believer know that suffering will be part of following Christ
- Suffering is not accidental...it is not some random accident that has happened without God knowing about it and even orchestrating it
- "Sadly such teaching seems far removed from the outlook that prevails in large parts of the church today. The impression is given that the purpose of the Christian life is enjoyment. Everything that stands in the way of that is to be eliminated. People are looking for a problem-free Christianity. The health, wealth, and success gospel is having a field day. Purveyors of such a gospel look the part. Unfortunately, the hollowness of such views becomes apparent when suffering, sorrow or disappointment comes. Then it become clear that we need a faith that is grounded in God's Word."¹
- When we come to expect a "problem-free Christianity," we ask questions like:
 - Why is this happening?
 - Is God still in control?
 - Why is God allowing this?
 - Why doesn't God take this pain away?
 - Why does God allow this to continue?
 - Where is God when I am hurting?

¹ John Murray, *Behind a Frowning Providence*, 11.

THE LIES ABOUT OUR SUFFERING²

Believers Should Not Experience Trials

- Some today claim that trials like poor health, family problems, or financial difficulties are proof that a person lacks faith
- However, the Bible is clear that trials are to be expected and come in all kinds of shapes and sizes

Job 5:7 ~ For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward.

Job 14:1 ~ Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil.

James 1:2-3 ~ Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

1 Peter 1:6 ~ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

Suffering Always Comes as a Result of Sin

- Some believers assume that they will avoid suffering if they live a relatively righteous life
- Thus, if a person suffers, they must have sin in their life
- In a sense, all suffering comes as a result of sin...and sometimes there is a direct connection between a person's sin and their suffering

Psalms 32:1-4 ~ How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! 3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.

- However, there is not always a direct cause-and-effect relationship between a person's sin and their specific suffering

John 9:1-3 ~ As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 ~ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

1 Peter 2:21-22 ~ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;

God's Comfort Comes Automatically

- "Immediately after the plane crash, I expected peace like a river to attend my way. I just assumed my heart would be 'fully blessed, finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest.' So much for basing my spiritual expectations on familiar hymns. In the days after our family's loss, I started to pray and read the Bible, but the peaceful river didn't flow. Instead a dark cloud descended upon my heart. Horrible nightmares disrupted my sleep. Well-intentioned but misguided friends aggravated my soul by talking too much and listening too little.

² Adapted from Don Green, *Trusting God in Trying Times*, 40-46.

Sermons instructed my head but did not comfort my heart. I did not realize it at the time, but a profound spiritual crisis was enveloping my soul. The truth I knew was not helping me. As it turns out, I did not know how to trust God. In retrospect, my assumptions were all wrong. I did not understand the power of grief, and I thought God's comfort would come as I passively waited for it."³

- Being a believer does not automatically give us peace in the midst of our trials
- "...you and I need to stir up our faith in the midst of our trials. We must remember biblical truth and rest in it if we are to know the comfort that God has promised in his Word...Turning to Scripture is the key to finding that hope."⁴

Psalms 42:5-6 ~ Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence. 6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

Lamentations 3:17-18, 21-23 ~ My soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness. 18 So I say, "My strength has perished, And so has my hope from the LORD"...21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

THE SOURCE OF OUR SUFFERING

From the Fallen World

- Often suffering is simply the result of living in a post-Fall, sin-cursed world
- Everything that God created was initially "very good" (Gen 1:31)...because there was no sin, it was an ideal, perfect world, without any form of pain, suffering, grief or sorrow
- Man had direct access to God and he communed directly with him (Gen 3:8)
- However, the entrance of sin into the world changed everything

Romans 5:12 ~ Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned

- The effects of the curse permeated every corner of the universe

Romans 8:19-22 ~ For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

- "Now, because of sin, the world and the people who populate it are cursed. Our brows sweat, our bones break, our hearts hurt, and our bodies ache and decay and, ultimately, expire at the end of our seventy (or, if due to strength, eighty) years here on earth (Ps 90:10). We live in sin-cursed bodies, with sin-cursed minds, on a sin-cursed planet. Sin, sadly, is the 'norm' in a post-Fall world, and the inevitable result is that we experience hurts, pains, disappointments, and, yes, suffering."⁵
- Tragedy is not always a sign of God's judgment

³ Ibid., 42-43.

⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁵ Jesse Randolph, "Suffering and the Will of God," in *Voice*, July/August 2023, 19.

- Suffering is not always proportional to sinfulness
- Bad things don't always happen to just bad people

Luke 13:1-5 ~ Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

From Our Personal Sin

- Suffering happens not only because we live in a sin-cursed world...it also happens because it is the natural consequence of our sinful choices and actions
- We sometimes bring suffering upon ourselves through our own sin

David with Bathsheba

Romans 1:26-27 ~ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

1 Corinthians 11:30-32 ~ For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

- "Sin is lawlessness (I Jn 3:4), and the sins we commit lead to various consequences. For instance, the sin of prideful people-pleasing may lead a teenage boy to jump from a roof into a shallow swimming pool to show off for his friends, which leads to a broken back and a cracked skull. Or the sin of adultery, may lead to a grieved spouse, and then to divorce papers, and then to lonely nights in a one-bedroom apartment, and then to holidays spent alone, all of which leads to a season of suffering marked by malaise and despair."⁶

From God's Sovereign Hand

- Ultimately, everything that we experience in this life, including our trials and suffering, happens according to the perfect plan and will of God...he is sovereign over it all
- God is providentially in control of all events in the universe, ordaining them and using them to accomplish his purposes
- Even seemingly "bad" things ultimately happen by the hand of God

Isaiah 45:7 ~ The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.

Lamentations 3:37-38 ~ Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?

Amos 3:6 ~ If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?

- "This is not to say that God is the author of evil, or that He takes some sinister form of delight in our sufferings. This also is not to say that God is to blame for our suffering. Job learned that lesson over his protests and objections. But God, in His infinite wisdom, does allow us to walk through various painful

⁶ Ibid.

episodes, seasons of suffering, and long valleys of despair, to bring about His perfect eternal plans, in accordance with His perfect wisdom and will (Ro 8:28; Ge 50:20)...”⁷

- Divine providence is the governance of God by which he, with wisdom and love, cares for and directs all things in the universe...it is his act of purposefully providing for, sustaining, and governing the world
- It refers to the loving, sovereign care of God by which he governs all the affairs of our daily lives
- It demonstrates that God takes an active role in the world that he created, particularly in the lives of those who are alone made in his image

- “27 – Q. What do you understand by the providence of God? A. God's providence is his almighty and ever present power, whereby, as with his hand, he still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed, all things, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.”⁸
- “Article 13 – The Doctrine of God’s Providence. We believe that this good God, after creating all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune but leads and governs them according to his holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without God’s orderly arrangement.”⁹
- “Question 18 – What are the works of providence? Answer – God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory.”¹⁰
- “Chapter 5 – Of Providence. 5.1. God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.”¹¹
- “Providence is like a curious piece of tapestry made of a thousand shreds, which, single, appear useless, but put together, they represent a beautiful history to the eye.”¹²

- God’s providence is infinitely greater than even the most complex Rube Goldberg machine (a contraption where someone sets up an incredibly complicated chain reaction in order to accomplish a simple task)
- In such a contraption, every little detail has to work out exactly right or the whole thing falls apart
- God’s providence is infinitely more complex and amazing in that it pervades every minute detail of our lives

- “I believe that every particle of dust that dance in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes – that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens – that the chaff from the hand of the winnower is steered as the stars in their courses. The creeping of an aphid over the rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence – the fall...of leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.”¹³
- “Every tiny, popping bubble in the foam at the top of a newly poured can of Coke. Every floating dust mote which you can only see in the early-morning bedroom beam of light. Every tip of every stalk of grain stretching across the endless Nebraska plains. All of them, with their slightest movements, specifically governed by God.”¹⁴

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Heidelberg Catechism

⁹ The Belgic Confession

¹⁰ Westminster Larger Catechism

¹¹ Westminster Confession of Faith

¹² John Flavel

¹³ Charles Spurgeon, “God’s Providence,” sermon on Ezekiel 1:15-19.

¹⁴ John Piper, *Providence*, 36.

- “There are an infinite number of wheels in the works of providence.”¹⁵
- “Like the gears on a clock, every little detail in all of human history, your life and my life included, is a part of something bigger than we could ever imagine. And God is causing all things to work out exactly as they should for our greatest good and His greatest glory. If only we could see as God sees. Can we see that this moment is working exactly as it should in order to accomplish something for God in the next month or year or decade or century? Can we believe that our God is so perfectly wise and capable, that He can direct an infinite number of wheels to accomplish one great goal? In sadness and joy and heartbreak and fulfillment. In all these things, God is lovingly orchestrating His purposes.”¹⁶

THE PURPOSE FOR OUR SUFFERING

To Try Us

- Trials are used by God to determine the authenticity of our faith
- “The test of a person’s Christianity is what happens in the storm, when the house is battered in the winds of affliction.”¹⁷

Job 23:10 ~ But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold

Psalms 66:10 ~ For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined

Isaiah 48:10 ~ Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction”

1 Peter 1:3-7 ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 4:12 ~ Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

- Suffering is what God uses to bring out a firm trust in him (or to show that a person’s faith is not genuine...the same sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay)

- Abraham is a supreme example of this:

Genesis 22:10-12 ~ Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 12 He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

- Until Abraham was fully devoted to God, he could not be useful to the Lord...Abraham passed the test and his faith was determined to be pure gold
- As the hymn writer says: “When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie...my grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply...the flame shall not hurt thee; I only design...thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine”

¹⁵ Jeremiah Burroughs

¹⁶ <https://jacobrcrouch.wordpress.com/2023/03/01/there-are-an-infinite-number-of-wheels-in-gods-providence/>

¹⁷ Murray, *Behind a Frowning Providence*, 12.

To Expose Our Sins

- Trials are one of the means by which God reveals our sinfulness

Hebrews 12:5-7, 10-11 ~ and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; 6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?...10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 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 fruit of righteousness.

- John Newton discovered this:

*I asked the Lord that I might grow In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of his salvation know, and seek more earnestly his face.*

*'Twas he who taught me thus to pray; And he, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way As almost drove me to despair.*

*I hoped that, in some favoured hour, At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power Subdue my sins, and give me rest.*

*Instead of this, he made me feel The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell Assault my soul in every part.*

- Pain and suffering do not always lead to blessing but they do provide an opportunity to grow spiritually and be sanctified in the areas we still harbor sin
- The Lord uses suffering and trials to chisel away the imperfections that remain in our lives
- FOOTNOTE: When we encounter suffering, how do we know whether it is due to sin in our life (for which we need to repent) or whether God is allowing it, not as a correction for sin, but to display his glory and grow us in godliness?
- “...those two divine ways of dealing with us are very real. They’re both taught in the Bible. But what makes [it difficult]...is that the line between them is permeable. Another way to say it would be that those two kinds of responses from God to our situation always overlap, which means, practically, that there is never a situation in life where we should not respond with self-evaluation...there’s always appropriate evaluation in the midst of affliction and, if necessary, alteration. In other words, I’m suggesting...that, in the end, knowing for sure which of these two ways of being treated by God is happening to us is not essential to living as we ought. God may make it plain; he may. But he may not.”¹⁸

To Keep Us From Sin

- Sometimes God ordains suffering in our lives for the purpose of keeping us from falling into sin

2 Corinthians 12:7 ~ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!

- God did this to keep Paul from becoming proud, independent, self sufficient
- There was a design behind Paul’s difficulty...to keep him humble, to keep him dependent

¹⁸ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-my-suffering-a-correction-for-sin>

- God wants humble, weak, and dependent people because those are the one he can work through
- The most effective instruments in the redeemer’s hands are those who look to the Lord and not themselves
- So, God may often put us in situations that are hard or difficult for the sole purpose of keeping us humble and dependent on him
- The trials and hardships we face may be simply to keep us from falling into sin by keeping us dependent on the Lord

To Mature Our Character

- God’s greatest aim in saving us is to make us like his Son...to conform us to his image

Romans 8:29 ~ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

- He aims to form our character such that it is increasingly like Christ...and trials are one of his primary tools in shaping us into his image...suffering is character school...the growing pains of the soul

Romans 5:3-5 ~ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

James 1:2-4 ~ Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- “He uses the suffering we experience in our lives to make us more like Him. Through our suffering, our natural weaknesses are revealed and exposed. Through our suffering, our dependence on self is broken. Through our suffering, our grip on this world loosens. Through our suffering, our dependence on the Lord deepens. And through our suffering we are grown, matured, and sanctified.”¹⁹
- Once a sculptor was working on a piece of marble and was asked: “What are you doing?”
- He replied: “I am chipping away everything that does not look like a horse”

To Teach Us More About God

- It is one thing to know about God...it is another thing to know God
- Often we learn more about God in the furnace of affliction than we do in any other circumstances in life
- Suffering has been called “the Christian’s theologian”...it teaches us unique qualities about God that we would not have learned if we had not endured the hardship

Job 42:5-6 ~ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; 6 Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.

Psalms 73:25-28 ~ Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You. 28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

- “Adversity and affliction, suffering and sorrow, pain and perplexity – these are the tools in the skillful, omnipotent hand of a loving Father who is good and wise. God’s intent is to train His elect, to disciple His

¹⁹ Randolph, “Suffering and the Will of God,” in *Voice*, July/August 2023, 19-20.

people, so that no matter the difficulty, no matter the circumstance, they will anchor their confidence in his perfect Word, set their hope fully on Him, and settle their hearts in the peace that passes all understanding. God is their refuge, the place of perfect rest for their weary souls.”²⁰

- A poem by Robert Browning Hamilton captures this:

*I walked a mile with pleasure, she chatted all the way,
But left me none the wiser For all she had to say.*

*I walked a mile with sorrow And ne'er a word said she,
But oh the things I learned from her, When sorrow walked with me.*

To Make Us More Useful to the Kingdom

- The Lord frequently prunes his children so they can be more fruitful
- Just as the farmer removes anything on the branches that prevents them from bearing maximum fruit, so the Lord prunes believers through trials to increase their effectiveness

John 15:1-2 ~ I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

- God's purpose is to produce spiritual fruit for his glory
- Paul is an illustration of this

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 ~ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

- AW Tozer: “It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply.”
- Charles Spurgeon: “God gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction.”
- Thomas Boston: “It is the usual way of providence with me that blessing comes through several iron gates.”
- J.C. Ryle: “The tools the great Architect intends to use much are often kept long in the fire to temper them and fit them for the work.”
- John Flavel: “Oh the blessed chemistry of heaven to extract such mercies out of such miseries.”

- An anonymous poet captured it this way:

*When God wants to drill a man, And thrill a man, And skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!*

*How He ruthlessly perfects Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him, And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying And he lifts beseeching hands!*

*How He bends but never breaks When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses, And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out— God knows what He's about.*

²⁰ Travis Allen, endorsement for Don Green, *Trusting God in Trying Times*, 6.

To Make Us Long for Heaven

- Suffering helps us see that this sin-cursed world is not our home

Romans 8:17-18 ~ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ~ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- If all we knew in this life was comfort and ease, we wouldn't long for the blessedness to come
- Maurice Roberts: "God will have his people sign and groan on the way to glory."
- Thomas Watson: "The vessels of mercy are first seasoned with affliction and then the wine of glory is poured in."