

The Journey to Biblical Manhood

Challenge 10: Suffering

Session 2: Why Does The Bible Teach Us To Be Joyful In Suffering?

Unedited Transcript

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Try that again. Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to First Peter Chapter Four Verse 12. We are going to begin the day with a shout out. A group of men meeting in Singapore called "Fabergardeners". I apologize if I didn't pronounce that correctly, men. Four guys are joining us on Fridays at 7:30 pm. So that would actually be, for us, 12 hours later than that, right. So that would be for us ... Well, anyway. The group's desire is to be authentic and supportive to each other for the glory of Christ. Wong Sung Kuan is the leader, and I wanted to say to you men that we now have opened an Asia division of Man in the Mirror.

We do the actual, official commissioning ceremony of eight leaders next week. This is a result of the field trip I did a year ago. So, Robert Lim is going to be the President and the Asia Director for Man in the Mirror. They are headquartered in Malaysia. They will be an independent organization, but we basically will give them everything we have. And so I hope that you will soon be able to meet Robert. I've already told him about you. And he's looking forward to connecting with you. So, men, I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm, and rousing welcome to these men in Central Singapore.

One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome, guys, we are honored to have you as part of our Bible study.

So we're doing this series, The Journey to Biblical Manhood. We're in the 10th challenge, sacrifice and suffering. And the faith and life objectives for today, I will count it pure joy when I face trials. That's the second bullet. Believing that God is shaping me, that's to the heart. And so today, the title of the message is, you know, Why Does the Bible Teach Us to Be Joyful in Suffering?

So, everybody suffers. That's just part of the deal. We suffer for doing right. We suffer for doing wrong. We suffer for no apparent reason. All kinds of things are going on in our lives all the time. Physical things. Some of you are on medication right now, without that medication you wouldn't be able to be here this morning. And there are others who are online the same way. Some of you have been ravaged by natural disasters, whether it's hurricane, flood, or fire damage, flood or wind damage. There are fires that are raging all over, and thousands of people who have lost their homes here recently. And then there are ... And these are things where you're just sort of standing around. Many of them just minding your own business. And all of the sudden, you know, life happens.

Then there are moral sufferings, where we actually are doing something wrong, or somebody else has done something wrong. That have maybe cheated us. Have defrauded us. Maybe there's been some kind of physical violence that's been perpetrated against you or a member of your family. It could be assault, but it could be rape of a child. And the list is just so endless. And so, we're talking about suffering in this challenge.

And you know, we all suffer, but here's the thing. We're all gonna suffer, but suffering will make each of us either bitter or better. Suffering will make you bitter or better. And so this morning I want to talk about how God has provided for suffering to make us better.

So first up, what do the Scriptures teach us about our response to suffering? First Peter Chapter Four Verse 12. "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ." Rejoice, it says. Don't be surprised, everybody suffers. Don't be surprised. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. And then, turn over a couple pages to the left, or scroll a few pages to the left, to James Chapter One Verse Two. James writes, "Consider it pure joy, or suppose it to be pure joy my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds." Some of which I mentioned in the open.

And then, if you would, you might want to keep your finger there, but turn a few pages over to Romans Chapter Five Verse Three. Romans Chapter Five Verse Three, "not only so, but we also we rejoice in our sufferings." We rejoice in our sufferings. And then, if you can keep your place in two verses. Continue to do that.

Those of you who are doing it online, I don't think, or with your tablets and phones I don't think are gonna be able to do that. But Second Corinthians Chapter 12, Second Corinthians Chapter 12 Verse Seven. And this is the famous thorn in the flesh passage. Paul write, "to keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations." So this is Paul's conclusion, that because of the superiority of the vision, or revelations, that God had given him, "there was given to me a thorn in my flesh." We don't know what that is, but some sort of an infirmity. "A messenger of Satan to torment me. And three times, I pleaded with the Lord to take it away. But, Jesus said, my grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness." And watch what he says. And so, he says, "therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses." I will boast. And further down, in Verse 10 he says, "that is why for Christ's sake I delight in weaknesses, insults, hardships, difficulties, persecutions."

So, the Scripture teaches us that our response to suffering should be rejoicing. To be joyful. To consider it all joy when we do encounter these various trials. So what is the situation that is calling all of these texts into existence? Well, the situation was is that Christians were an extremely persecuted group of people and in addition, living conditions were harsh. And so there was a lot of suffering. There was a lot of persecution. And honestly, I don't ... You know, people try to compare ages and so forth, but look, if it hurts, it hurts. And it doesn't make any difference if you're some sort of nomadic person living 2,000 years ago, or you're living in some kind of fancy house and whatever. Suffering hurts, it's painful.

And so, the same reasons exist today, why these passages are relevant to us. There are other verses too. You know, there's so many of them, so just listen. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before. The Apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because of being counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name. Philippians 1:29, you have been granted not only the privilege of trusting Christ Jesus as Lord, but also of suffering

for Him. Acts 14:22, it is through many hardships that we must enter the kingdom of God. So, this is the way it is. And this is what the Scripture is teaching us about suffering.

But, why? Why? All right, well, let's go back and review these passages again for the why. And let's go back to our first one, which was First Peter Chapter Four Verse 12. First Peter Chapter Four Verse 12. So, rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. Why? So that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. And then, let's just keep moving around here. Back to James Chapter One. So consider it pure joy when you encounter various trials, Verse Three, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything. So suffering builds perseverance, it helps to mature us, so that we don't lack anything.

And then, to what was the last one? That was Romans Five was the next one we looked at. Let's go back to Romans Five. And Romans Five says, rejoice in your sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope, and hope does not disappoint. So, why we rejoice is because it produces perseverance, character and a hope that doesn't disappoint. Then it's Second Corinthians Chapter Nine. It's Chapter 12 when we're looking at Paul teaching about his thorn in the flesh. He says, therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me.

So, the why of rejoicing is incredible. Because, when we do Christ's power rests on us. We develop perseverance. We develop a hope that doesn't disappoint, and all these other things that we've been talking about here. So, again, it has been granted to you, not only the privilege of trusting Christ Jesus as Lord, but it's a privilege also of suffering for Him. And so, there's so much ... Just so much good that can come from suffering.

Now, the world will tell you to pretend you're not suffering. Put on your game face. Suck it up. Don't let them see you sweat. Christianity is unique because it says that ... It tells us to rejoice in suffering. In other words, we don't pretend that suffering is not real. We proclaim suffering is real. But then we rejoice because we know that God is using this suffering for good things. And we'll get to that a little bit more in a moment.

So this year, has been ... a year of cash flow suffering. Cash flow suffering for, not for me, but for our ministry. For our ministry. And so for five months, five months ... So we're a ministry that should have several hundred thousand dollars of reserves. Just as business prudence, ministry prudence, we should have several hundred thousand dollars of reserves. And we did. Six months ago. And then five months ago we had zero. We have zero reserves. For five months we have had zero reserves.

Now, it's interesting because that has driven our leadership team to its knees. An utter dependence upon God. Because we don't have any reserves to depend on. And so, what's happened though is that we have sweated it out for five months, and guess what our reserves are today?

Zero. So nothing has changed, except everything has changed. Because this suffering has produced perseverance. And this perseverance is producing character, and there is a hope today that is different. Because God has proved Himself faithful. Here's what's happened. In order to stay in business, a ministry has to have, as a business or a family, it has to have its revenues equal or exceed its expenses. And for five months, I, as the chief fundraiser, so I guess it's my fault that we have zero reserves.

As the chief fundraiser, I've had no idea where the next paycheck is coming from. Honestly, I mean I'd like to pretend that I had all this planned out. And I've been doing the work. I mean, we have been faithful, honestly. You know, God calls us to be faithful, not to produce a particular outcome. We have been faithful, and man, we're not getting any outcome out of it that I would have preferred. But, anyway, we have been getting an outcome though that is astonishing.

Every week somebody comes, out of the blue, with a massive amount of money that usually I wasn't expecting. So, I'm working on developing these major gifts. I had one that was supposed to, a major gift that was supposed to close in June, one in July, and one in August. None of them have closed. And yet, this last week I was talking to a man on the phone. And I was talking to him about spiritual gifts assessment. He's not part of the Bible study, but he's been a major donor for 20 years. And so I've been working through his gifts with him.

And so, he said well, how's it going? I said, well, you know, we're running on fumes. We've been running on fumes for five months. And that was that. And I hung up. And two days later, he sent me a text, he said I just wanted you to know, I just put a check in the mail for \$25,000 that the Spirit prompted me to send. And I wrote him back, and I'm not 100% sure about this, but I said ... I, I, I told him, I said, I'm pretty sure that next week, when we do our payroll, that that \$25,000 is gonna be exactly what we needed. I'm pretty sure that that's gonna be the case.

And this has happened week in, week out, for five months. And where are we now? We are no better off than we were five months ago. Although, we are so much better off in this way. Because instead of worrying and fretting ... And of course, I'm thinking okay, well God, God is doing this for the leadership team. Because we are making a transition to a new generation of leaders at Man in the Mirror. And during this period we were able to actually hire a new development director, promoting from within. A man in Denver is now our new development director, and he's gonna do a fantastic job.

And I know that the leadership team is growing, and here's the thing, all along I've been ... All summer long I've been thinking you know, I have a strong faith. In fact, I don't even really need faith at this point. Because I have knowledge. The knowledge based on firm experience. Now, you, there's always a little element of faith that's still required. But you know, when you've started your old car, you know. Your old, crummy car, 10,000 and it never lets you down. The next time you go out you're pretty confident it's gonna start. You know. And so, that's how I am. I'm just really confident that God is gonna do what God says He would do. I'm just am.

And so, I have been thinking well, this is for the new generation of leaders that we're raising up. This is an opportunity for them to grow in their faith. And I believe that's true. But it's been interesting, because the Lord has been teaching me, too. You can teach old dogs new tricks. Because I have been touched with how tender the Lord has been with me in teaching me, taking me to a new level of abiding in Christ, versus striving for Christ, something we talk about here.

And then, as I am vulnerable and transparent and honest with you, and I look back on these last five months, I do see that while it wasn't striving like the old Pat would do. Let's go blow the hinges on this door with C4. There has been a striving. There has been an element of striving that I've felt. A need to perform. A need to make something happen. A need to take ... And we do need to take responsibility to be faithful. But, I felt a responsibility for the outcome. You know, this big. Not as big as it used to be, but this big. So that's progress, right? That's progress.

But the Lord has been tender with me. And so it's brought me to a place where I rejoice in the suffering. And you know, honestly, there are very few pains like cash flow pain. And here's what the Lord has shown me in His tenderness. I believe that He's going to give us the proper reserves, because in the house of the wise are stories of choice food and oil. That's wisdom, is to have reserves. But the Lord has shown me this, when you had several hundred thousand dollars of reserves in the bank, you felt peace. You felt comfort. Because you had put your trust in your reserves. Not because you had put your trust in Me. And so, I'm allowing your reserves to go away not for your leadership team. Well, yes for your leadership team. But, as to you, to remind you that your comfort, your peace, your contentment, your delight, your joy is not in the knowledge that you have this money to fall back on, but that you have me to fall back on.

And so, when you're out of money, and you're out of options, you're not out of options and you're not outta money. You have someone to fall back on. Someone who said that He's going to take care of you. And so, because of that, we can rejoice. Basically what's happened is, for me, over these last five months, and I'm ... We are by no stretch of the imagination through this period of time. But, what's happened to me is that God has used suffering to deepen me into a man I didn't know I could be. I continue to be astonished. I get to these places where I think, okay, I'm there. And then, the Lord will take off a blinder over here, and show me another 10 degrees, a vision that I didn't even know was there.

And so here's the Big Idea today. **I rejoice because suffering deepens me into a man I could otherwise never be.** Do you believe that's true?

Have you experienced that for yourself? We can rejoice, like the Bible tells us to. That is why for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses. That means He is well-pleased with weaknesses. That means He is well-content with insults and hardships and persecutions. Or, don't be surprised at the painful suffering, like something strange. But, rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. So, we can rejoice because suffering will deepen us into a man that we otherwise never knew that we could be. It's gonna open ... Every occasion of suffering will open up a little bit more of your field of vision to the goodness and the greatness of God.

All right. Now, okay. So we're supposed to rejoice. My question is, you know, how is that possible? I mean, how is that possible? Turn to Romans Chapter Eight Verse 18, Romans Chapter Eight Verse 18. You know, suffering is one of these topics that you could really talk about every week in a Bible study at some level. So we're really trying to focus on this one thing of rejoicing in the face of trials. But you know, the question is, how do we do that? How do we do that?

Well, there is one thing that if we fully understand and truly believe, could help us to do that. But, I'm gonna actually give you three ways that this is possible. But, this is the most important of the three in my opinion. I shouldn't even say that, but for me I'll say. Not ... I'll say for me this is the most important of the three. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth compared to the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed, for the creation was subjected to frustration, to futility, to vanity, to meaninglessness, to suffering. For the creation was subjected to frustration not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it. Who would that be?

God. God has subjected the creation, and we're part of the creation, to frustration. Solomon says, meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless. That's from God. And why did He do it? In hope,

reading on, in hope that the creation itself would be liberated from its bondage to corruption, and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of light. This is what God is doing. And so there is ... There are three ways that it's gonna be possible for us to rejoice. It's to understand His perspective, His promise, and His plan.

So, His perspective. God has this perspective that He created a world in which men and women had free will. They used that free will in the wrong way. The Fall resulted. But God graciously decided to continue the creation with free will. So, you know, think about how gracious God is. I mean, if God would have, in righteousness, rightly so, if He would have said well, this experiment didn't work, and He would have ended the whole thing, I don't think we'd be having Bible study today.

So, this futility, this suffering. It's the chief tool by which God is sovereignly drawing us to Himself of our own free will. You've got free will. But, Luther said, what is free will? Free will is the free will to sin. That's all free will does. Is it leads people to sin. Well, you know, he's overstating the case to make the point I suppose. But, free will is the free will to sin. And God, in His kindness, is using futility. So, you know, you put your hand on a hot stove, and it gets burned. And you remove it. It's a safety. It's a safety. That's what suffering is. It's a safety. It keeps us from further destroying ourselves.

Number two. So, there's His perspective, it's that suffering fits into God's larger perspective of what He's trying to do in the world. And then His promise. First Peter Chapter Five Verse 10. First Peter Chapter Five Verse 10. We'll come back to this probably next week. At First Peter Chapter Five Verse 10, and the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

Listen, if this is not true, given the last five months, and given the fact we have zero reserves, I might as well sleep in. If it's not true, I might as well sleep in. And guess what. If God's promise is not true, you might as well sleep in too.

And then, the third part about how this is possible. Number one is to have this perspective of Romans Chapter 18 and following. Second is to believe this promise that after a little while He will come and restore you. And the third is His plan. Psalm 118 Verse 24, this is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. And I taught you recently, some of you were not here, but if you were here, you remember I taught you that this word rejoice in the Hebrew language can either be a feeling or an action. So, when it says let us rejoice, it could be that you feel that way. But, when you're suffering oftentimes you don't feel it, but you can rejoice as an action, based on the promise, based on the perspective, you can follow the plan. You can rejoice.

Same thing in First Thessalonians 5:16 to 18. Rejoice always. Same meaning for the word rejoice in the Greek. It can either be a feeling or an action. Pray without ceasing, rejoice always, and so forth.

The big idea today, I rejoice. Because suffering deepens me into a man that I could otherwise never be.

And then just the, you know, what does this joy look like in action? So, I ... In May, let's see. Let's see. Yeah. A few months ago, I received an email from a woman, from the wife of an Oregon State Trooper, whose husband is a Sergeant and has a distinguished 26 year career, having saved many lives. Over those years. In the county where he's stationed. And he decided to give a copy of the Man in the Mirror book to a coworker. And it set off a lot of misunderstandings, but it set off a firestorm, a firestorm.

And so, there was a huge investigation. Witnesses were deposed. People were interviewed, the entire ... Everybody that worked in the station was made aware of what was going on, through personal contacts. And a lot of the hubbub dealt with the chapter on marriage, and the concept of submission, which I explained very clearly in the book. The Biblical concept of mutual submission, but the submission of the wife to the husband. And so, she wrote me a series of emails, and the second one she wrote, she said I wanted to give you the final outcome of what happened.

My husband was found guilty of giving the book to a subordinate. Guilty of pushing religion in the workplace. And his punishment was, you know, first of all don't ever do it again. But then, the women under his command, he's a Sergeant, the women under his command refused to work with him anymore, because of the position that the book takes on submission. And so, he was forced to transfer to another county in Oregon. He never, once, expressed any anger. He loved all of his coworkers, in both locations. He took the blame for everything. He did what his superiors desired. Never made a complaint.

But in the new place, he realized that this is not really where God had called him to be in this other county. And so, after about a month of prayer, he decided to take a demotion back to Trooper so that he could be back in the original county where he lived. And so, she wrote me to let me know that he was stepping back from Sergeant so that he could talk about his faith more openly. And she wrote, and you may want to know, your book has been the talk of this county and within the Oregon State Police. Where they can't seem to understand why a Sergeant would risk his career to give a book to a Trooper. And we are hearing that many are actually reading this book to find out why.

And so then, this week, she let me know that they've finished replacing all the patches on his uniforms. And changing his car back to a Trooper car. And then she writes this, she says, the blessings continue to flow in. The time that we're able to spend together. The time with God he gets. A true blessing. And the guys back in such and such a county, welcomed him back with love, knowing that he chose to demote to come back to be with them.

And then she said, I'm not sure if I mentioned this or not, she hadn't. But, with all the forced overtime that he was getting, and no time to spend it, we were able to pay off our house and land. So the loss, and the cut in pay that we had to take, God had already taken care of that too, because we didn't have any more house payments.

So that, that's what joyful looks like in action. It doesn't mean that we're not suffering. It doesn't mean that we pretend that we're not suffering. But, we choose to see the good that God can do through it, in us, and we choose to rejoice because suffering deepens me into a man that I could otherwise never, never be.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the teaching of Your Word. Quicken it to our hearts by the power of Your Holy Spirit, and allow us to be men who are able to then turn around and put this on display for those around us. In Jesus name, amen.