

Calling to mind the goodness of God

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Date: 12 July 2026

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[0:00] Before we go through it. The destruction of Jerusalem happened in 587 BC.! The Babylonians came in and took over Jerusalem.

! They destroyed the temple. God had to allow them to suffer because of their disobedience over and over.

We see those cycles within the scripture. But at this time, God allowed them to be carried off into captivity. And so here they were, these people that had built this temple and had worshipped the living God in Jerusalem.

And all of a sudden, they're off in captivity. They're wondering, what happened? Kind of like what I felt like. What's happening? Why is this happening? And as they were carried off into captivity, the book of Lamentations was written.

And it's wrestling with the theological issues, massive theological issues, to lament. And I had hundreds of funerals over the years. But it was different when my wife died.

[1:12] And I just want to tell you, I felt bad for all the spouses that had lost their spouses that I had done funerals for previously because I had no idea how hard it really was going to be to lose my wife of 38 years.

We would have been married 40 years now. But anyway, so I went to the book of Lamentations. And I read a book that was talked about lamenting as well.

To lament is to do two things at once. To bring together suffering and pain. And also that God is good and loving. How do you bring those two things together?

That's a hard concept to wrap your mind around. That God is good and loving. But yet, why is this going? And that's an age-old question, isn't it? Don't so many people say, well, I can't believe there's a God because of the suffering in the world or whatever they may say.

How could God be good? Because this happened to me or this happened in our situation. But bringing those two things together is what it means to lament. So we're going to be in chapter 3.

[2:15] And I've got to turn there myself. But I'm going to try to quote the scripture as we go through it. Lamentations 3. And we're going to start with verse 19. So we'll go through it here.

And then I'll put them up on the screen. And we'll go through the words. But he says, I remember my affliction and my wandering. The bitterness and the gall. I well remember them.

And my soul is downcast within me. That's the first passage. We'll go right there. Yet this I call to mind. And therefore I have hope.

So we're going to look at today. This is the beginning. We have three Sundays I'm going to be teaching. And it's all about the, a lot of it's about the mind. And we'll get to that at the end here. But see the words that have to do with your thinking.

I remember the hard times. The affliction, the wandering, the bitterness, and the gall. We'll talk about those in a moment. I well remember them. And my soul is downcast within me. So the downcast is the thing.

[3:10] So he calls something to mind. I call this to mind. So that's the first part of the verse. I'll just go ahead and try to quote the whole thing. We'll see. We'll move on from there. Yet this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope.

Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed. His compassions never fail. They're new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Which is where we get our hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness.

Great is your faithfulness. And then he says, I say to myself, the Lord is my portion. Therefore I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him.

To the one who seeks him. It is good for a man to bear the yoke when he is young. Let him sit alone in silence. Let him bury his face in the dust.

Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him. Let him be filled with disgrace. What's the next word? I'm lost there. Anybody there following me along in the Bible?

[4:10] For the Lord, for man is not cast off by the Lord forever. For man is not cast off by the Lord forever.

Though he brings grief, brings, that's a hard word. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion. So great is his everlasting love. For the Lord, for the Lord does not cast off.

No, let's see, how's it going there? I'm missing up the last part. How's it going? Yeah, why don't you read those? The Lord will not cast off forever.

But though he cause grief, he will have compassion. According to the money, he can't pass away. The last one is for, what's the next verse? For he does not afflict from his heart.

Yeah, he does not willingly, he does not willingly bring affliction to the hearts of men. Okay, so I kind of messed up the last part there, but you get the script. We're going to go through these, go back through these. We'll start here with this one.

[5:12] First of all, our suffering. I remember my affliction, the bitterness and the gall, and I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. I want to say a couple things about this. God's compassion and his awareness of our suffering and our oppression, our persecution, it's rather than a punishment.

God does it for a purpose. And sometimes we think about, why do we suffer? And I've thought this through many times. Sometimes we suffer because we're knuckleheads. Can anybody agree with that? Anybody want to say yes to that?

We're a knucklehead. We do something that causes suffering. And there's natural consequences to our lives. Natural consequences to our lives. So we suffer because of something we do wrong.

Sometimes we suffer because we live in a broken world. That's why my wife suffered. I want to tell you right now. She inherited this problem that she had. It was not her fault.

She did nothing to deserve it. But because she had it, she suffered. And she suffered greatly. She overcame so many times. And she was so strong, my wife was. But eventually she succumbed.

[6:16] But I just want to say that I really believe that my wife died because of her illness. That's why she passed away. Just as somebody would pass away from cancer or from something else.

And so that has brought me some comfort in this situation. And sometimes God allows suffering in our lives because he's trying to draw us closer to himself.

Like a father who lets his kids suffer because he needs to learn some things in his life. You know, there's a time for discipline. So sometimes we do something wrong and just natural consequences occur because of our, sometimes we can say no, there's nothing we can point to to say why we suffer.

It's just we're living in a broken world. And sometimes God uses suffering to draw us back to himself. And that's what he's doing here in the book of Lamentations. He says, I remember my affliction, my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.

Let's talk about those two words there, gall in particular. The word bitterness comes from Mara. And we're going to look at a verse in scripture in relationship to that in a moment.

[7:21] But in Genesis chapter 31, Jacob tells Laban that God had seen his suffering, his afflictions, because he had labored with Laban for all those years.

That was a case where God saw his suffering. It wasn't deserved, but God saw that and was compassionate towards him. Job says the same thing, how God saw his afflictions. But bitterness, bitterness, the word Mara and gall.

I'm going to talk about gall for a minute. But gall, do you know what gall is? Anybody know what gall is? Gall comes from the gallbladder, okay? That's what the gallbladder.

Gallbladder is an important organ. I don't know that much about it. I know that my father had peritonitis. He had to have his gallbladder removed. And it's a very important organ because it takes from the liver, it secretes an enzyme that goes into your small intestine that allows you to digest oil, greasy foods.

So I think it's people that have had their gallbladder removed, they can't go to McDonald's anymore. They can't, but it's going to be painful later. So that's what gall is. Gall was a secretion that goes into the gut and breaks down the food and causes the internal biology that causes you to be able to

have your, what do you call it?

[8:42] Well, I won't say it. I'm talking about your digestion. That's the word I was thinking of. Let's just stop right there. It helps you with your digestion. Okay, that's what gall is. But gall is a very powerful thing that stirs you up inside.

So the bitterness, to be bitter and to have gall is to be stirred up inside, to be angry. And I have to admit, I had some anger. I'm dealing with it. Sometimes the anger seems to be just right under the surface of my life.

I say, well, guy, why am I so angry? Why does this particular traffic situation make me so mad that I actually honk at a person that I shouldn't honk? Why is anger just right under the surface where Pastor Ken has a real desire to express a word that he shouldn't be saying?

Why is that like that? Why is it happening? And I think some of it is because I am still dealing with the bitterness in my soul as to why this happened and the gall that's there.

So Jeremiah is talking about it for the nation of Israel. And we all have a tendency to do that. Things that have happened to us, we let it boil up inside of us. We let the gall kind of disrupt our lives. It's our thinking that has to be a part of this.

[9:49] We'll see in a moment. But he says, because I'm remembering. What are we doing? We're remembering the bad times. I can sit in my house and be in grief in a second when I remember the bad things. I can bring those things up. He says, I will remember them.

And my soul is downcast within me. My thinking, my heart is depressed because of the bad things that have happened to me. And then he says, but yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.

So he's calling something to mind. What is he calling to mind? That's the next verses that we'll look at here, which are wonderful verses. This is the portion that everybody knows.

Everybody knows this part of lamentations. Well, lots of people do. This I call to mind. Now, I want to think about this. Calling it to mind is a discipline. We can sit there in our stew for a long time and be upset about something somebody did to us, be bitter for years and years about the way we were treated or about a relationship that's gone south or whatever or about the physical things that we're struggling with.

We can be bitter about that for a long time. We just think about it. But it takes discipline to call to mind something that's going to change that. And what are you calling to mind? It's that other thing for lamentations. Bad things happen.

[10:57] God is good. God is loving. We've got to put those two things together. So because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed. Oh, what wonderful words there.

Because he loves us so much. The word there is *hesed*. The word is used 240 times in the Old Testament. It's a very difficult word to translate. It's translated mercy. It's translated loving kindness. It's translated love. It's difficult to translate it because it is such an all-encompassing word of how much God loves us. And it's a love that is a covenantal love that he's never going to take that love away.

He's a part of us, our lives. It's a relationship that we have with him because of his great love with which he loved us. We are not consumed. His compassions never fail.

To be passionate towards, to care for somebody. Remember Jesus looked at the masses.

Remember what the scripture says? He saw them suffering. He had compassion for the people.

[11:56] Compassion for the people. His compassions never fail. They're new every morning.

Great is your faithfulness. And then I say to the Lord, I say to myself, the Lord is my portion.

So three things here. We remember the bad things. We're downcast. We call the mind God's love.

We have hope. And then we talk to ourselves. It's a good thing. Do you talk to yourself?

I'm 65. I'm talking to myself more and more as I get older all the time. Right, Mike? So yeah, we sort of talk to ourselves a little bit.

But what do we say to ourselves? The Lord is my portion. Therefore, I will wait for him. That phrase right there just stopped me dead in my tracks when I was memorizing it. Wow.

The Lord. What does that mean? What does that mean? The Lord is my portion. Well, I think about food. You know, somebody brings you a portion of food. And it satisfies you.

[12:54] You eat that food. And it brings satisfaction. And what he's saying is the Lord is his satisfaction. That's it. Nothing else. Nothing else but the Lord is his satisfaction.

And therefore, I will wait for him. And that really spoke to me too because I know that God is my, God is the one that has given me joy. But Jesus went to his father.

That's where he looked for his satisfaction. He didn't care what other people thought about him. How many of you care about what people think about you? He didn't care about what people thought about him. All he cared about was pleasing his father. And so the Lord is my portion. Therefore, I will wait for him. Wait. Sometimes we have to wait. And we hate to wait. But we have to wait. There's a picture here. I don't know if you can read it. You probably can't see it. I'll tell you what it says. I couldn't buy this. It took me a year to buy this. I didn't cancel my wife's phone for three months. I still have her nightstand set up with her glasses that she put on there and her books. [13:54] I need to do something about that. I have dealt with her clothes and other things, the things that are so hard to do after your spouse dies. But we have a cemetery right by our church in Port Orchard.

And it's our cemetery. It's a Bethel cemetery. And so I was able to bury my wife there, which I never thought I would be doing this early. But it basically says, the Lord is my portion. Therefore, I will wait for him. That's what I wanted to put on our tombstone. I wanted to speak to generations following when they come to my gravesite to be able to say, this person got his satisfaction from God alone.

And now he didn't get his satisfaction from God alone. He was patient. He's waiting. And when I'm dead, I'll be with the Lord. The Bible says, but I will be waiting for the resurrection where a new body is raised from the dead. And I will have a body that doesn't get achy and tired anymore. Like unto the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. So anyway, I just wanted to show you that picture there. The Lord is my portion. So he goes on to talk about the goodness of God. So he talks about the, well, and I wanted to, I want to turn to another passage here.

[14:59] Sorry, how are we doing timeways? We're going to three o'clock, right? Is that? No, no, no, I'm kidding. Let's turn to, turn to Exodus chapter 15.

Exodus 15. Yes, yes. Exodus chapter 15. This is about the, back to the bitterness and the goodness.

I want to talk about both of these things here. Exodus 15. We have in the book of Exodus, this chapter 13 and following 14, the crossing of the Red Sea.

Now that's, you know, I've always thought about this. Moses, God tells Moses to go and free his people from Egypt. And he says, what are you going to take?

What am I going to do? Take a stick, okay? A stick. And throw it on the ground. It becomes a snake. Pick it up. Go to Pharaoh with this stick and tell him to let my people go.

[15:53] So Moses, who's been a shepherd for 40 years. He did, he was raised in Egypt for 40 years. But now he's been a shepherd for 40 years. Said, no, you know, send somebody else.

I'm fine. Just right now. Stay where I am. No, Moses, go. And so Moses eventually goes. So he walks before the most powerful man in the world, Pharaoh, with a stick. And he says, I'm here from God.

And God says, let my people go. You think Pharaoh? Oh, I think. What's Pharaoh going to do about, is Pharaoh going to let the people? Well, God brings the plagues. You know how that happens.

And finally, the plague of the firstborn son. Pharaoh's son is killed, dies. And Pharaoh says, get out of my sight. Leave. So they leave. And you know how they go.

And it says there, let's see. Let's find the verse. There's a verse that talks about how they went, when they did leave, they didn't go the normal way. They didn't go where there was a road, but they went through the desert instead.

[16:51] And they come to the Red Sea. In chapter 15, they have a Miriam song. We see when Pharaoh's horses and chariots, verse 19 of verse 15.

And horsemen went into the sea. The Lord brought the waters of the sea back over them. But the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. So move on down from there. Let's go to verse 22. Here's the verse I was looking for a minute ago.

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went into the desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. So let's just stop there for a moment.

How many of you like to hike? Have you gone up to the mountains around here? I love the mountains around here. Did a lot of hiking here when we lived here. Just really enjoyed it thoroughly.

What is the most precious commodity when you're out in the wilderness? Water. Water. That shelter is important too. Don't get me wrong. At night when it's getting dark, it's nice to have shelter. [17 : 48] Water is the most precious. It tastes so good. Coming out of the streams around here, the water is... And it's hard for me to believe there's anything bad in that water, but I guess there is.

Because I'm kind of of the opinion that the filtering companies are deceiving us and that we can drink that water if we wanted to. I have, and I've done that at times.

But water is a precious commodity. We need it. We need it desperately. And so I'm going to tell you something. So they have just seen God do some of the most amazing things. They'd seen it firsthand.

God delivered them from Egypt. God let them cross on dry land. They saw the waters recede. They walked on dry land. They saw the waters come back again and destroy Pharaoh's army. They're standing on the other side.

They must have been jubilant and excited. Then one day out, we need some water. Well, where's the water? We can't find any. Two days out, there's no water. Three days out, I understand because I've been in a situation like that where I didn't have water.

[18 : 48] And it becomes very critical. And they start to do what? What do they start to do? Grumble. Complain. They're grumbling and complaining. So verse 23, chapter 15.

When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. So that's the word Marah means bitter. That's what that word means. The water was bitter. So the people grumbled against Moses saying, what are we to drink?

Moses cried out to the Lord and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it in the water and the water became sweet. God miraculously did something. We don't know what that was in that piece of wood. Lots of people would like to try to figure it out from a rational perspective.

What was in the wood that caused the water to become sweet? But God did a miraculous thing and made the water sweet. Just had to have faith to take the piece of wood and throw it in the water, which he told them to do. There the Lord made a decree and a law for them.

And there he tested them. He said, if you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord, your God, and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought upon the Egyptians.

[19 : 59] For I am the Lord who heals you. Verse 27. Then they came to Elim. Here's another place. Where there were 12 springs and 70 palm trees.

And they camped there near the water. Okay, so what I want to say about this, as far as goodness is concerned, God showed them there was a time of bitterness and struggle and frustration.

And they cried out to God. And God brought them to a place where they received his goodness.

Elim. 12 palms. There's a lot of comparison with the word number 12, the 12 disciples later.

Some comparisons with the number 12. 70 elders later with Jesus. We see in the New Testament, the 70. There's an aspect of the 70 palm trees. But you can imagine they were in the wilderness, nothing to drink.

They became bitter. They get some water. They can't drink it because it's bitter. Then they're really frustrated. And then God brings them to an oasis. Isn't that cool? He brings them to a place of rest and peace.

[21 : 00] With the palms. I can just picture them. Just the relief that they felt when they got to that place of goodness. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him. To the one who seeks him.

So we see his goodness in the passage here. His love and his goodness. I want to tell you something about your pastor for a moment. Todd was at the boys' ranch when I was, well, he had been, he was in the military.

He was in the army when I came here as pastor. But he came back. He worked with our youth group for a while. He worked at the Alpine Boys' Ranch working with troubled kids. He was doing those things. And we did some hikes.

Actually, we tried to climb Mount Stewart once. We didn't quite make it. We went up towards Stewart Lake and crashed through the woods and up onto one of the passes up there. Dropped on the other side. We got stuck in snow up to here.

So we didn't make it to the top. But we did some hiking together. We did a lot of things together at that particular time. When Julie passed away, Todd James drove over to my house probably five times the first two months.

[22:08] And just to be with me. I just want to tell you what he did for me. What that meant to me as a person. Respect, Molly. Yes, respect. But literally what he would do is he would come over and I'd hear a knock on the door.

I didn't even know he was coming. I go over there. I open the door. And he walks in. And we sit in the backyard in some lawn chairs where nobody can hear us talking. And I can share all the stuff that I've been talking about with you.

But more harsh and real because of what I was going through. I could talk to him about just about anything. And I'd talk to him about those things. He would listen. And he would sometimes contend. Todd does contend with you occasionally.

Did you know that? Sometimes he would contend. But I need someone to contend with me at times. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

And then I'd say, Todd, stay for dinner. Spend the night with us. Don't go back to Leavenworth tonight. It's like two and a half hours. Stay here. Nope. Got to get home. Literally five times he came over to my house at least to sit and talk with me.

[23:10] So the goodness of God and the love that I felt from God, from your pastor, was a blessing to me as I went through those times. So anyway, God's goodness.

So what I wanted to say also with that is that God takes us through the hard times and then he brings goodness. I want to tell you a little something. And this is kind of news. Not that you need to hear news in a sermon.

But God has recently brought a girl into my life. And I'll just say that because I didn't know when that was going to happen. I didn't think it was going to happen. I was willing to stay single the rest of my life.

But he has brought a person into my life. And she was a pastor's wife. Her husband died of a stroke three years ago. I stopped to talk to her literally a month and a half ago. And she was in Omaha, Nebraska.

We were on our way to New Jersey to help a church there. And we talked for a while and we've been talking ever since. She's coming here next Sunday. Just to let you know she'll be here.

[24:09] So she's flying in on Saturday. We need to start spending some time together to see what God's going to do or if God's going to do anything. But I want to say, I just want to let you know that the goodness of God is there.

It's coming. And even when we go through very hard times, you have the hope that something is coming. Something good is happening. And God is bringing her. Her name is Carrie. And you'll meet her next week if you're here at church.

But I'm thankful that his goodness has been expressed to me. God is good. Even through the hardships and the difficulties, his goodness comes out. And anyway, there's much more to say about that.

But let's move on from there. We'll finish up our sermon here. Enduring hardship. Let him sit alone in silence. It's good for a man to bear the yoke when he is young.

Yoke of suffering. Let him sit in silence. Be quiet. For the Lord has laid it on him. All these things are things that are difficult to understand. To be quiet in your suffering.

[25:09] To not complain. To not get angry. But you can express yourself to God. But at one point, you have to be silent and simply sit and listen and talk to God and wait.

And the Lord has laid it on him. That's a hard phrase. Because that seems to think that God is bringing the suffering to our lives. And like I said, sometimes I think he does that for a purpose.

But he tells them some things here. And what I want to express about this is let the suffering you experience do its work. Don't try to get away from it. Let it do its work.

Because that's what he's saying here. Let him bury his face in the dust. There may yet be hope. I like that phrase. You know, they used to throw dust on themselves when they were mourning.

But let him bury his face in the dust. There may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him. Which, who wants to do that? Let him be filled with disgrace.

[26:09] Why does God say this? What is he talking about? Turn to 2 Samuel chapter 5. We're going to go there. 2 Samuel 5.

Actually, chapter 16. I think it is. 2 Samuel chapter 16. Yeah, 2 Samuel chapter 16. And this is David.

He's fleeing from his son Absalom who wants to kill him. So, we could get into that. I won't say much about that. But you remember that Absalom killed his brother because of his indiscretion. The things that he did with Tamar, his sister. His full sister. And so, Absalom kills his other brother. David bans him from the kingdom. Absalom leaves. Absalom comes back.

But he feels like his dad doesn't love him anymore. Absalom starts to turn the hearts of the people towards himself. And he rebels against his father. And he wants to be the king. And David is still the king. God made David king.

[27 : 17] He did not make Absalom king. But Absalom was trying to take the throne from his father. So, David is fleeing Jerusalem. And it's really kind of a very sad story. If you look at the passage here, David is fleeing starting in verse 13 of chapter 15.

As he's going along, all these people are coming with him. And everybody's sad. And they're worried for David. They're worried about what's going to happen. Verse 23 of chapter 15. The whole countryside wept aloud as all the people passed by.

The king also crossed Kidron Valley. And all the people moved on toward the desert. So, from the Temple Mount down to the Kidron Valley. The Mount of Olives. If you look at a topographical map of Israel, Jerusalem.

There's a tall mountain, the Mount of Olives. Drops down to the Kidron Valley. Back up to Temple Mount. So, David's dropping down from the Temple. He's walking up the Kidron Valley. And he's leaving. He's leaving Jerusalem.

And everybody that loved him are very sad. And David tells him to take the Ark of the Covenant. Zadok wanted to bring the Ark with them. David says, no, it belongs in Jerusalem.

[28 : 19] Don't bring it. David continued. Verse 30. Chapter 15. David continued. Up the Mount of Olives. Weeping as he went. His head was covered. And he was barefoot.

So, you see him. He's mourning. David is mourning. You don't cover your head and go barefoot. But unless you are mourning. And all the people with him. They're weeping as he goes. And everyone wants to help.

So, they come up. Turn all the way to 16. Look at verse 5 now. Because this is reference to our scripture here. As King David approached Barim. A man from the same clan as Saul's family. Came out there. His name was Shimei. Son of Gerah. He cursed as he came out. He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones. Though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left.

He cursed. Shimei said, get out. Get out, you man of blood. You scoundrel. The Lord had repaid you for all the blood you shed in the house of Saul. In whose place you have reigned.

[29 : 17] The Lord has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin. Because you are a man of blood. So, we'll stop there for a minute. This guy. Shimei's by himself. He's throwing rocks at the king.

The king has a bunch of mighty men around him. All the king's. Some of the king's men. With swords and spears. And this guy's throwing rocks at him. Because he was from Saul's clan. And he felt like David, when he became king, he took the place of Saul.

And so, he was bitter. And he's throwing rocks down at David. And cursing him as he goes along. I love this. The men that are with David. What they said. Then Abishai, son of Zariah, said to the king.

Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head. That sounds like a good biblical statement. That's the mighty men of valor that David had.

Let me go over there. Take that guy's head off. Don't let him say these things to you. But listen to what David says. But the king said. What do you and I have in common?

[30 : 19] You son of Zariah. If he is cursing. Because the Lord said to curse him. To said to him, curse David. Who can ask why do you do this? David then said to Abishai and all his officials.

My son who is of my own flesh is trying to take my life. How much more than this Benjamite? Leave him alone. Let him curse. For the Lord has told him to.

It may be that the Lord will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I have received today. So David and his men continued along the road while Shimei was going along the hillside opposite him cursing as he went.

Throwing stones at him and showering him with dirt. The king and all the people with him arrived at their destination exhausted. And there he refreshed himself. David.

What did he say there? He wanted God to do what he needed to do with his suffering. I will continue to suffer. I don't know what's going on here.

[31 : 18] But God is doing something in my life. And I'm going to let it happen. Don't try to stop it. Now that's not the way we live in the United States of America. If there's any pain what do we try to do?

We take a pill. We take a vacation. We stop all things. We do all things we can do to get out of pain. But what David is saying here and what I see in this passage is sit there in quietness.

Allow the suffering to filter through your mind and your heart because God has a purpose for it. You may not know what it is, but he has a purpose for it. A book that really helped me after Julie died is Jerry Sitzer.

He wrote a book called A Grace Disguised. Jerry is a professor, was a professor at Whitworth College over in Spokane. And he's pastored churches before as well. In the early 90s, they were homeschooling their children.

And they were in a minivan. His four kids, his wife, his mother, and he were in North Idaho. They were driving. They'd gone to an Indian reservation to do some homeschooling thing as a family.

[32 : 24] And they're coming out of the place where they were. And a man going 90 miles an hour hit their minivan. Killed his mother, his wife, and his oldest little daughter. You can imagine.

And he woke up and his other little boy with a broken femur was screaming. And the chaos that was around him of the carnage of the wreck in his family. The remains of his family. And he wrote this book, A Grace Disguised.

It really helped me when I was dealing with my grief. But one of the things he's talked about is how he had this kind of nightmare dream that the darkness was overtaking him. And he couldn't get away from it.

He was trying to run to the west to get away from it. The darkness kept creeping closer and closer. And his brother-in-law said to him, you know, I think what you need to do when the darkness is creeping over you is run into the darkness.

Run into the darkness because the sun is coming up on the other side of that darkness. And I thought that was a really good illustration and how true that really is. David was saying, I'm going to run into the darkness here.

[33 : 24] God is doing something. And I'm willing to see what he's going to do. And I will keep going in that direction. So enduring hardship. We're almost done here.

Let me just go on to the next one. God's grace. These are the verses at the end which are such a blessing. For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion.

So great is his unfailing love. He doesn't willingly bring affliction and grief to the children of men. He doesn't do it willingly. He doesn't want to cause his grief and affliction. But he allows it to happen.

And he does bring it at times because it draws us closer to you. I thought that I loved the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I thought that I was dedicated to him and him alone.

Since my wife died, I've grown so much. I didn't think I needed to. I guess like some of us, we think we've arrived maybe to some degree. But no, I have grown so much memorizing scripture, allowing it to become a part of my heart and life.

[34 : 26] Because of my pain, I was driven to God and to his word. And I just want you to know that that is something that God continues to do in my heart and life. And his grace. And also, my kids know, and I know, and we've talked about it.

But nobody can replace Julie. Nobody can take her place. Nobody will ever take her place. Nobody will ever replace my friend's husband.

But we have to choose to continue to live. That's a choice. And sometimes you have to stand up and say, I choose life. And God has me here still.

I'm not done. And I need to continue to move forward. And that freedom to be able to do that. So God's grace. I felt it in such an amazing way. It's funny as I'm texting back and forth and writing notes to Carrie.

You'll meet her next week. I feel like I'm in junior high again. I write a note. I give it to my friend. My friend gives it to her friend who gives it to her. She writes a note.

[35 : 31] The little games we used to play at junior high, if you remember that. But it's given me a sense of joy again. That life isn't over. My life is not over. And does not need to be over.

Anyway, there's a lot that I've said in this sermon about my life. But I want it to be about suffering. And I want this to be about the mind. Okay? Because we make choices.

Are we going to allow our mind to stay down in the distress and the hardship? Are we going to call to mind God's goodness? Are we going to speak to ourselves that the Lord is our portion and we'll wait for him?

Are we going to choose, make choices? And that can really affect the entire process of your life. The Apostle Paul, we'll get into Philippians chapter 2 next week.

We're going to look at it for two Sundays. We're looking at Philippians chapter 2. If you want to read it beforehand. Where Paul talks about the word *phroneo*, which is the word for think and mind. Have the attitude of Christ.

[36:26] And also be like-minded. He uses that phrase. The way you think affects your life so much, you guys. We don't really realize how much it does. Our thinking needs to be brought into obedience to God's truth and who God is.

And from that place, we can live a hopeful, joyful, peaceful life. Anyway, that sounded like a conclusion, didn't it? That's not, though. You're stuck for a couple more minutes.

These are all the mind words. The mind is key. Our thoughts. Remember, remember. And call to mind. All these thought words. And when I memorized the scripture, I didn't even see these words. It sort of struck me later. The Holy Spirit brought it to my attention. I say to myself, the Lord is my portion. So the mind is key. We remember the loss. We're downcast. We call to mind God's love. It brings hope.

We say to ourselves, the Lord is my portion. And we really believe it. So just in closing, one thing I want to say about this, too, is be honest with God. I love the Psalms. I love the Lamentations.

[37:21] They're not saying, oh, I'm so happy as a follower of God that these bad things happen to me. No, they're saying, what in the world is going on here, God? That's what they're saying. Be honest.

And he can take it. Sometimes I think we think as Christians, we're supposed to just put on this happy face all the time, pretend like God knows how I'm feeling anyway. Lay it out. Tell him how you feel. Their pain is real.

Bring it to God without shame. Just let him know what you're going through and your need for him. Choose to hope. Because of God's love and goodness.

Be able to see that God is still good. God is still loving. And there's still hope that I have. I believe that things will be better. We look at our world today. It's pretty pathetic, isn't it?

But I know God has a plan. And I know that that plan is going to come to fruition. The Lord himself is enough. Even when everything is gone. And that's one thing I'm learning and continuing to learn.

[38:19] That God himself is all that I need. And everything else is superfluous. It's good. But God can do things without it.

It's good to wait quietly and bear the yoke. I've just expressed that enough. You understand what that is. Just to allow yourself to suffer the pain. God does not willingly afflict his children.

But he does use affliction for their good. He has used it for the good of me. I am a better man, I think, since my wife passed away. Because I've reevaluated many things that I said and did.

I will be a better man in the future because of what God has done in my life. I will be closer. I am closer to the Lord because of my affliction. God does not willingly afflict his children.

But he uses it. And I'm very thankful that he does. And your story's not over. Restoration is coming. It is exciting to continue to live.

[39:17] And to see that God can do good things. Now, I know what I've described to you today. My story is kind of extreme. But we all suffer. Every one of us suffer.

Raise your hand if you have suffered. I want to see, okay? I want to see. So we all have suffered. And all I'm telling you today, just in the grand scheme of things, is going to the scriptures and reading them has been such an encouragement to me.

But the way that you express that suffering, get it out. But over a period of time, allow it to do its work. And think the right thoughts.

Don't stay in that place of downcast heart. Because God is still there. And he's still at work in your lives. Let's bow our heads and close our eyes and have a word of prayer.

Thank you.