

From Adversity to Advancement

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[0 : 00] Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ.

Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly. To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. The others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed.

And in this I rejoice, yes, and I will continue to rejoice, because I know that this will lead to my salvation through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now, as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

[1 : 12] Thank you. You can be seated. Let's pray together. God, I pray that you would bless now the preaching of your word, the study of your word. God, let our hearts be transformed. Let us look more like you as we study and apply what we see today.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So I was blessed late last year in December into January of this year to join my pastor, the church that I just came from, on a mission trip to the country of Myanmar.

And Myanmar used to be called Burma, but now it's Myanmar. And we went to lead a pastor's conference. We were able to speak to about 200 men and their wives and families and the orphans of the orphanage that we were staying at and all those types of things.

And we were able to speak to them. And it was a conference explaining how to teach and preach through the book of Ephesians. My pastor had been to Myanmar, to this specific place in Yangon, multiple times.

And this was my first time to go. And it was an incredible journey. But it wasn't the most safe place for us to go. Myanmar is a pretty small country. It's in Southeast Asia.

[2 : 18] So it typically stays out of our, you know, mind. We don't typically think to read how things are going in Myanmar. But in case you didn't know, in February of 2021, the military from Myanmar overthrew the government because they didn't like the way that the election went.

There was a democratically elected president and all those things. And the government didn't like that. They wanted control. So they overthrew the government. And since 2021, Myanmar has been under the reign of the military junta there in Myanmar.

It's not a safe place. There's a lot of – it's a war-torn nation right now. There's fighting happening all over the place. Bombings and killings happening almost daily, it seems like.

And yet, with that lack of safety in the country, not only did we go, but these pastors traveled from all over the country of Myanmar to come meet with us, to come be encouraged by the word of God. It was really a testament to their faith in Christ that no matter what happened to them, Christ was in control. He was good. And so they were going to take the opportunity to study God's word together with a group of people.

[3 : 33] And so they did. No matter how dangerous it was, they decided to travel across the nation. And many Christians there in Myanmar are regularly killed. I mean, churches are getting bombed. Schools – Christian schools are getting bombed.

Pastors' homes are being destroyed. The government or the military will take people's homes and they'll, you know, just take them for themselves, right?

Like, we have the Third Amendment to keep that from happening here, but they don't have that. So these homes are just getting taken and they're being used for the military. But there's a strong – now, well, there's a strong Christian influence there in Myanmar, thankfully.

There's a lot of different people groups. One of the people groups is the Chin people in Myanmar. The Chin people are over 90% Christian. It's an amazing thing. There's the Karen people.

And the Karen people are also very highly – high percentage of Christians there in Myanmar. And so, it's amazing that there's so many believers there in that small country.

[4 : 32] God's doing so many neat things there despite the dangers. People are traveling to hear the gospel, to study God's word together and all of those things. And I have some pictures of my time there in Myanmar.

This is the conference. This is my pastor. Actually, he's teaching the group. This was our translator. Really nice guy. And he's an incredible translator. By the way, if you've never spoken public speaking with a translator, you think that you have enough material for like an hour and a half.

But that turns out to be about 20 minutes worth of material because it throws you off more than you expect to have to wait for them to finish. But it's a cool learning experience.

This is the last day. This is the group with the kids who live there and everything. It was a really neat thing. I have this, which is just a video of them worshiping. If you can hear it, I mean, if not, it's fine. But their worship is unbelievable. It's beautiful. I don't speak the language. Hallelujah. One, two, three, four.

[5 : 34] Yeah, so that is just a little bit of what they, I mean, they're very talented musicians.

It was a really, really neat place to be. But how did God's word, how did the Christian movement even start there in Myanmar? And I'm going to take you on a little bit of a history lesson, okay? Because we're good Southern Baptists, we want to celebrate this person. Anybody here ever heard of Adoniram Judson? Judson? You've heard of Judson? All right, sweet. All right, Adoniram Judson, he's from the 1800s, so it's not surprising if you haven't.

But if you haven't, let me encourage you to go home and read about him because he's lived a fantastically interesting life in Christ. So Judson, in 1813, he and his wife, Anne, they left the United States with another couple for Calcutta, India.

And they went with the Congregationalist Church. They were sent by them. They were the first two couples in our nation's history to leave here, to live in another place for the sole purpose of being missionaries in that country.

[6 : 50] And on the ship over, Judson was studying scripture, and he was studying baptism because as a Congregationalist, he believed in paedo-baptism, child baptizing infants.

And as he was studying scripture, he became convicted and actually changed his denomination to being a Baptist on the ship over after being funded by the Congregationalist Church.

And so he became a Baptist. He was a Christian first. We're always Christians first. But he was a Baptist. And this left him in an interesting spot because when he was in India, he didn't have his funding because the right thing to do was to tell his church who sent him, Hey, I don't align with you guys theologically anymore, so I'm sorry.

But he lost his funding because of that. So he didn't have any funding. So another person named Luther Rice, one of his missionary colleagues, would go around the United States and, you know, stir up support for Judson on the mission that he was on to deliver God's word to the nations.

And so through Luther Rice's efforts and through Adoniram Judson and his wife and the missionary work that they did, this actually began what eventually over time turned into what we know as the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

[8 : 06] So it's an amazing start to that. But Judson went from Calcutta to Burma, which is India. I mean, Myanmar used to be called Burma. And he was there, and he was an incredible, incredible translator.

So he actually developed a Burmese to English dictionary, and another language, native language, he developed a dictionary to English for them as well. So he had done a lot of translating work.

But most importantly, he translated the Bible into Burmese. And, in fact, still today, when we were there, if I quoted Scripture, they would quote Scripture in Burmese.

And they're still quoting from the Judson Bible to this day. This is a testament to how good his work was in the 1800s in translating. But he had all of this success.

I mean, there in Myanmar, and, I mean, multiple people groups point, trace their religious background of Christianity back to Adoniram Judson and his faithful work. And the Bible that they read was translated by him.

[9 : 10] So he had a lot of success. So it must have been an easy experience for him, right? No, it was not at all. Unfortunately, Judson probably knew some of the fruit from his mission work, but he definitely didn't know the reach of his mission work.

And by the time he passed away, his life had been filled with tragedy, with loss, with imprisonment, and with all sorts of struggles that many of us would not want to even touch.

But he faced. He was married three times because his wives died from sickness repeatedly. He lost multiple children in childbirth and after childbirth and early childhood. It was a lot of loss.

He was ostracized from the community. He was actually put in prison because he was assumed to be a British spy. So he spent out two years in a dungeon-esque prison in Myanmar. He wasn't being fed.

His wife actually fought for his freedom. And she brought him a pillow. And inside his pillow had stitched in his work in the Bible translation. So he was able to continue his work there in the prison.

[10 : 17] But Judson lived a life of faithfulness, but it was marked by suffering. And still, despite the suffering that he experienced and endured, the gospel went forth throughout that country.

And still today, the effects of his work and his faithfulness in Christ are seen. Judson got to a place where he had lost his second wife.

And he was so distraught that he literally secluded himself into the jungle of Myanmar. And he pondered death. And he just lived by himself. And the locals thought that Judson was going to die, be eaten by a tiger.

There's tigers in the jungle out there. But instead, he lived. He came back. And he served faithfully. He got to a place that the Apostle Paul describes in 2 Corinthians.

When he says, We have put our hope in him that he will deliver us again.

[11 : 38] Like Paul, God brought Adoniram Judson back from the brink of despair, in the middle of his suffering, to continue on in faithful ministry.

So today, we're going to talk about this idea of adversity leading to the advancement of the gospel. Adversity leading to the advancement of the gospel.

There's two essentials that I want us to consider this morning. Number one, God uses the good and the bad for his glory. We talked last week about the providence of God. He's in control.

God is completely sovereign. God uses the good and the bad for his glory. Number two, spiritual maturity is when you actively look for God's hand, where God is at work.

In the middle of your suffering, through the good times, no matter what we're experiencing in life, we, as spiritually mature believers, should have our eyes set on where God is working.

[12 : 38] So that's what we're going to look at today. So first, the good and the bad. Look at what happens here, starting out in verses 12 and 13. It says, You see, Paul wouldn't have normally described his personal circumstances or given a missionary update this early in a letter.

If you look at every other letter of Paul, he does it near the end of the body of the letter. Before his final farewell, he tells the church that he's writing to, Hey, this is my situation. God's working here.

It's great. And so he doesn't normally do this, but in this case he did, because the church in Philippi had, this wasn't like Paul was responding to a report that he got back from Timothy.

Like, Timothy didn't go to Philippi and then come to Paul and go, Hey, Paul, you know, the Philippians need some encouragement. No, like, the church wrote him a letter. They were concerned for him.

They thought that his imprisonment was their fault because they were Gentiles who'd come to faith. And so Paul, in this, you know, paternal care that he has for the church there in Philippi, addresses their concerns on the front end.

[13 : 56] All right? Just kind of just shows the love that he has for them. Look, he knows their concern, and so he wants them to be calm so they can read the rest of the letter and glean from it what they need to. So he explains his personal circumstances, that he's in prison, but they think it's a bad thing.

They think that because he's in jail, the gospel's not going forth, Rome's never going to hear the gospel, Paul's in jail, the whole thing's done. And this would have been really concerning to the church in Philippi because, you remember, we've walked through this, they supported Paul's

ministry multiple times.

They believed in the gospel, and they believed in his work in sharing the gospel everywhere that he went. So they would have been concerned about this. But Paul says, Look, you guys think that me being in prison has been a bad thing?

It's been a detriment to the gospel. But on the contrary, God is going further and reaching more people because I'm in prison. Suffering can lead to the gospel advancing.

Suffering can lead to the gospel advancing. So this is what Paul is telling the church. Look, I'm not doing the best personally, physically.

[15:09] I'm in jail. I wish I wasn't. But God is using this for his good. So this is a few things that Paul points to, that I want to point to, I guess, in considering how he understood his own imprisonment and the way that the gospel was shared through that.

If you read Acts chapter 20 through Acts chapter 28, so the last nine, eight chapters? Is it eight technically or is it nine? Anyways, those last chapters of the book of Acts, what you'll find is Paul goes from being a free man on his way from Ephesus to Jerusalem to being attacked by a mob, being left for dead, severely beaten, and then the Roman commander actually sees Paul there, beaten by this mob, takes him into prison, and then he's held in prison.

He has to go before the Sanhedrin, and then he has to travel to Caesarea. He goes before the governors. He goes before King Agrippa, and then eventually he's on his way to Rome, and he has a shipwreck in Malta.

It's a small island. He has a shipwreck. He gets bit by a snake, and look, that's probably the worst part. I hate snakes. I mean, like, if I was Paul and I saw a snake, I mean, anyways, he got bit by a snake and just shook it off into a fire.

It was crazy. But anyways, from there he makes it to Rome. He makes it to Rome. And so he is going through these different places, but there's a few things that I would point to as evidence of the suffering that leads to the advance of the gospel.

[16:48] Number one is suffering can be expected. You know, before Paul went to Jerusalem, he knew he was going to be arrested. He told the church in Ephesus, the leaders of Ephesus, he said, I don't know where I'm going, only that the Holy Spirit warns me that in every town chains await.

And then there's this guy in Acts 21 named Abagas. He's a prophet. He came and he met Paul, and he took off Paul's belt and tied his hands and tied his feet and laid on the ground, and he said, like basically, this bondage is what waits for the person who owns this belt.

So Paul knew that going to Jerusalem meant certain imprisonment. Suffering can be expected. Number two, suffering provides new platforms for proclamation.

You remember those people that I just said that Paul had to stand before? Well, in every single case, he told his testimony of salvation in Jesus Christ. Before the Sanhedrin, he did it in Aramaic so that they would hear him and understand him and want to listen.

Before Agrippa and Festus and Felix and all these people, he stood there boldly and proclaimed the gospel. He said of the work that Jesus had done in his life and that that's why he's arrested.

[18:01] So suffering, our suffering can provide new platforms for us to share the gospel, to proclaim the gospel. And then the third thing, and this is just a hard reality, but suffering is part of God's plan.

Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world, which means we will experience suffering in our lives.

There's probably not a person, there's not a person in this room who hasn't experienced suffering already.

And I hate to be the bearer of bad news, you will experience it again. We will experience suffering. But here's the thing, God didn't just see Paul in prison and say, I bet I can use this.

Like, this could be kind of good for me, actually. No, no, no. God is sovereign. God's in control. God had Paul exactly where he was, knowing the sinfulness of man, the sinfulness of the Jerusalem mob, the sinfulness of the leaders in Rome.

God knew all of those things and used them so that Paul could stand before these different people and proclaim the gospel message. By the time he got to Rome, he met with the Jews in Rome, and they all knew that he was there on behalf of Christ.

[19:18] So look what happens next here in verse 14. So the second thing is, faithfulness through suffering increases confidence.

Confidence. Not just in Paul, but in the brothers as well. People who were encouraged to share the gospel more boldly because they saw him boldly stand before these people and live in this prison experience.

I read this somewhere this week. I can't remember where, but courage is contagious. Right? Courage is contagious. When you see Paul, the apostle, in prison but not scared, completely trusting that God's in control, that courage in the face of the suffering and the persecution and the imprisonment was an encouragement.

It was contagious to the brothers there in Rome to get out and share the gospel even more. So Paul says, look, the gospel's advanced. I've shared with the imperial guard.

By the way, the imperial guard, these Roman soldiers, these were Caesar's hand-picked soldiers. These people were like the Navy SEALs today. They were like top of the line.

[20 : 39] And part of their duty was to be chained to the prisoners of high importance. So Paul was chained to a Roman soldier, an elite Roman soldier, every day, 24-7.

And if you know anything about Paul, you just know if somebody's going to be chained to him, they're going to hear the gospel. You know what I mean? He didn't miss that opportunity. So this whole imperial guard is hearing the good news of Jesus.

They know why Paul's in prison. And they're being told the gospel repeatedly. The gospel is able to make the courage in the face of trial something worthy of being shared.

So think about the people in your life who have faced suffering and they've done so courageously. Isn't that an encouragement to you and your faith?

To see the person who's struggling with a cancer diagnosis, with the loss of a loved one, the loss of a child, to see someone face these horrible, sinful circumstances, and to do it with the confidence that God's in control, that he'll use it for his glory, to still use that suffering as an opportunity to tell more people about Jesus, isn't it encouraging?

[21 : 56] I think about the people of Myanmar, and they're facing, you know, danger every single day. That's legitimate suffering. Like, they don't know if their house is going to get bombed.

That's a terrifying reality. And yet, they were able to gather, a group of 200 of us gathered during this time in Myanmar was probably not the best idea, but God protected us.

And to hear these people who traveled across this country, who could have been arrested, could have been put into, forced into military service, could have been killed, but they got there anyways, and to hear them tearfully sing praise to Jesus, I mean, I'm telling you guys, that was encouraging to me.

That's contagious. To see them suffer faithfully is an encouragement to me to preach faithfully, where I'm not suffering. So think about those who are suffering and do so well.

And then also, when we experience suffering, we need to be those people who suffer and who do it well. The last thing with the good and the bad here is that the gospel advanced regardless of motive.

[23 : 07] So if you look at verses 15 through 17, to be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. These preach out of love, knowing that I'm appointed for the defense of the gospel. So there are some people who were encouraged to share the gospel more and more and to do so fearlessly because they said, Paul, this is an injustice, he shouldn't be in jail, but you know what?

If he's in jail for Christ, then I can too. I could go to jail too. I don't even care. So they're boldly proclaiming the gospel. They were defending the gospel with him. And this was a good thing. They did this out of love and goodwill. But the others, this other group, they proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they'll cause me trouble in my imprisonment. The idea here is that thinking they'll rub my chains, right?

They'll make my wrists hurt even more. They'll annoy me, right? These people were sharing the gospel. They saw Paul. They knew of him. Maybe they were Jewish Christians who didn't like some of his stances on the Gentile, you know, Christian life.

And so they weren't heretics. He didn't say that they were heretics or anything like that. Like they weren't blasphemers. They were just people who didn't agree with Paul. And they saw this opportunity to develop their own platform as something that would hurt Paul.

[24 : 21] That's something that would bring pain and more suffering that would add on to his suffering. So these people were sharing the gospel from a terrible motive. And yet, God was glorified.

Look what Paul says here in verse 18. What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice. Listen, I have a younger brother. I can't say a little brother because he's like 6'3". I haven't been able to say a little brother since I was like 7. I mean, he's always been bigger than me. But James, as my brother, he is a, one of those like even-keeled, you know, dudes.

You know what I mean? He's just, it's hard to get him worked up unless you talk bad about his favorite sports teams. But if he knows that you're trying to agitate him, then without fail, he will sit there with a stone-cold look on his face and just like, yeah, whatever.

Doesn't bother him. And as an older brother, let me just say, nothing makes you more mad than when you can't annoy your younger sibling. You know what I'm saying? But I have to imagine these people were preaching from the false motives.

[25 : 34] I mean, they were like, yeah, that'll show Paul. And then he said, what does it matter? Only that in every way Christ is proclaimed. And they were like, are you serious? It didn't make him mad. And that had to be a humbling reality for them.

But even from bad motives, God was able to proclaim his truth. This is a reminder to us, by the way, I said earlier, we're Christians first and then Baptists.

Listen, just because somebody doesn't align perfectly with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 does not mean that they're not a Christian. It doesn't mean that their church should be like blasted on social media telling people to stay away and instead come to the Baptist church.

God's able to use people who disagree with us on issues that aren't essential to the gospel to still share the gospel and lead people to Christ. Then hopefully, eventually, they'll come to our Baptist church.

But no, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. God is able to use the good and the bad both in our circumstances and in the motives with which we preach.

[26 : 41] And by the way, we're guilty of doing things from the wrong motives as well. We want people to come, so we'll, you know, post on social media our Bible verse that we've been studying that day and then we say, come join us at church.

And like, part of it is we want people to read the Bible, but most of it is we want our church to get bigger or, you know, we want people to think highly of us for the fact that we're studying Scripture. and still, even though we have these wrong motives sometimes, these sinful motives, God's able to still use His Word to go forward and to do a mighty work in people's lives.

Even in our sin, God is still good. So the last thing here is the spiritual maturity, looking for God at work. So I just want to look at these last two verses real quick, okay?

Verses 19 and 20. It says, because I know this will lead to my salvation through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ, my eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now, as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or death.

The second essential here is looking for God's hand is kind of the application of this entire thing. We can know that God is in control. We can know that God is sovereign, but if that doesn't change the way that we live at all, then that knowledge does us very little good.

[28 : 11] It's like knowing how a microwave works, like knowing how to use it really, really well. But if you don't put your food in the microwave, you don't put your bag of popcorn in there, it's not going to pop, right?

You've got to apply what you know if you want to get the result. And in this case, we have to apply what we know about God, that He is in control, that He's sovereign, that He has, He's provident, He's providentially over all of our lives.

And we apply this by looking for God at work and seeking to glorify Him through every circumstance that we find ourselves in. So the second reality in verses 19 and 20 kind of reveal an issue that many of us have.

We have this human nature that is self-centered. Can I get an amen? Amen? Okay, a few of you. We have a self-centered nature.

We look at our suffering and we turn all of the attention inward. We pray and we ask God, God, why would you make, let this happen to me? Haven't I served you?

[29 : 17] Haven't I given to the church? Haven't I been faithful? Why would you let me go through this loss? Man, that's a, that's a dangerous game to play.

We say that we know that God's in control, but at some point when we face suffering, unfortunately, it becomes nothing but lip service. We trust the big man upstairs.

He's got you. He'll figure it out. Yeah, trust His plan. But then whenever we're actually facing suffering, we don't believe those colloquialisms. Instead, we believe that we're being, you know, martyred by God, it seems like.

We blame Him for our suffering. And God wants us to think more highly of Him than that. God doesn't just put us through suffering so that we can have a pity party and look to Him and say, you know, you were good.

What happened? God's still good in the middle of our suffering. We just live in a fallen world. In 2 Corinthians, Paul says, therefore, we do not give up, even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day, for our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable weight of glory.

[30 : 38] So we do not focus on what is seen, but what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. As we go through life, we will experience suffering, but the way that we respond to our suffering says a lot about the faith that we claim to have in Christ.

So as we experience suffering, here's a few questions to consider. Number one, how can this suffering give me an opportunity to proclaim Christ?

If you've lost somebody that you love, very closely love them, and then you have the opportunity at their memorial service or funeral to share the gospel with a group of people who may or may not know Christ, I mean, that's a pretty solid platform there, an opportunity to share Christ, to proclaim him as king.

What about in the way that you respond to the suffering, where people see you? I mean, I'm not saying to put on a face and fake it until you make it. I'm not saying that at all. What I'm saying is if you truly trust Christ and that's shown with how you suffer, then people will see that.

People will recognize the fact that you are, you're sad, you're hurting, there's no doubt about it, right? Like these realities don't take away the hurt that we feel. Paul's wrists were still sore from the chains, but these realities change our perspective so that as we go through suffering, though we're hurting, we look for ways to proclaim Christ in the middle of it.

[32 : 08] So do you love God enough to trust that your suffering is for His glory? And do you love others enough that the salvation of the lost is more important than the suffering you're experiencing?

The next thing is, how will I look more like Christ through my suffering? How will I look more like Christ through my suffering? Just so you know, going through hard times, persecution, suffering, sickness, death, loss, all of those things, that doesn't just happen just because.

God is not some God who's far off and just looks at our situations and waits for us to turn to Him before He uses the situations. God is at work in all of these things.

He knows the sinfulness of man, the sin that leads to sickness and death and loss and all of those things, and He uses them as opportunities to bring Himself glory, and part of bringing Himself glory is making us, the church, look more like His Son, Jesus.

So how is our suffering going to make us look more like Jesus? And then the third question, and this is the hardest, what if this never ends? What if suffering never ends? Am I still going to be okay with that?

[33 : 20] Am I still going to worship God through that? Am I still going to have an immovable faith no matter what? What if this never ends? And nobody likes it when the preacher talks about stuff like this because it's like, oh, it became real.

Wait, what if it doesn't end? That would not be great. That would hurt. But this is what the text, this passage is begging this question.

As we look at the example of Paul and the way that he went through this experience and the perspective that he had, we have to ask, do we have the same perspective? If we were constantly beaten, put in jail, shipwrecked, bit by snakes, oh, gosh, if we constantly went through those things, would we be okay?

Would our lives still be to the glory and praise of God? It's tough to consider, but what if you were to lose a child or a spouse or your own health, if God was going to use your death for a greater gospel reach than your life, would you be okay with that?

Can you honestly say, God, whether by my life or by my death, let Christ be highly exalted and honored? Because that was Paul's perspective. And this, by the way, this is a sign of spiritual

maturity as we grow in Christ.

[34 : 52] This is the overflow of our love for Christ. And I'm not just thinking about this because we love Paul and we want to, you know, make Paul a big deal or anything like that.

Paul learned how to respond this way because he looked to Jesus. Paul knew the Old Testament. He was a Pharisee, so he knew the Old Testament really, really well. And so he knew that the Christ, the Messiah, Jesus, would have to suffer.

Isaiah 53 says, he was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. Jesus was despised.

Jesus was rejected. Jesus was a man of suffering. And how did Jesus respond to the suffering that he faced? He humbly went to the cross and laid down his life so that somehow, in the work of God, the greatest injustice of all time, the murder of the perfect Son of God, became the very means by which God would glorify himself more than anything else throughout all of human history.

Christ responded to his suffering by enduring to the point of death, to the point of death on a cross. Hebrews 12 says, So Paul is a great example of what this looks like from a human because he was a human being just like you and me.

[36 : 28] But ultimately, Paul points us to Jesus. You and I are able to experience suffering because we have a high priest who experienced suffering and he did it for us.

And Isaiah 53 goes on, it doesn't just tell us that he would suffer, it says that he actually bore our sickness, he bore our afflictions, he bore, he was pierced for our iniquity, our sin.

He was beaten for our transgressions. That Jesus who suffered, he didn't just suffer for the sake of suffering, he suffered so that our suffering can look different because of our hope in him.

So we're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper today. We're about to do it now. I promise I'm wrapping up. But, I want you guys to consider this today.

I want you to think about the suffering that you have faced in your life. It's easier, in hindsight, to look back on suffering and say, yeah, I can see how God was working through that.

[37 : 30] So look back on suffering that you've experienced in life and ask yourself, how was God working there? Where was he glorified in that? And then pray for that God would reveal it to you if you can't find it, if you can't think of that.

And then, I want you to consider the suffering that you might be currently facing or people that you know who are experiencing suffering and pray that God would give us the spiritual insight, the spiritual maturity to see how he's working in the middle of the pain we bear.

How does God want to use your current suffering to point to him as king? If you don't know Christ as Savior, I want you to understand that your suffering, it's not in vain.

It's not useless. Even though you don't know Christ now, Jesus did suffer and like I said, he took our suffering on himself, on the cross, so that as we're perfected by him, when we put faith in him, there's going to be a day where we're in his presence and the pain and the hurt and the tragedy and the backstabbing and the suffering that we experience is gone.

It's not even in the rearview mirror because we're not looking back at it. We're only going to see him and his glory and celebrate the work that he's done and perfecting us by faith in him.

[39 : 08] So if you haven't put faith in Jesus, let today be the day that you do. Maybe you've experienced the life of suffering. Maybe you're hurting. Jesus Christ lived on this earth and suffered and died so that your suffering wouldn't be for nothing.

So put faith in Christ today. Can I pray for us? Can I pray for us? And we'll just have a moment of reflection. Think about these things. Let's pray. God, thank you for who you are. Thank you for your truth. God, thank you that we have this example of Paul who sees the way that you're working through the challenging circumstances of his life and he doesn't just see it and acknowledge it and then look past it but he celebrates the fact that you're at work.

God, let us have that same heart, that same mind to see where you're working through our suffering, to trust you with the result no matter what, whether we're freed on earth from the suffering or whether we're freed in eternity with you.

Lord, let us trust you. God, I pray now for everybody in this room who's experiencing suffering right now that you would give them the eyes to see where you're at work, that your word would just fill their hearts with encouragement as they consider the suffering that you, Jesus Christ, faced on this earth and the way that you've taken our suffering for us.

God, we love you and we praise you and we pray all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. So, we're going to have the Lord's Supper if we'll go ahead and stand for that or prepare for that, I guess.

[40 : 40] And I was going to do the invitation time but we're a little bit past time so I'm going to have to forego it. So, we're going to have the Lord's Supper, okay? So, if you guys would come up and prepare to take the Lord's Supper in order to distribute the Lord's Supper.

We're going to read from 1 Corinthians chapter 11 today. We're going to have