

What Not To Say To Those Who Suffer

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Flop the Bible open to Psalms and go to your left, you'll find a neglected treasure, the book of Job. The book of Job, chapter 4.

And to honor the Word of God, if you're able, I'd like to invite you to stand as I read chapter 4 in its entirety. Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If one ventures a word with you, will you be impatient?

Yet who can keep from speaking? Behold, you have instructed many, and you've strengthened the weak hands. Your words up him who was stumbling, and you have made firm the feeble knees.

But now it has come to you, and you are impatient. It touches you, and you are dismayed. Is not your fear of God your confidence and the integrity of your ways your hope?

[1 : 25] Remember, who that was innocent ever perished, and where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger they are consumed. The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, the teeth of the young lion are broken.

The strong lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered. Now a word was brought to me stealthily. My ear received the whisper of it.

Amid thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, dread came upon me, and trembling, which made all of my bones shake.

A spirit glided past me, and the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern its presence.

[2 : 24] A form was before my eyes. There was silence, then I heard a voice. Can mortal man be in the right before God? Can a man be pure before his maker?

Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error. How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed like the moth.

Between morning and evening they are beaten to pieces. They perish forever without anyone regarding it. Is not their tent cord plucked up within them?

Do they not die, and that without wisdom? This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. In 1987, Michael W. Smith released a song that captured a generation of young Christians.

He sang, Friends are friends forever, if the Lord is the Lord of them. And a friend will never say never, because the welcome will not end.

[3 : 36] Though it's hard to let you go, in the Father's hands we know that a lifetime is not too long to live as friends.

As hard as it is to believe, that song was quite popular. While you may have never sang that song, and definitely never swayed with that song, with your best friend dreaming of forever, it's not an exaggeration to say friends are very important to us.

Friends are the best. Most of the time. You know, it's not always easy to be a friend. Everyone wants to be a friend, but not everyone who wants to be a friend or wants to have a friend has one.

Everyone wants to be a friend, but not everyone knows how to be a friend. Everyone knows what they want a friend to be like, but not everyone knows what they need a friend to be like.

Among other reasons, this is why friendships can bring great joy and great sorrow to our lives. Nevertheless, friendships are one of the great preoccupations of life.

[4 : 50] They're what everyone is talking about. In fact, though, friendship has become harder than we can imagine.

We've lost our way a bit. Numerous studies confirm that the feelings of loneliness and isolation are more prevalent than ever. The number of people who discuss important matters with someone has dropped on average from three to two, which might not seem like a lot, but it's a great amount if you actually think about it.

The number of people who say they don't have a single close friend has quadrupled over the last 20 years. There's a growing consensus that the number one health crisis facing America right now is not cancer or obesity or heart disease.

It is loneliness. One senator wrote, What's wrong with America starts with one uncomfortable word, loneliness.

We all know. We talk about our friends, my people, my tribe, and yet we're struggling to find friends more than ever before.

[6 : 00] One of the purposes of the book of Job is to show us how to be a friend with those who suffer. At no point in the Christian life is the feeling of isolation more acute than in suffering.

And at no point in the Christian life is the danger of not having good friends more perilous. After the first and second test of the book of Job, we might think, He succeeded!

It's over! Hallelujah! But after Satan slithers away, Job's closest friends arrive. They're quiet for seven days, but then they begin to speak.

The first test, Job lost all that he had and all that he loved. The second test, Job lost all vigor and vitality of life. But in this third test, it'll come from his friends and what they say to him.

You know, they begin well. They clear their calendars. Who's cleared their calendar for seven days for a friend's suffering? They spend seven days weeping with him. In general, that seems good.

[7 : 15] They generally mean well. They share what they think is best for Job to hear. They share what they think is the whole truth, but they don't know what they don't know.

And what they do know and what they do share is completely unhelpful. It's the third test that Job will face, and it's a long one.

Eighty percent of the book of Job is spent in conversation with these three friends. Eighty percent of this book.

And I'm trying to sum up what the first three of them say in one message. Now, other parts of the Bible discuss suffering and evil. We can think of Psalm 13.

We think of Ecclesiastes. We can think of John 11, different parts of the Bible. They talk about suffering and evil. But Job is unique in that it focuses on the word spoken to those who suffer.

[8 : 15] Why is so much of the book of Job spent on the word spoken to those who suffer? Because most of what we say to those who suffer is lousy.

And we have to learn how to speak. In a word, where we're going is don't cause your friends to suffer harm. Use your words to help others suffer wisely and well.

A companion of fools suffers harm. So don't cause your friends to suffer harm. Use your words to help others suffer wisely and well. I've entitled this message, What Not to Say to Those Who Suffer.

The friends of Job are completely unhelpful. But if you've ever read the book of Job without a study Bible or someone guiding you, it's not always easy to tell. They speak so well.

They have rhetorical flourish. It's beautiful the way they say. They say things that sound so true, but they're unhelpful. Not by how they say what they say, but of what they say.

[9 : 23] John Calvin, in his commentary, preached three massive volumes. They're his sermons from 1546 and following. He said this in the opening page of his commentary.

He said, when we understand, now this will help you locate the rest of Job. When we understand that Job sustaining a good cause, that means arguing a good cause, argues it badly, and the others sustaining a bad cause, argue it well.

We have a key that opens the entire book. I think that's so helpful. Job sustains a good cause, which we'll talk about next week, but does so poorly, badly.

The friends sustain a bad cause, but argue it well. They're unhelpful because of what they say, even though the way they say it can make us think they're saying good things.

There's three things, I think, that they don't say, or they don't understand, they don't get that they're wrong. One is there's no innocent suffering, no waiting for judgment, and no mystery.

[10 : 26] No innocent suffering, no waiting for judgment, and no mystery. So those are our points. The first is no innocent suffering. They have no category for innocent suffering. The first problem, and perhaps the main problem with what they say is they have no category for innocent suffering.

Now these friends, we've talked about these friends, Taylor did several weeks ago. They're three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, three friends of Job. They're three cycles of speeches.

So each of them speak three, well, two of the three of them speak three times. It appears Job cuts off Bildad the third time he speaks.

So there's almost three cycles. But there's still three cycles of speeches and interactions between Job and these friends from chapter 4 to chapter 27. Eliphaz is the first to speak.

That'd be fascinating to talk about what they all bring to the table. It's a little bit different, but this morning I'm kind of trying to summarize what they all say together. There is some variation, but generally there's the same.

[11 : 32] And you saw as we began, Eliphaz preaches first, or speaks first, and he begins pretty well. He says, he acknowledges how Job was a good man. Look at verse 3. You've instructed many.

You've strengthened the weak. You've upheld the one who's stumbling. You've made firm the feeble knees. They're nice here. They're not so nice as they get further along, but they're acknowledging the man that Job was.

We know he's the greatest man that ever lived, is what the narrator tells us. He fears God, turns away from evil. But then they move to the heart of what they're trying to say.

The main message they try to say. Look in verse 7. He says, remember Job, who that was innocent ever perished, or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

So he's getting at the heart of what he has to say to Job. And he says, you're sitting there in the ashes. You're cursing the day of your birth. As we read about in chapter 3.

[12 : 38] You're saying, why was I born? If this is the way life was going to turn out. Why was life given to me if all my days were trouble? And he's saying, Job, you must remember that trouble does not come from nowhere.

I know things have been hard, but you're reaping what you have sown. Eliphaz says it again. Look in chapter 5, verses 6 and 7, which I think we have for you.

He says, for affliction does not come up from the dust, nor does trouble sprout from the ground. But man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

So affliction doesn't come from the dust. It doesn't come out of thin air. It doesn't just appear one day where it wasn't before. It doesn't come like that, nor does it sprout up. It's not like a weed that grows without being planted.

No, trouble comes by sowing. And trouble comes by reaping what you have sown. Trouble does not just appear.

[13 : 41] So Eliphaz is kind of saying to him, Job, you must embrace the discipline of the Lord. That's what he says later on. All this suffering, all this loss, all that has happened to you.

It is the Lord trying to get your attention. You're reaping what you have sown. Bildad speaks next, and it's not his kind.

He says the same goes for your children. Look at this sentence. He says, if your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression.

He says, no, no, this storm didn't take out your kids. Your kids, they got what they deserve. Can you imagine saying that to someone who's lost every member of their family?

Zophar doesn't say much different. Now, what the friends say to Job is often true. Suffering is often because of personal sin.

[14 : 50] We know that in the Bible, sin always leads to consequences, trouble and suffering. Adam sins, and then comes guilt, shame, and death.

David sins, and he writes, I was filled with burning, feeble, and crushed, groaning. We know David's sin brought all sorts of wreckage into his family.

Proverbs says, whoever conceals his transgression does not prosper. What's the opposite of prospering? Trouble. Scripture repeatedly teaches that cause and effect, there's a cause and effect between what we do and what we receive.

Man reaps what he sows. God cannot be mocked. How could you reap what you haven't sown? You sowed trouble, you sowed sin, so you reap trouble.

That's what they're saying to Job. So the friends are right. Suffering often is because of personal sin. But they're wrong because suffering is not always because of personal sin.

[15 : 50] It's not always because of personal sin or because God is trying to make you grow in some way. Douglas O'Donnell writes, the friends of Job are dead right.

Sin always, always has consequences. Various sufferings of sorts. It may be physical pain or physical suffering or perhaps a slow but sure searing of the conscience.

But they are dead wrong that suffering always, always is traced back to sin. They're right. Suffering always has consequences.

This is why it's hard to read the book of Job. But they're wrong in saying that suffering always is traced back to sin. Personal sin. So if the rule is suffering, it's often because of personal sin, then the book of Job is an exception to the rule.

Now you're learning the rules of English grammar, which is like the hardest language to learn if you learn it from the outside. It's helpful to learn that I comes before E. It helps you spell, believe, and grieve and move right along.

[16 : 57] But before long, your teacher says to you, I comes before E, but there are exceptions to the rule. I comes before E except after C and sometimes Y.

But even that's not all. One meme I saw said, I comes before E except after C. And when your foreign neighbors, Keith and Heidi, sees their eight counterfeit heifer slaves from feisty caffeinated weightlifters of average height in a heist.

Weird. All of those are exceptions to the rule, right? There's tons of exceptions to the rule. Well, one exception to the rule in the way suffering works in this world is innocent suffering.

We know. So we're poised, right? We know Job is innocent. We know he's blameless and upright, fears God and turns away from evil.

God himself has said it. The narrator has said it. The friends don't know it. It's given us a window. We should be poised and ready to say, you're wrong!

[18 : 03] As we read this, Job is blameless and upright, fears God, turns away from evil, yet he suffers greatly. Job is treated like the worst sinner ever.

There's only one man treated worse. Job's story, though, in being treated in this way was for a purpose.

Job's story is like the man born blind in the Gospels. You remember the people come to him and say he's blind because of sin. They assume he's blind because of sin. They ask Jesus, is this man blind because of his sin or his parents' sin?

What's Jesus say? He says he's not blind because, or this man's not blind because this man's sin or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. And so the same thing is going on in Job.

Job suffers not because of his sin or his parents or anyone else's, but so that the works of God might be displayed. So all this means don't assume that everyone who is suffering is suffering because of sin.

[19 : 12] What not to say? This is what, don't assume that everyone who is suffering is suffering because of sin. Now Job's friends don't know what God thinks of him.

Job doesn't know what God thinks of him. But we know that God thinks of him. We know what God thinks of him so that we might learn how suffering works. And suffering is not always because of sin or because God wants you to grow in some way.

We often assume that there's always a cause for trouble. I think we think things that we would never say in public. We see someone whose husband committed adultery and we think, I bet she wasn't easy on him.

I bet it'd be hard to live with her too. We see someone who's suddenly fired and slandered and we think, he looks lazy.

I bet he didn't work hard. We see someone who's deeply downcast and discouraged, whose life is in disarray and disorder. And we assume they must have sinned in some ways.

[20 : 19] But it's not always because of sin. And so the book of Job is meant to help you check your assumptions at the door. One of the most tragic stories of suffering in the history of the church is William Cooper.

Cooper, several hundred years ago, was a well-known close friend of John Newton. So John Newton wrote Amazing Grace. And you know him as that hymn writer.

Cooper was a well-known hymn writer in his own right. But what is less known about Cooper is how he battled darkness and discouragement, like few others, like few I've ever read about. His mom died when he was six.

Fifty-three years later, Cooper received a letter, a portrait from a friend of his mother. And Cooper said, I heard the bell tolled on that burial day.

I saw the curse that bore her away. And turning from my nursery window, drew a long sigh and wept adieu.

[21 : 28] Wept goodbye. Fifty-six years later. Fifty-three years later. He's acutely aware of the pain. He went to boarding school and like what was common in England those days, he was cruelly bullied and likely abused.

He never recovered mentally from boarding school. After a two-year engagement, his fiancé's father broke the engagement. He was never married.

His fiancé was never married and supported him in later parts of his life. At 31, he suffered a psychotic breakdown, tried to kill himself, and was committed to an asylum.

In God's mercy, though, it was run by a Christian. And six months later, he became a believer. Cooper appears to have experienced a true conversion, but he continued to battle deep darkness, discouragement, and depression.

During one of those bouts, he wrote this hymn, which we have for you. He said, Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?

[22 : 38] Where is the soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His Word? The dearest idol I have known, whatever that idol be, help me to tear it from Thy throne and worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God, calm and serene my frame. So pure light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.

You know, this hymn is devastating, actually. It may have been sung by many believers, but what Cooper is saying, he's saying, there must be some hidden idol that makes me feel so sad, so lonely, so depressed.

But is that right? Or could it be that he lost his mom? Could it be that at the end of his engagement and his unfruitful life as a result is breaking him?

Could it be that he was bullied and abused? It appears Cooper has no category for innocent suffering. He has no category for mysterious suffering. And so we have to ask, do we have this category?

[24 : 06] Do we have a category for innocent suffering? Do we have a category for suffering that's disconnected from anything we do? Point two, no waiting for judgment.

No waiting for judgment. The second problem of the friends is that they have no category for a delay in God's judgment. They say again and again, if someone is suffering, it must be because of their sin.

It must be because of the judgment of God. You should have your Bibles in chapter 4 and you see this immediately. Look down in verse 9. Right after Eliphaz says, who that was innocent ever perished and those who reap, they reap what they sow.

Look in verse 9. He says, by the breath of God they perish. The blast of his anger, they are consumed. What he's saying is the principle of cause and effect, reaping and sowing is not just an impersonal principle.

It is tied to the personal judgment of God. And so God judges sin immediately and completely. God brings personal judgment.

[25 : 13] He becomes angry and he brings down judgment and punishment. Later in chapter 5, he says, God frustrates the devices of the crafty so that their hands achieve no success.

He catches the wise in their own craftiness and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end. They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope at noonday as in the night.

He's saying, this is what God does. He frustrates these things. He catches the wise and the schemes of the wily. They're brought to quick end, you see. They meet in the darkness in the daytime, but by the noonday, the next day, they're busted in the night.

He's saying, God brings judgment immediately. And so Job, though, he defends himself. He says, this is not the judgment of God. I'm not suffering because of judgment. But the friends will have no, they'll hear nothing of it.

They say, if Job is innocent and is suffering, then God must be unjust. How could an innocent man suffering, it throws apart their whole system, their whole way of understanding the world and understanding what God is doing in the world.

[26 : 29] Christopher Ashe, in his commentary, develops what he calls the system of theology of the three friends. He says, and summarizing this system, he says, God is absolutely in control.

And we saw that from the beginning of the book of Job. God is absolutely in control. Satan asked for permission from God. God's absolutely in control. God is absolutely just and fair.

We know that to be true as well. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. So God's absolutely in control. God's absolutely just and fair. But in their system, point three, they say, therefore God punishes wickedness and blesses righteousness and soon and certainly in this life.

Therefore, if I suffer, I must have sinned and have been punished justly for my sin. Do you see? That's the system. That's what holds it together.

Their system is almost true. It's halfway true. As we've seen, God's absolutely in control.

[27 : 35] We know God is just and fair. Therefore, God will bring judgment. The difference between their theology and the theology of the Bible is that they say judgment is now.

Psalms 1 says, the wicked will not stand in the judgment. But they argue that judgment falls now on sin.

There are moments where judgment falls immediately. we think of the story of Uzziah who tries to help the cart that's carrying the ark of the Lord in the Old Testament and when it falls over he tries to hold it up with his unclean, unholy hand and the Lord strikes him down.

We think of Ananias and Sapphira who sell money to give to the church but lie about what they sold and they're struck down immediately. They join together. They have no communication problems in their marriage.

They're united in lying against the Holy Spirit and the Lord brings immediate judgment but the reality is God does not bring judgment immediately on everyone in this world.

[28 : 43] So the friend's theology is neat and tidy but it's disastrous. Essentially what they say and this is haunting they say if your prayers go up the blessings will come down. We might sing that you know if your prayers go up the blessings will come down.

Again and again they tell Job to repent and turn to God. They tell Job to turn in repentance but really they're offering them the devil's temptation again.

The devil is tempting because he said does God does Job fear God for nothing? Does Job love God for who he is or for what he gives but they say if you turn you'll get all the stuff.

Repentance is not about grief over sin it's about getting these things back from God so bring your prayers so that the blessings come. Look at what they say in chapter 8 5-7 if you will seek God and plead with the almighty for mercy surely then he'll rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation and though your beginning was small your latter days will be very great so you might have been the greatest man in the world back then.

Imagine what you'll be in the later days. You see they're offering him the devil's temptation again. they're offering him a crooked God that's not the way that God works but obviously what they say the reverse is neglect those prayers and down come the curses.

[30 : 09] So they say again and again Job what's happening to you is a judgment of God you lost your family you lost your possessions you lost your wealth you lost your friends you've lost everything because of the judgment of God.

The most disastrous thing about their theology is their view of God. Turns God into a vending machine. It turns him who is the Lord the Lord a God merciful and gracious slow to anger abounding in steadfast love it turns him into he whose favor must be earned.

it turns him into he who must be paid off he who's not filled with love so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son it turns the living God into a hired hand into a mercenary and so again and again a haunting question that filled one of the we read it just a moment ago but it fills the rest of Job can mortal man be in the right before God can man be pure before his maker and instinctively because we we're aware that we're a sinner we've sinned against God instinctively our answer is no but really what that question is saying is can man have a relationship with God by grace where he's not paying God off with the things he does can man ever be off the treadmill can he ever truly know that God loves him and that God's called him to walk with him and that's the question we have to say yes

Job knew it he knew he was walking with God the deepest agony of his suffering was not the loss of everything he had it was the fear that he was losing God man can walk with God and know him truly and so we should not assume don't assume that everyone who is suffering is experiencing the judgment of God now there's an inconsistency in the in the friends you know if judgment is immediate and now why is anyone alive right I mean these these are astute guys they know they know the inconsistency so why do they say this again and again to Job it seems to me that their theology is a way of making them feel better now looking at what

Job lost like what were they thinking seven days looking at Job now they shouldn't have been silent that long but they're sitting there with him seven days looking at what they lost what are they thinking how come this hasn't happened to us what's the reason Job lost everything and we haven't the only answer they can give is that we're better than Job we're morally superior we pray more that must be it we read more we humble ourselves more we love God more and he must love us more that's the only reason and so as they talk they just begin to talk to feel better about themselves and so we're vulnerable when relating to people who are suffering greatly to think we're better we're vulnerable to relating them in such a way that we're convinced we're better than they are we're vulnerable to making ourselves feel better in the way we relate to them

[34 : 03] Christopher Ash says in his commentary the privilege of speaking with sufferers is one that is easily abused why how is it easily abused one is we talk too much why because it's talking at those who suffer greatly is a whole lot easier than hearing them talk it's easier we feel better but hearing them describe agonies hearing them cast burdens hearing them talk about what is scary and heartbreaking It's a lot harder and so the privilege of talking with them is abused Eric Ortlund advises us and I think this is very helpful he says as we speak to sufferers we must continually constantly be asking ourselves who we are really trying to comfort our friend or ourselves it is very easy to think we are consoling our friend when we are really more interested in our own comfort we've all been exposed to that someone coming in to help us or to offer something where they end up talking the whole time and we end up thinking to ourselves well this was really just all about you you know it's really all about your good work or whatever you wanted to do it's really all about you the friends think they're better than

Job but they're not the reality is the Lord admonishes the friends but commends Job Job's not suffering because he's experiencing the judgment of God it's quite the opposite Job is suffering so horrifically!

because he's dear to God sometimes God plucks out those he especially loved and calls them to suffer there's no one like Job he's the greatest person alive as we walk with those who are suffering rather than looking at ways to make us feel better we should be saying this is not the judgment of God so often we're in this legal world so we're so often tend to think if this is coming down the pike it must be because God doesn't love me or God wants to beat me into place pound me out or something like that no we have an opportunity to say this is not the judgment of God though God may appear harsh right now he is not he's the God of our Lord Jesus Christ so hold the line wait for judgment don't give in to this temptation that's what we have the privilege of saying again and again trust in the Lord all will be sorted out all will be well trust in the Lord wait on the Lord and take courage so rather than making us feel better let us offer that point three no mystery this is intentionally the shortest because it's the shortest accent in their speeches no mystery the third problem of the friends they have no category for mystery

God is completely sovereign God is completely just you are suffering it must be judgment that's their system you know in the peanuts cartoon Lucy said to Charlie Brown there is one thing you're gonna have to learn in life you reap what you sow you get out what you put in no more no less and Snoopy mutters in the corner I'd like to see a little margin for error that's pretty funny you guys are not laughing that's alright it's a sermon on Job I get it you know but the friends theology is air tight it's neat and tidy there's no holes there's no it all there's there fix it all that's who they are but the problem is does mortal man know the mind of God does mortal man know the plans and purposes of God to which we must say no several times the friends mocked Job for saying he's right with God that he has nothing deserving of death Zophar mockingly said oh that God would speak and open his lips to you and that you would tell you the secrets of wisdom can you find out the deep things of God there is definitely sarcasm there can you find out the limit of the almighty

Eliphaz adds later have you listened to the counsel of God have you been in the throne room do you know how he's governing the universe do you limit wisdom to yourself what do you know that we don't know what do you understand that is not clear to us but this is where the deepest irony of the book is they're the ones claiming to know the mind of God not Job that's what happens you get around and know it all he's claiming the mind of God he's drawing judgment before the day he's leaving no room for mystery Job never learns why he suffers God never tells him about the throne room God never tells him that he's blameless and upright that he has no one like him in the world and often times God doesn't tell us why don't assume you know everything about why you or someone else is suffering who has known the mind of the

[39 : 41] Lord or who has been his counselor God is God and you are not he does not report to you or me he does not tell you everything leave room in your theology for mystery now it's not all mystery because God's word speaks clearly but there is mystery there is no mystery in the friends but you will not make it through the suffering of this life with sanity and joy without room for mystery so leave room for it don't cause your friends to suffer harm use your words to help others suffer wisely and well now all of us are more like Job's friends than we care to admit we're self righteous cruel unkind we can make a casserole for a friend and drive away congratulating ourselves our sympathy is shot through we talk too much we talk too much about ourselves we need

God to forgive us we need a friend who's not like us we need Jesus Christ you know so many ways the book of Job paints a picture of Jesus Christ he is the innocent one who suffered more than any other person and all that he suffered was not because of sin and definitely not because God wanted him to change in some ways but he's also the friend of sinners no longer do I call you servants he said on the night he was betrayed I've called you friend greater love has no one!

than this that man lay down his life for his friends but I must say I've been a pastor at this church for almost seven years is that right?

yeah sorry math I was a lit guy you know I'm impressed by how you care for those who suffer you are not like Job's friends I love watching you be friends to one another you've been a friend to me and so!

it's not corrective and my hope is because of the gospel we learn about these friends and we're not nervous to help those who suffer but because of the gospel and the comfort we receive in Christ we run to those who suffer we help those who suffer now not everybody suffers you know not everybody in this room is suffering some of you are and we have the tremendous privilege to suffer together every Christian is a saint a sinner and a sufferer at the same time we have the privilege to walk together

[43 : 34] Paul Tripp says in his book on suffering one of the sweetest gifts to us between the already of our conversion and the not yet of our home going is the gift to the body of Christ God makes his invisible grace visible by sending people of grace to give grace to people who need grace I'm in that category his people are meant to be the look on his face the touch of his hand the sound of his voice the evidence of his love the picture of his presence and the visible demonstration of his faithfulness God hasn't left us to ourselves but has blessed us with an abundant community of help the question is whether your suffering will drive you inward to go it alone or call you outward in honest humble honest and willing dependency companion a fool suffers harm but a church that uses her words to help one another suffer wisely and well is one of

God's sweetest gifts Father in heaven we humble ourselves before you Lord your word is living and active heaven and earth will pass away but not a word from your word will pass away we pray that you would sustain us keep us hold us carry us as it were as we seek to love one another well in this life and wait your return in Jesus name amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com holy