

POWER IN WEAKNESS: The Sufficiency of God

November 7, 2021

November Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 13:4 For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

Introduction: 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

Big Idea: Believing God functions out of his self-sufficient fullness will change my _____ & my _____.

Paul's beliefs were based upon the Bible and so should mine

- God's Self-Sufficiency: God possesses within Himself, _____ and _____, every quality in _____ measure.
 - INTRINSICALLY - He doesn't get _____ of himself, but he is the source
 - ETERNALLY - None of these qualities God possess wane or _____
 - INFINITE – Not finite but _____ limit or restriction

God's self-sufficiency on display Isaiah 40

- How big God is
 - God's _____ and power (12)
- How perfect God is
 - God's knowledge and _____ wisdom (13-14)
- How superior God is
 - God's authority is above _____ nations (15-17)

What is meant and not meant in these statements:

- He does not mean
 - *I don't care about them.*
 - The proof of his care and love is found in the sending of _____
- He does mean
 - The nations with all their power and wisdom contribute nothing to the fullness of God? _____ !

Life Lessons:

#1-God is not incomplete without me, anyone or anything else. **The creator God of the universe is SELF-SUFFICIENT. Worship Him for who He is!**

#2-While God doesn't need me, He has provided a way through Jesus Christ for me to be eternally safe in His presence & protection. **Live daily depending on the SUFFICIENCY OF GOD!**

Table Talk : PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH SUNDAY

Learning to follow Jesus ALL THE TIME will require a THEOLOGY (God-centered ideas) of SUFFERING. Our aim today is to help you build and add to yours.

Today, just like in the book of Acts, Christians are persecuted all over the world for following Jesus. Christians remain one of the most persecuted religious groups in the world. While Christian persecution takes many forms, it is defined as any hostility experienced as a result of identification with Christ. Christians throughout the world continue to risk imprisonment, loss of home and assets, torture, beheadings, rape and even death as a result of their faith.

Trends show that countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East are intensifying persecution against Christians, and perhaps the most vulnerable are Christian women, who often face double persecution for faith and gender. Every day new reports are made of Christians who face threats, unjust imprisonment, harassment, beatings and even loss of family because of their faith in Jesus. **Every month:** 255 Christians are killed, 104 are abducted, 180 Christian women are raped, sexually harassed or forced into marriage, 66 churches are attacked, 160 Christians are detained without trial and imprisoned.

The following are foundational Bible truths learned from persecuted believers around the world:

Matthew 5:10-12 *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

There is something about hardship that allows us to know God deeply. When times get really tough, we discover more about who God is and how He works. Christians who have endured persecution for their faith, know this well.

There are no easy answers for why God allows his followers to face suffering. However, the lives of persecuted Christians reveal that even when things look out of control believers can rest secure, knowing that God is still in control. He is able to give courage, peace and even joy to stand strong through the storm. It is through these storms that believers discover God's love in new and powerful ways.

Six Foundational Truths to Anchor to build Suffering Theology (adapted from Standing Strong in the Storm, published by Open Door Ministry)

- 1. Sometimes you need to build yourself a cell.** *Be still, and know that I am God—Psalms 46:10*
One Chinese church leader, who spent 23 years in prison, once said this to Christians who did not face persecution: *"I was pushed into a cell, but you have to push yourself into one. You have no time to know God. You need to build yourself a cell, so you can do for yourself what persecution did for me—simplify your life and know God."*

**It is vital that we spend time with God, to grow in Him, so we are prepared to stand strong in the face of persecution.
- 2. God keeps secrets.** *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts—Isaiah 55:8-9* There have been countless stories of persecuted Christians who have died without seeing the fruits of their labor. However, God knows all that has been and all that is to come.

**Our labor is not in vain, it is in His hands.
- 3. Weakness is a direct path to power.** That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong—2 Corinthians 12:10 An Egyptian Christian reflected on the way he was treated when he converted to Christ:

“In great suffering you discover a different Jesus than you do in normal life... Pain and suffering bring up to the surface all the weak points of your personality. In my weakest state, I had an incredible realization that Jesus loved me even right then.”

****True empowerment does not come from human means, but through Christ alone. It often takes being at our weakest point to realize this.**

4. **Overcoming is greater than deliverance.** *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. —Romans [12:21](#)* Suffering is difficult and the natural response is to ask God to remove it from our lives, but these trials often come with the opportunity to both grow our faith and bring glory to Jesus.

****Persecuted Christians often ask us to pray that they would stand strong in the midst of persecution—and not just for persecution to be taken away.**

5. **Extreme hurt requires extreme forgiveness.** *And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments—[Luke 23:34](#)* A Christian widow from Iran said: *“I only had hatred in my heart for my enemies who had murdered my husband. But one day a miracle happened. God taught me how I could love my enemies... I had been praying for this, even though on the deepest level I didn’t want it to happen. Gradually, through a process of ups and downs, God answered this prayer.”*

****The only way we can get through extreme hurt is by forgiving people as Christ did.**

6. **Prayer is the ultimate fellowship.** *Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering—[Hebrews 13:3](#)* Prayer is vital—not only as a direct line to God, but as a way to encourage our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world. [1 Corinthians 12:26](#) tells us that we are one body—when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is lifted up, we all rejoice. Persecuted Christians and Christians in the free world are not two separate entities, but rather are one body. The persecuted church needs the free church to support them and most importantly to lift them up in prayer. The church in the free world learns lessons from the persecuted who have stood strong in the face of persecution. Christ is the head of the body and uses the church (both free and persecuted) in unique and powerful ways.

Ways To Pray for the Persecuted Church

- Sense God’s presence
- Know we are praying for them
- Experience God’s comfort
- See God open doors to evangelism
- Boldly share the gospel
- Mature in their faith
- Be granted wisdom in covert ministry work
- Remain joyful amid suffering
- Forgive and love their persecutors
- Be rooted in God’s Word

CLOSING PRAYER: Pray for the persecuted church using the guide above.