

Suffering Part 4: Setting the Foundation • Phil 3 & 4

Smallpox

1. Smallpox was a highly contagious disease responsible for more death than any other infectious disease in history, more even than the Black Death.
 2. For most victims, it began with a fever & headache.
 - a. Then severe nausea, followed by pus-filled bumps in the skin.
 - b. Some people had them just on the chest and back. Others were covered head to toe.
 - c. $\frac{1}{4}$ of those who contracted smallpox died. Survivors were left permanently scarred.
 - d. Blindness was common, but all who had it carried deep scars for the rest of their lives.
 - e. So many Europeans had it, veils, heavy make-up and false beauty marks became fashionable as people tried to cover the effects.
 3. But there was one upside. Those who recovered, never got it again.
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4. Mary Montague was wife of the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in the early 18th C.
 - a. A brilliant young woman she'd been raised to think for herself.
 - b. Her beloved brother died of smallpox and she herself barely survived.
 5. When she arrived in Constantinople, she was determined to learn how women of the East lived.
 6. She was surprised by their flawless skin, since the skin of most British women was deeply-pitted with smallpox scars.
 - a. She learned that once a year, all young children who'd not had the pox were gathered in groups of a dozen.
 - b. A scratch was made in their arms, then a powder made of scabs of a mild form of smallpox was missed in the blood.
 - c. A week later, those children were sent to bed with a mild fever, headache, and a couple bumps.
 - d. A week after that they rose, now immune to the dread disease.
 7. Mary had her young son take the treatment while the embassy surgeon watched.
 - a. Sure enough, the boy had a mild case of smallpox, recovered, and became immune.
 - b. Mary wrote home, encouraging others to try the cure.
 8. Most of the British medical community scoffed at first, until others duplicated the procedure to find it indeed worked.
 9. By inoculating people with a *mild* form of smallpox, it kept them from contracting the more deadly.
 10. Introducing a weakened virus stimulated the body's immune system to make the antibodies needed to fight off stronger version.
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11. We're administering a *spiritual* inoculation today.
 12. One that combats the deadly effect of the lies Satan tells when we suffer.
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The Foundation / What's Coming

1. This is the final message in our series *When Suffering Comes*.
 2. We finished our study in the Book of Job Wednesday.
 3. Today, this passage in Philippians provides a foundation for how to weather the storms of life.
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4. As I shared in the first message, we need to prepare for hard times.
 5. In January of this year I strongly sensed the need to prepare us for difficult days.
 6. Part of the urgency was due to the fact that the Church in the US *isn't* ready for hard times.
 - a. We've enjoyed a standard of living unheard of in history.
 - b. And some goofy but popular theology has distorted the Life of Faith,

- c. Making it an endless Spiritual Disneyland.
 - 7. The Church in the US is like a cruise ship full of tourists sailing the tropics.
 - 8. We **ought** to be sailors on a warship in the midst of a battle.
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Rapture?

- 1. We here at Calvary believe the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation.
- 2. Critics of that position say it's *escapist*; that we *only* believe it because we don't WANT to be here for the Tribulation.
 - a. Of course we don't want to be here. Who WOULD?
 - b. But that's not the *reason* we believe in a Pre-Trib Rapture.
 - c. We believe it because it best fits all the Bible says about the Rapture and the Tribulation.
- 3. It's not my purpose now to defend our position on this.
 - a. Only to say, holding to a Pre-Trib rapture doesn't mean we believe the Church won't see hard times.
 - b. On the contrary, we expect to – BECAUSE Jesus said we would // In John 16:33 He said >>

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

- c. As our culture's turned its back on God to become even more worldly, people of faith ought to expect even more trouble.
- 4. Being Pre-Trib doesn't mean we expect everything to be soft pillows and cotton candy right up to the Rapture, then it all goes to hell overnight.
- 5. No, the Tribulation is just the ***climax of trends*** that have been in play for a long time.
 - a. Indeed, it's the presence of those trends *already at work in the world* that move us to conclude the Tribulation is close.
 - b. And if the Tribulation is close, the Rapture is closer.
 - c. But! And this is important, we ought to *expect* things to become increasingly difficult for God's people ***before*** the Rapture.
- 6. We're already seeing it.
 - a. Pastors are thrown in jail for holding church services.
 - b. Preaching Biblical morality is called hate speech and results in arrest.
 - c. Christian business owners are sued for living out their convictions.
 - d. The **Equality Act** being pushed thru Washington would require churches & Bible schools to accept views of sexuality prohibited by God.
- 7. In 2 Thess 2, the Apostle Paul warns of a massive apostasy, a great falling away from the Faith in the End Times.
 - a. It's already begun with what's called *Christian Progressivism* -
 - b. The fastest growing movement in the Evangelical Church.
 - c. There's no *progress* in Progressivism. On the contrary, it's *regressive*.
 - d. It's nothing but a reheated version of the *theological liberalism* of the 19th C.
 - e. It denies the Gospel. It's not *Christian*, regardless of what it claims.
 - f. Progressives wants to be a *friend* of the world rather than *faithful* to God.
 - g. They'll quickly find they're neither.
 - h. But right now, it's popular and growing rapidly, especially among young adults.
 - i. Some of you have friends and loved ones caught up in it.
 - j. You know how angry Progressives are toward those of us who hold to The Gospel.
 - k. Something's wrong when they argue with us but have no argument with the world.

8. A divide is happening before our eyes in the Evangelical church, a great falling away just as Paul warned.

Now Is the Time

1. So, now is the time for us to lay a solid foundation against the dark and difficult days surely ahead.
2. That's what this series has aimed at.
3. Job resisted the temptation to curse God in the midst of his suffering by tenaciously clinging to what he knew about God; that He's good and just.
4. In the end, he discovered God was far greater than he'd imagined.
5. **We'll** make it thru **our** darkness, difficulty, pain, grief, trials, & troubles by what **WE** know about God.
6. And we will discover what Job did, it's in the **midst** of suffering that what we know **about** God turns into knowing God Himself.
7. To that end, we walk through a passage in Philippians this morning, covering a lot of ground, quickly.
8. What I suggest is that you return to each day this week for your own deeper meditation.
9. Pray your way though each verse, each phrase. >> **Ch 3**

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

1. Following Jesus is a team sport. We don't go it alone.
2. Spiritual growth happens best by spending time with people a further along than us.
3. Just as children mature by watching the mature, so do we in our spiritual lives.
4. This is why it's important to be a part of a small group.
5. Then Paul warns about those we need to steer clear of.
6. They take the label "Christian" but are in fact enemies of The Faith >>

¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

1. That's an apt description of Progressivism, which takes it's agenda from the world rather than the Word.

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

1. So. Much. There. >> Until a generation ago, Christianity was the main religion of our land.
2. But in a poll released 2-wks ago, *for the first time*, a majority said they had **no** religious affiliation.¹
3. In a secular society, Politics becomes the Religion.
4. And haven't we seen that over the last couple yrs?
5. It's crucial Christians make sure they don't get swept up in the culture's politics-as-religion fervor.
6. Our primary, identity-defining citizenship is in Heaven.
7. Our opinions and values are shaped by The Gospel, not a political ideology.
8. Our loyalty is to a King, not a senator, governor, or president.

^{4:1} Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

1. On Christ the solid rock we stand, all other ground, is sinking sand.

² I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/13/us/no-religion-largest-group-first-time-usa-trnd/index.html>

1. I love this little insert Paul drops about a couple women in the Philippians church who were at odds.
2. He tells them to set aside what divides them for the far greater unity that is theirs in Christ.
3. Folks, let's never allow side issues to become main issues.
4. We need to keep the Main thing the Main thing. Jesus and the Gospel are the Main thing.
5. Don't divide over masks & vaccines.
6. Don't allow the enemy to plant the subtle-hatred of despising in your heart over something as transitory as these things.

³And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.

1. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."²
2. When opinions are flying, it's easy to add ours to the mix and only add more fuel to controversy.
3. Let's endeavor rather to affect peace & reconciliation between those who are at odds.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

1. Paul *repeats* the call to take joy in God because it's crucial.
2. 1 of 2 things is going to occupy our attention; our circumstances, or God.
3. If we look at God thru our circumstances, what's happening to us edits our understanding of Him.
4. But if we look at our circumstances thru God; thru Christ & the Cross, it edits our circumstances.
5. We remember that God works all things together for good, for those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose.
6. The Cross reminds us God has the last word.

⁵Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

1. Here's a prime example when translation obscures a word.
2. "Gentleness" needs a whole page to unpack >>
3. It means that which is *perfect for the situation*; sweetly reasonable / fitting / proper.
4. We used to say if someone behaved with poise and respect he was a perfect gentleman; she was a perfect lady.
5. That's the idea here. Paul says, "Don't forget wherever you are, God is. Act accordingly."
6. "You say you believe in God. Have a reputation aligned with that."

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

1. What will see us safely through suffering is God's peace.
2. That peace comes from setting ourselves and our needs before Him and asking Him to do His thing.
3. Then >> **Trusting** He will.
4. When anxiety /worry / fear come >> Pray.
 - a. Make them prompts that send you to Jesus.
 - b. Satan loves to torment us with fear.
 - c. But if every time he does, all it accomplishes is sending us to the Lord, he'll back off.
5. Pray for God to step in, **then thank Him** for the perfect timing He'll use in doing so.

² Matthew 5:9

6. God **WILL** answer your prayer, according to His perfect wisdom.
 - a. This is what we learned from Job.
 - b. God did answer Job's prayer for a reason all that calamity came on him.
 - c. But not when Job wanted it, or even how God answered.
 - d. Because there was stuff *in* Job that needed to be worked on.
 - e. God answered Job at the perfect time, in the best way to not just provide Job a reason, but to complete something in Job that made him the man God intended him to be.
 7. God intends to do that in you, no less than Job.
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8. V7 says when we pray with thanksgiving, God's peace will guard, it will **fortify** our hearts & minds.
 9. So that satan tries to sneak in, he'll gain no access.

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

1. The time to do prepare ourselves for hard times is now.
2. We do that by filling our minds with truth, with what's honorable & fair.
3. Christian, be careful about what you allow to *entertain* you.
 - a. What you feast your senses on becomes the fodder of your thoughts and opinions.
 - b. Just as what we eat affects the health of the body,
 - c. What we see & hear affects the health of our soul and spirit.
 - d. Some who avoid junk food think nothing of all the junk they pour into their eyes and ears.

⁹ The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

1. We end there.
2. Like Paul, we too can do all things –
 - a. But only through Christ
 - b. And only because He strengthens us to do them.
3. Jesus, perfect God and perfect man, endure suffering the likes of which no other human being has ever known.
4. We are called to be His eternal companions.
5. It's only fitting we'd have a taste of what He endured –
6. That our love *for* and appreciation *of* Him would abound to His glory.