

You can be seated.

We're so glad that you're here this morning.

If you have a Bible.

I'd encourage you to grab that and turn to the book of Exodus and chapter 5.

If you don't have a Bible this morning, we have copies available for you.

Our ushers have those.

Just raise your hand.

Hey, Eric, I need one.

I forgot one up here.

That'd be great.

Bring one up here.

While you're coming, there might be some other people who need one.

Yeah, we need one over here, ushers.

If you could pay attention to that, that'd be great.

So raise your hand.

We'll get you that.

Yeah, hit over there first and then, yeah.

Yeah, throw me one.

Don't throw it.

It's not like Lambert's.

Hey, that could be our thing, right?

Lambert throws rolls and we throw Bibles.

Praise the Lord.

If you get hit in the head with a Bible, man, the Lord's got a word for you.

If that's the case, you got a mark and you won't forget it.

All right.

Well, while you're getting situated in Exodus chapter 5, and as I turn there, I want to just bring us up to speed real quick on what we've talked about over the last couple of weeks.

of weeks, that's important because we're in a narrative.

This is a narrative and it's important that we know where we've been in order to properly understand where we're going.

Did I dismiss kids?

I don't think I did.

Did kids know to leave?

They left while I was doing that?

My shenanigans were going on?

Okay, great.

All right.

So anyway, here's where we've been so that we can all be brought up to speed.

I'm scatterbrained this morning.

After his return to Egypt, Moses, and really Aaron with Moses...

presented God's word to the people of Israel, and the people of Israel actually believed what God said.

We're told at the end of chapter 4 that the response from the people was belief and worship at the hearing of God's word and seeing the signs that Moses and Aaron performed.

So

From there, Moses and Aaron then go into Pharaoh, as God had instructed them to do, and they presented God's command to Pharaoh to let his people go that they may worship him in the wilderness.

And you remember Pharaoh's response?

Yes.

Pharaoh's response essentially was, who is this God?

Who is this God that I should obey him?

So Pharaoh doesn't recognize the authority of God to command him, and so he dismisses

He dismisses Moses and Aaron and he calls God's word lying words.

And then Pharaoh turned around and ordered that an even greater burden be placed on the Hebrew slaves.

He decreed that no straw should be given to them in making bricks, which we know.

Talked briefly about last weekend.

So people had to go out.

They're just not making bricks all day.

They had to go out and find their own straw.

And that wouldn't even be good straw.

Which meant that many of the bricks that they would labor to make would actually break.

And so no straw for bricks.

No reduction in the quota of bricks means a more than doubling of their already price.

laborious work.

And it's, listen, it's all the result of the people believing God and worshiping Him.

That's what I want you to see here.

The people believed, received, believed the Word of God, obeyed Him, worshiped Him, and then things got more difficult.

In other words, God's people responded rightly to Him, and now things are worse than they were before.

So,

Faithfulness and obedience of the people of God was met with even greater suffering and hardship.

So here's the natural.

Can we do real talk for a minute?

When you read scripture, sometimes you just stop and you're like, wait a second.

What is happening right now?

And you have questions.

Anybody?

So real talk, because the natural question that arises when we look at this is, why does God bring his people through all of this difficulty and suffering and not just end the story when the people believed God and worshipped him when the word was first delivered to them, right?

Like, if God's purpose...

is to free his people so that they could be with him and worship him.

Why not just go in after the people believe and worship him, smote the Egyptians, and then release his people into the wilderness?

Why do all of this through the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and causing the people to suffer even more than they had before?

You ever wonder that?

Let me make it a little bit more relevant to our lives because I think it's not unlike the questions that we ask today in our lives, both on the macro level and on the micro level.

So on the macro level, I've heard many people ask some version of this question.

Jeff, why doesn't God just beam us up to heaven after he saves us?

You ever wonder that?

Why bring us through this arduous, grueling process of sanctification where we struggle and make a mess of things and suffer much of the time?

You ever wonder that?

That's the macro level.

How about the micro level?

I know that y'all have wondered this at times.

When you're in prolonged suffering, a period of difficulty over time, have you ever wondered why God is choosing to bring you through that particular hardship?

Like, God, I believe you.

I trust you.

I'm desiring you in this, but still...

The difficulty persists, and you're left crying out to God.

Like, I mean, there's those times of hardship where you're like, it feels unrelenting, and you feel like you're breaking.

You ever been there?

You feel like you're breaking.

It's like David in Psalm 13, when he's crying out to the Lord.

You may have read this Psalm if you've ever been hurting.

David cries, how long, O Lord?

When

Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I take counsel in my own heart and have sorrow in my soul all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

That's Psalm 13.

Ever been there?

Man, I think we probably all have at some point.

Here's why I think God does this.

At least one of the reasons.

But a big reason why God does this.

Why he subjects his people to periods of prolonged suffering even as they are being obedient to him.

And this is the main idea that we're going to drive at this morning as we look at God's interaction with Moses in our text.

Here it is.

If you're a note taker, I want you to remember this.

God is building in his people a faith that is rooted and unshakable.

Now, I'm going to say it again, and I want you to remember it because I promise you, if you are united with Jesus, this is a good word for your life.

Because if you're not in the midst of something right now, I promise you, you will be in the midst of it at some point, and you need to remember that God is building in you a faith that is rooted and that is unshakable.

That is 100% true all the time.

God is so radically committed to this work of building faith in us that he will sometimes walk us into prolonged suffering and difficulty in order to test our faith.

Now, I know we've talked about this over the last few weeks, but I want to remind us of what I mean by test our faith.

Because this kind of testing that we're talking about, isn't God trying to like administer an exam to figure out what you know and what you don't know.

God knows precisely before the foundation of the world what you know and what you don't know.

This is the kind of testing the way metal is purified over time.

When gold is refined, for example, or silver...

It's heated up, right?

All the impurities rise to the top.

Those are sifted off.

It's cooled down.

It's heated back up.

More impurities arise to the top or sifted off and so forth, so on and so forth.

That's the process that happens.

That's what God's doing.

Now listen, this is a common theme that we see throughout the pages of Scripture.

I think it's particularly evident in the Psalms.

For example, the Psalm that John read earlier from Psalm 112, verses 6 through 8.

Listen to this, because this is God's aim for you.

It says, for the righteous will never be moved.

He will remember forever.

He's not afraid of bad news.

His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.

His heart is steady.

He will not be afraid until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

Do you want that to be true of your life?

Do you want to have a faith that is unshakable and immovable where fear has been cast out of your heart and you're like, I'm not afraid of any bad news because I know who my God is and I know he's ruling right now and sovereign and good in my life.

Do you want that kind of faith?

Then you want difficulty in your life because that's how God cultivates it.

The firmness and steadiness of the heart.

Having faith that allows us not to be moved.

Being in a position where fear has been pushed out by faith.

That is something that must be developed over time.

It does not come to us like that.

It's cultivated and that cultivation includes adversity.

You guys tracking with me on this?

very important for our lives.

It's very much like, if you know anything, I'm not an arborist, okay?

Just like a few weeks ago or last week, I'm not a brick maker.

I had to study this, but I've planted some trees, and I know enough about trees to know that

The health of a tree is established over time.

The more adversity a tree experiences as it's developing, the deeper and the wider that root system of the tree is established.

Which is why if you have a young tree, you don't want to stake it so tightly that it can't be pushed by the wind.

It needs to be pushed by the wind.

in order to develop its root system.

That's what allows it to be strong, to be healthy as it matures in stormy times.

Nearly four years ago, I...

I planted seven apple trees along our driveway for Maren on Mother's Day.

Maren's always wanted trees along our driveway, and we really like apples.

I'm a practical guy, so I'm like, let's do the math on this.

We're gonna plant apple trees next to our driveway.

Well, three years ago,

my at the time 17-year-old daughter decided that it would be a good idea to give her keys to her at the time 13-year-old brother so that he could move her car in the driveway.

As you might imagine, that was not a good decision.

Jude backed Macy's car through the driveway and ran completely over one of Maren's year-old apple trees.

I brought a picture so that you don't have to imagine this.

That's Marin standing by the car, by the way, like what the actual heck is going on right now, right?

Okay.

So, so we thought this tree was toast.

Do you see it under the car laying completely on its side?

That's the apple tree.

And we're like, there is no way this tree survives.

There is no way this thing's going to make it.

I can tell you now, three years later, that it is the tallest and thickest of all seven of those apple trees, and it's not even close.

And that's because it was put through this test.

Now, let me ask you, anybody ever felt like that tree?

You just got run over by Jude, and you're like, what the heck is going on, Lord?

Felt like that?

This is the point that we're driving to in these passages that we're looking at in Exodus.

God is orchestrating all of this to do a work in his people to build our faith, to establish us, to grow a firmness and steadiness of heart that requires all kinds of different circumstances, including adversity.

He's doing that here with Israel.

He's doing that in our lives right now.

And as we'll see in our text today, it's what God was doing in the heart of Moses.

And so let's read this together, starting in Exodus 5 and verse 22.

I'll read through verse 5 of chapter 6.

Now remember what's just happened.

The people have heard about the fact... Hey, Jude, glad you're here.

Welcome.

Welcome.

You missed some stuff while you were gone.

I didn't tell him I was putting that up there.

Anyway, God's good.

Okay.

So we'll work on our relationship afterwards.

So where was I?

Yeah, let's just read.

You know where we've been.

So verse 22, then Moses turned to the Lord.

Moses has just gotten blasted by the people as they've left.

this decree that their work is going to be more than doubled.

And Moses turned to the Lord and said, I want you to listen to how shocking this is.

Oh Lord, why have you done evil to this people?

Why did you ever send me

For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people.

Some confusion there, you see.

And you have not delivered your people at all.

But the Lord said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.

For with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, this is so important for us, tune in, I am the Lord.

I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, but my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them.

I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.

Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel, whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

This is God's word for us this morning, and it is a good word.

We're going to unpack it, but let's ask God for his help.

Father, would you show us what you want us to see in this text this morning?

God, reveal yourself to us for your glory that we might be changed, conformed to the image of Jesus.

We pray in his name.

Amen.

All right, so seeing this through the lens of God leading Moses on a journey to establish and to build faith in his heart, I want to think about the two movements that we see here.

It's a conversation.

We see Moses turn to God in the midst of hardship.

That's verses 22 and 23.

And then we see God respond to Moses through the revelation of who he is, verses 1 through 5.

Those are the two things that we're going to look at.

But before we dig into that, let's make sure that we're clear on what exactly Moses' hardship was and what was going on in his heart.

Look at this again in verses 20 and 21, what we looked at last weekend.

It says, the people met Moses and Aaron as they exited Pharaoh who were waiting for them.

They came out from Pharaoh and they said to them, the Lord look on you and judge because you made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.

So get this, Moses and Aaron have done what God has told them to do, and they've done it in the way that God instructed them to do it.

They've done the signs, they've delivered God's word, both to the people of Israel and to Pharaoh.

And now, because of the increased hardship, the people have turned on Moses and Aaron and accused them of wrongdoing.

You ever had something like that happen to you?

Ever had a situation where you do the right thing?

What you believe to be is the right thing and you believe God's calling you to do this thing and you do it with good intentions and you end up suffering for it?

It costs you something.

People turn against you.

I think that's actually a common experience and it can be really, you know, it can leave us questioning God.

if we're being honest.

Like, the temptation, like, it's exactly what Moses is doing here.

We're going to look at it in just a minute, but here's what I think we need to understand when this happens, right?

Because we're left going, God, what are, like, what are you doing?

I did exactly what I think you asked me to say, and people are turning on me here.

What's he up to?

Well, this is part of the testing that God is doing to reveal what's going on in the heart and to show us where our hope and our trust and our worship lies.

And it also is going to show us the condition of our heart based on what comes out of our mouth.

which is what we see in Moses here.

Because I can tell you right now, like for me, I'll just talk about my stuff.

I don't have to involve you in this just yet.

The temptation that I always face when I'm put in situations like this, where people are talking poorly about me, my temptation is usually in the flesh to respond based on their comments towards me.

So I do damage control where I'm trying to defend myself or trying to make myself look a certain way or be like, explain myself.

No, you don't understand.

I'm trying to help you in this.

Like I'm not doing that thing.

That's how my flesh wants to respond.

But the truth at the end of the day, can I just tell you this and just be free in this?

It doesn't matter what people think about you.

I think so much of Christendom now is us running around competing for the affections of other people and basing how we live on the approval of man.

It doesn't matter what people think.

It doesn't even matter what you think about yourself, per se.

It matters what Jesus thinks about you.

And that's what you need to be reminded of over and over again.

That's what Paul said to the Corinthians, by the way, when he wrote to him.

He's like, look, I don't care.

I don't care what you think about me.

I don't even judge.

I'm not even here to judge myself.

Jesus thinks things about me, and that's what's most important.

These kind of things reveal what we believe about our identity and what God thinks about us.

But these kind of situations will also reveal just at large what's going on in the heart.

Am I going to turn to God or am I going to turn to something else?

Am I going to run into God in times of hardship and difficulty?

Or am I going to run to something else that, by the way, will never bring life or peace or joy?

You might remember last week that we looked at the fact that the Israelites cried out in their trouble to Pharaoh and not to God.

And Pharaoh's response was, back to work.

Back to work.

Because that's how our idols, these false gods that we chase after, these things that we think will bring life and joy and peace that we will often run to in our suffering, that's how our idols always respond back to us.

Serve me.

Work for me.

Perform for me.

It's only Yahweh, the one true God, who calls us into rest.

Only God will give you rest.

So,

Moses turns to God in the midst of hardship.

He makes a mess of it.

He does it imperfectly, but he turns to God nonetheless.

And by the way, I made this point.

I'm going to reiterate it this week.

I talked about this last weekend.

This is a big deal for us because if you think you have to clean yourself up in how you come to God, you've missed the point.

God wants us to run to him like a child comes to a parent when they're in trouble.

A child who's in trouble and is afraid and is suffering doesn't gather themselves and then present themselves, mom, dad, things are going poorly.

And I would love for you to advise.

That's not how it works.

I'm talking about a little kid.

Kids don't do that.

They don't have the capacity to do that.

I talked about this last weekend.

We need an ugly cry out to God, right?

That ugly cry where snot's flowing.

That's how kids run into their parents.

They're sobbing.

They're clinging.

They're running into.

They are a hot mess.

And God loves it.

Because the same way if you've got a small child and you're hugging them and embracing them, you love that.

You're like, I'm here.

It's okay.

I'm with you.

We're going to walk through this.

You're good.

That's what God does.

You don't hug your little child who's a mess and be like, why can't you figure stuff out?

Why can't you get your stuff together?

God loves this.

Wants us to ugly cry out to him.

And that's what Moses does here.

Moses just says some ugly stuff.

Look at this, verse 23, 22 and 23.

Moses turns to the Lord and says three things.

Oh Lord, why have you done evil to this people?

That's nonsense, right?

Why do you ever send me?

For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he's done evil to this people, and you haven't delivered your people at all.

Ever been angry with God?

Come on.

We can be honest about that.

Moses is angry with God, but he runs to God.

There's a big difference between being angry and running away.

And being angry and running toward.

Big difference.

And I'll tell you it makes all the difference.

Moses is ticked.

And he's wrong.

And he's blind.

We'll talk about that.

But man, he runs to the Lord with this.

And I want to make the argument that this is simply how we must learn to respond to God.

Or the Christian life will not make sense to us.

Because if we run into the things of this world, when we face suffering and difficulty, it will only lead us further away from life and joy.

But if we turn into God, even in our mess and brokenness, especially in our mess and our brokenness, He is faithful to meet us there and He will do work in and through us.

God in that moment won't be like, get to work for me.

God's like, watch me work.

See the difference?

Talked about this last week in Exodus 14, 14, the people on the shores of the Red Sea about to get smoked by the Egyptian cavalry.

They're freaking out, but they cry out to God.

God says, you need only be silent.

Watch me work.

This is good.

This is a good word.

So let's look at this.

Let's dig in.

I want to think about this here and consider

how Moses addresses God, and then how God responds to Moses.

So first, let's walk through how Moses addresses God and see if you can relate to feeling any of these feels when you've navigated hard things in your life.

Moses essentially says three things to God in these two verses.

Two of them are phrased as questions, but I'm just going to make it easy and I'm going to boil them down into their corresponding statements.

So three things.

First, he says, God, you're responsible for the evil that's happening.

All this, your fault.

Second, he says, God, you shouldn't have sent me in the first place.

Also your fault.

Underlying, you know what Moses is doing right now?

Told you so.

This is what I meant at the burning bush.

told you that it would go like this.

And then third, Moses says to God, God, you failed.

You have failed to deliver on what you've promised.

Anybody ever thought any of that?

Don't lie.

I probably thought some of it this morning.

Yeah, right?

This is real.

Moses is here where we are.

And you read it and you're like, this is a pretty shocking list of accusations against the Lord.

And make no mistake, that's what Moses is doing.

He's accusing the Lord.

Now, a couple things that we need to recognize in this that are happening at the same time.

And we need to recognize these things because they happen to us.

The first thing, let's just be honest about it, the first thing that's happening is that Moses has been blinded by his pain and his suffering.

how he is experiencing these circumstances has blinded him to what is true.

And specifically, he's not seen correctly what's true of who God is, and he's not seen himself rightly.

So Moses in this moment cannot see the goodness and the compassion of God.

Now look at what is happening, because we do this.

It's caused him to elevate himself above God.

which is impossible, but he's trying.

Now, I'm going to make the argument we do the same thing.

How often in times of difficulty do you and I find ourselves questioning the goodness, the compassion, the love of God as though we're better, as though we're more compassionate, as though we are more loving than God is?

Because I'm going to say that's exactly what lies beneath our accusations of God.

It's self-righteousness.

I know better than God does.

It's what we're thinking in that moment, which is just us being blind to the truth of what's actually true about who God is and who we are.

We're just blind to it.

So that's one thing that's happening here.

Like, have you ever had a conversation that starts with somebody going, how could a loving God fill in the blank?

I mean, how could a loving God let this person suffer?

How could a loving God not save this person?

How could a loving God let childhood cancer be a thing?

How could a loving God do all this stuff?

Well, in the phrase, how could God, what you're doing is you're putting yourself above God as though you can judge God because you think you know better than God.

And that's what Moses is doing here.

And that's just being blinded to the truth by how we feel about our circumstances.

I'm not saying those feels aren't real.

And I'm not saying they're not understandable.

Suffering hurts.

Like this stuff hurts.

Let's be honest.

But it can very easily throw us out of whack and not see things correctly.

So that's one thing that's happening here.

But the other thing that's happening congruent to that at the same time is that God is actually building his heart in the heart of Moses.

That's happening in real time in this text.

Don't miss that here.

It wasn't long before this passage that God was having to coax Moses into going back to Egypt in this role.

You remember?

God's like, yeah, you need to do it.

This is what we're doing.

And now a short time, Moses is like, I can't do this.

I don't want to do this.

I don't want to be a part of this.

And God's like bringing him into this.

And just a short time later, the heart of Moses is genuinely broken when he sees the suffering of his people.

His anger towards God is coming from a place of loving people.

So what God's doing congruent to this, to Moses not seeing things correctly, is God's actually cultivating his heart, his love, his compassion in Moses' heart.

See, that's the thing.

It's not that Moses is more compassionate than God is.

God is infinitely compassionate.

It's that God is growing and deepening the faith of Moses through this process so that he can grow in both compassion for people and proper trust in the Lord.

That's important because as we're going to see later in Exodus, there are critical times when Moses is

intercedes for the people as he displays both a deep heart of compassion for the people and an incredible faith in God.

But don't miss this.

That has to be developed in Moses.

It has to be cultivated over time and that happens through testing.

That's what's happening.

God's deepening, he's developing, he's growing.

And the same thing is true for your life and for my life.

Without God bringing us through these kind of circumstances, our faith would not be deepened and grown, which means that it's God's goodness and his incredible kindness to bring us into and through these kind of hardships.

critical to understand when you're going through times of prolonged difficulty.

And again, if you're not in it, you may have just gotten out of it.

And if neither one of those is true, it might be coming because it's a regular rhythm.

By the way, that Jesus himself went through.

I love that

We don't have time to flesh it out today, but I love that.

We've got a great high priest who knows what it's like to suffer.

It's not like God was sitting up in heaven and be like, okay, good luck with that, everybody.

You know, in my economy, death is the engine of life.

Suffering is what leads to sanctification.

So have fun with that as though he doesn't know.

Jesus stepped out of heaven and took on the form of his own creation and suffered mightily.

Was tempted in every way as you and I are and yet without sin.

He knows what it's like to be betrayed.

He knows what it's like to be talked about.

He knows what it's like to have people grumble against you.

And he knows things that you and I maybe don't

Know what that feels like.

Like how to be scourged almost to death.

How to be beaten within an inch of your life.

How to hang on a Roman cross.

Jesus knows.

And this is critical for us to understand in our suffering.

Where we turn to God and we cry out to him in our mess and in our unbelief and in our brokenness.

That's important because there's something miraculous that happens in that place, in that tension.

I want to show you that here in how God responds back to Moses.

Look at verses 2 through 5 again.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord.

I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty and

But my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them.

I established also my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.

Moreover, Moses, I've heard the groaning of the people of Israel, whom the Egyptians have hold as slaves, and I've remembered my covenant.

Now there's much that could be said here.

But I want to focus our hearts on this.

Verse 3, because there's really strange language here that if you're theological and you're familiar with the Old Testament, your theological spidey senses were just like, ooh, what?

Is that true?

God says in verse 3, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty.

Here's the confusing part.

But my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them.

What does God mean by that?

he can't mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob didn't know his name because they did.

I mean, there are specific passages.

Genesis 4.26 references God's name being called upon.

Genesis 12.8, God uses... Sorry, Abraham uses God's name.

And there are lots of other passages that we could look at with this.

I think what God means...

this is very important, is the patriarchs didn't understand the full significance of the greatness of God's name.

The way that he unpacked it with Moses.

This is what John Currid says to this in his commentary on Exodus.

I thought this was helpful.

He said, the patriarchs

did not fully experience the essential nature and power of the name Yahweh.

As we have seen, that name reflects a God who fulfills his promises.

The promise of a coming exodus and redemption from slavery was not fulfilled during the time of the patriarchs, but belonged, from their perspective, to a distant future.

And so, when this passage in Exodus speaks of God's name, it refers to him revealing his essence.

One might say his character, his nature in redemption.

God was showing that he is the one who is faithful and unchanging in fulfilling his promises.

So understand this.

As Moses turns to God in his anger, in his brokenness, in his unbelief,

God's response to Moses is not simply to remind Moses of his name, but to reveal to Moses in this moment his character, his nature, something of his heart.

So get this.

So incredibly important for us in our suffering.

Remember what we talked about a week or two ago from 1 Peter chapter 4 when I said, it's the passage where Peter says, don't be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening.

Like this is normal.

And then later on, Peter says, rejoice when this happens because the spirit of Jesus rests upon you in a unique way.

You remember that?

This idea that when we suffer, we experience God's presence in a unique way.

That's what this means.

When we walk through prolonged suffering and we turn into the Lord, what God does in that moment is reveal his heart, his character, his nature, his essence in deeper ways than we had ever known them before.

Do you understand the beauty of this?

It makes suffering so worth it that you would be like, I wouldn't change a thing about that because of what I know of God and experience of his goodness right now.

And this moves in concert with how God is deepening and strengthening our faith in him.

We're growing in this experiential knowledge of God's sovereign goodness in the context of an intimate relationship with him and suffering only makes it sweeter.

Now, what did we sing earlier?

God loves to take what the enemy means for evil and he loves to turn it for good.

That's Genesis 50, 20, right?

This is what God does.

It's kind of his thing.

He's letting the enemy run around, causing all kinds of issues.

We're causing all kinds of issues in our flesh, the enemy within, and God's using all of it to drive us further into his presence so that we can experience more sweetness in his character and nature.

It's beautiful.

It really is beautiful what God's doing.

I think this is the beautiful realization that Job came to in the journey that God, if you haven't read Job, like it's good to read Job when you're suffering because that man suffered.

He suffered mightily.

And this is what Job says in his repentance and turning to the Lord in Job 42 verse 5.

I love this.

Job says, I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.

Do you hear the difference?

Job's like, I thought I knew you, but now that you've walked me through this suffering, holy smokes, I can see you.

The eyes of the heart are able to behold and partake of the goodness of God in unique ways when we suffer.

I'm just going to be honest with you.

When I go through times of difficulty, when there's trouble, and especially when it's prolonged in my life, my first movement in my flesh is to try to find a way out.

I do.

I hate being uncomfortable.

I hate it.

Last week it was 72 degrees in here when I was preaching.

I thought I was going to die on the stage.

I don't like to be uncomfortable.

So I'm trying to find a way out.

How can I develop a strategy through best practices and my own ingenuity to deal with this suffering and escape the pain?

That's what I do.

But I must learn to recognize that God has purposed the pain.

He's purposed the pain that we might know Him more deeply and experience in Him more fully.

I love what Peter writes.

In one of his letters, he says, we have everything as Christ's followers that pertains to life and godliness.

And then he says this, that we may be partakers of the divine nature.

You ever read that?

There's this beautiful thing that happens as we walk through suffering where we partake of the divine nature in real time.

And it changes us.

And that change

When we're conformed to the image of Jesus like that, our great high priest who's gone before us and who knows what it's like to suffer and who empathizes and sympathizes and is present with us in our suffering like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire walking with Jesus, man, that becomes precious and valuable to us.

This is where the rubber really hits the road for us guys.

That's why I prayed at the beginning.

Let's not just go through the motions.

This isn't just empty talk.

Every one of you knows what it's like to deal with hardship and suffering.

Every single one of you.

From small things to great things.

God has not forgotten about you.

God has not turned his face away from you.

He does not disregard you.

God has loved you.

You know when it says that God foreknew you before the foundation of the world?

You know what that word means?

It's the way a husband and a wife know each other when they're married.

It means God foreloved you before the foundation of the world.

He foreloved you.

He has purpose.

And it's not to do evil.

Because he can't.

And it's not to bring you harm because he won't.

And it's not to lead you further into captivity because Jesus died for you to be freed from the penalty, the power, and one day the presence of sin.

He's doing it because he's seeking your greatest good and he loves you more deeply than you could ever imagine.

Receive that this morning.

So that you run into him and not away from him when trials come.

Let's pray.

Father, this is a work that you must do in us.

Because as I started at the beginning, God, I...

by praying just about my faithlessness at times, my unbelief at times, my doubts at times.

God, I'm a mess much of the time.

So Father, I'm asking that you would do in us what only you can do and that you would take over in this moment.

And God, I'm praying for our response.

I'm praying that you would orchestrate and conduct in our hearts right now how you would have us respond and run into you.

God, give us, would you help us, God, to understand that we're free in Jesus Christ, that we might run into your arms.

We pray these things in Christ's name.

Amen.