

J.D. Kilmer

SESSION 3 | GOD IS WITH YOU

FOR A PURPOSE

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Review of previous session

1. "Listen Well" and "I am with you" God gives means of grace in our suffering:
 - a) God's Word
 - b) God's People
 - c) Christ

B. How Firm a Foundation: Verses 3 and 4

"When through the deep waters I call you to go,
the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless,
and sanctify to you your deepest distress."

When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be you supply;
The flame shall not hurt you; I only design
Your dross to consume and your gold to refine."

C. Four Vast Truths (Powlison, pg. 62)

- God himself calls you into the deep waters.
- God sets a limit on your sorrows.
- God is with you actively bringing good from your troubles.
- In the context of distressing events, God changes you.

II. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND OUR SUFFERING

A. God himself calls you into the deep waters

Examples:

- Job

“And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? (Job 1:8)

- Joseph

“But Joseph said to them, “do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Gen. 50:19-20)

- Christ

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:3)

“...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” (Acts 2:23)

B. God sets a limit on your sorrows

Examples:

- Job

“And the LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold all that he has is in your hand.
Only against him do not stretch out your hand...” (Job 1:12, see also 2:6)

- Psalm 23

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear
no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff the comfort me” (v. 4)

- Revelation 21:4

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no
more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for
the former things have passed away”

“...your significant sufferings don’t happen by accident. There’s no random chance. No purposeless misery. No bad luck. Not even (and understand this the right way) a tragedy. Tragedy means ruin, destruction, downfall, an unhappy ending with no redemption. Your life story may contain a great deal of misery and heartache along the way. But in the end, in Christ, your life story will prove to be a comedy in the original sense of the word, a story with a happy ending.” (pg. 62-63)

III. GOD’S PURPOSE IN OUR SUFFERING

A. God brings good out of our suffering and changes us

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith more precious than gold may be found to result in praise glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:6-7

"In God's hands, experiences of suffering purify you. His love works to take away what is wrong with you: your dross. The outcome is a growing love and joy toward God in Christ, as well as a more sincere love for others: your gold." (pg. 78)

B. God's purpose is to consume our dross

"Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word" (Ps. 119:67)

"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that might learn your statutes." (Ps. 119:71)

"Most of the time, we are right to separate sufferings from sins. What you do is different from what happens to you. Your sins are bad things about you as a moral agent. Your sufferings are bad things that happen to you...But it is worth nothing that you, as a new creation in Christ, also live in an essentially different relationship to you own sinfulness. Your sin now afflicts you...the sin that indwells becomes a form of significant suffering. What you once instinctively loved now torments you." (Pg 78)

"The essential change in your relationship with God radically changes your relationship to remaining sinfulness. In Christ, in order to sin, you must lapse into temporary insanity, into forgetfulness. It is your worst cancer, your most crippling disability, your most treacherous enemy, your deepest distress. It is the single most destruction force impacting your life. Like nothing else in all creation, this threatens your life and well-being." (pg. 80)

C. God's purpose is to refine our gold

1. Grace teaches us courage:

"Fearlessness is courageous in the face of fearsome things. It carries on constructively in the midst of stress that doesn't feel good at all. Courage means more than freedom from anxious feelings. Endurance is a purposeful 'abiding under' what is painful and considering others even when you don't feel good." (pg. 82)

2. Grace teaches you wise love:

"...fearless endurance is for the purpose of wise love. God is making you like Jesus in the hardships of real life. Jesus combines two qualities that rarely go together: true compassion and life-rearranging counsel." (pg. 83)

"God...comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (2 Corinthians 1:4)

"...but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because the God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

IV. OUR RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

“God is God. His reign is high and purposeful, yet reaches down into the details. But we often misapply God’s sovereignty when it comes to actually helping suffers both ourselves and others.” (pg. 64)

A. Unfruitful Responses to Suffering

1. The detached Stoic
2. The faithless Ranter

“Both stoics and ranters take a mechanical view of God’s sovereign control, detaching it from his loving purposes. For stoics, God’s control over suffering rationalizes cool detachment. For ranters, it justifies hot accusation.” (pg. 66)

B. Fruitful Responses to Suffering

“He’s not interested in offering you some cognitive perspective to help get you through a rough patch. He is working so you know him, so you trust him, so you love him.” (pg. 63)

1. Entrust your soul to God’s care

“Let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good”. 1 Peter 4:19

“Is he saying: ‘It does not really matter that you’re suffering. God’s in control, so just keep up you quiet time and fulfill your responsibilities’? Does God make the deep waters only waist deep?...Does he sanctify distress by making it unstressful? Does he call you to ignore what’s going on around you in order to get on with being a Christian? Look carefully at how to entrust your soul to a faithful Creator...What does that entrusting look like?” (pg. 65)

2. Lament and Supplication: The soul's anguish engages God's truth.

"When you trust in God's sovereign rule, promises, and purposes, you talk out the implications with him." (pg. 66).

"Supplication is not a calming exercise like deep breathing. Supplication pleads for help from Someone who can help" (pg. 65-66)

Examples:

a. The Psalms

"To you, LORD, I call.

My Rock, don't be deaf to me.

If you don't answer me, I will die.

Hear the voice of my supplications,

My cry for help to you."

(Psalm 28:1-2)

"Blessed be the LORD! For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy. The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped, my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him." (Psalm 28:6-7)

"The emotions of faith run the gamut from fear to courage, from sorrow to joy, from hate to love, from neediness to gratitude." (pg. 68)

"Turn and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. Consider my affliction and my troubles, and forgive all my sins...Oh guard my soul and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you...Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles."

(Psalm 25:16-17, 20, and 22)

b. Christ on the Cross

"My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?" (Psalm 22:1)

"Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God" (Psalm 31:5)

"God's high, sovereign providence in all things does take the panic out of life. Reasons for despair wash away. But grasp it rightly, and you'll never be matter-of-fact and coolly detached. God's purposes are to sanctify you. And his kind of sanctification aims for vibrant engagement with the real and immediate conditions of life, both the good and the bad." (pg. 68)

C. How Firm a Foundation

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the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless,
and sanctify to you your deepest distress."

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V. MAKING IT PERSONAL

- A. What does it mean that your significant suffering plays an intrinsic role in how you will know the love of God poured into your heart? (Rom. 5:3-5)

- B. What does it mean that your significant suffering plays an intrinsic role in how you will know joy inexpressible and full of glory? (1 Pet. 1:3-9)
- C. What does it mean that your significant suffering plays an intrinsic role in how you will become deep and wise? (James 1:2-5)
- D. What does it mean that your significant suffering plays an intrinsic role in how you will know the peace of Jesus Christ? (John 16:33)
- E. What does it mean that your significant suffering plays an intrinsic role in how you will learn to truly help other people who suffer? (2 Cor. 1:4)

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