

Andrew Chesemore

SESSION 2 | GOD'S MEANS OF GRACE IN OUR SUFFERING

I. INTRODUCTION AND RECAP OF SESSION 1

A. Three Kinds of Suffering

1. **"Persecution** - You experience someone opposing you verbally or otherwise *because* you are a Christian or are standing up for Christlike values (2 Tim. 3:12).
2. **Consequence** - You sin, and you suffer self-inflicted consequences like strained relationships or financial fallout as a direct result of your own sin (Num. 32:23, Rom. 1:21-25).
3. **Providential testing** - You suffer some kind of loss (relational, material, or otherwise) not because of your own sin or because of persecution, but as a means of testing and growth in your walk with Jesus (Job 14:1, Matt. 6:34, 2 Cor. 4:16-17)."

B. Three Things Scripture and Experience Teach Us

1. "There is never a "no-fly" zone over our lives for suffering.
2. We also experience good things in this life.
3. God speaks and acts through affliction.

II. Leaning into God's word

A. What more can he say

1. "First, the question: "What more can he say than to you he has said?"
Let that rattle around a minute. I don't know how you read Scripture. But there is a way to read Scripture that leaves you wishing God had said a whole lot more....If we only had one more verse on each of the top ten

questions we wrangle over!... But somehow, God in his providence didn't choose to do that.

It comes down to what you are looking for as you read and listen....
God's words address all the defining existential questions—questions about meaning or despair in the face of death, purpose or pointlessness, good or evil, love or hate, trust or fear, truth or lies. Can mercy untangle the knot of sin? Can justice undo oppression? What about the character of God? The dynamics of the human heart? The meaning of affliction? What more can the Lord say than to you he has said? **Listen well. There is nothing more that he needs to say.**" - Powlison, David. *God's Grace in Your Suffering* (pp. 34-35).

B. In His word we find:

1. Reminders of his nearness

- a) The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. - Psalm 34:18-19
- b) "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;" - Psalm 23:4
- c) "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." - Psalm 46:1
- d) "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me." - 2 Timothy 4:14-17a

2. Promises of His goodness

- a) "Scripture does commend honestly facing weakness and pain—as Jesus and the Psalms did—both for integrity's sake and

in order to love others who also suffer. Honesty feels the weight of things that arouse fear and dismay—because fearsome and dismaying things do happen to us. Hardships give us good reasons to be anxious, so God gives better reasons to trust him.”
- Powlison, David. God's Grace in Your Suffering (p. 49).

3. Wisdom to redirect our wayward hearts

- a) “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” -Matthew 6:25-30
- b) “Honest wrestling is not magic. It’s not “claiming the victory.” It’s not finding a religious truism to short-circuit the process. And it’s not wallowing in heartache and self-pity. God is taking us in his direction. Ask. Seek. Knock. He found you first, and he is willing to be found.” - Powlison, David. God's Grace in Your Suffering (p. 46).

III. Listening to Others

A. God’s people help us in many ways as we walk through suffering:

1. "You need other people. It's easy to forget this and try to fly solo through hard times. Who can walk with you? Ask yourself: "Who is the person I most trust? Who will handle with care the fine china of my honest struggles? Who will draw me out and listen well. Who keeps confidences, prays thoughtfully, and is willing to speak candidly with godly wisdom? Who is the most sensible, straightforward, humble, believing, experienced, courageous person I know?" None of your friends is perfect! But God puts imperfect people in our lives who are also wise, caring, and trustworthy—the kind of person you want to be for others. Who can share the burden with you, will cast your cares on God, will encourage you?"
- Powlison, David. *God's Grace in Your Suffering* (pp. 44-45).

B. God uses His people to:

1. Walk alongside us
 - a) "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." - Galatians 6:2
2. Exhort us
 - a) "Exhort one another every day... that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." - Hebrews 3:13
3. Encourage us
 - a) "Encourage one another and build one another up." - 1 Thessalonians 5:11
4. Comfort us
 - a) "For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you." - 2 Corinthians 7:5–7
5. Provide for our practical needs

- a) "As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." - Galatians 6:10
- 6. Intercede on our behalf
 - a) "Pray for one another... The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." - James 5:16

IV. Looking to Christ

A. Our example

- 1. "Jesus is a most excellent teacher. In the extremity of his agony, there was no incurvatus in se [curved inward on oneself]. He heard God's voice and remembered. He turned toward God in neediness, generosity, and trust: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Matt. 27:46; Luke 23:34, 46). He turned toward people in practical love: "Today you will be with me in paradise." "Behold, your son! . . . Behold, your mother!" (Luke 23:43; John 19:26–27). He gave voice to honest experience of his ordeal: "I thirst. . . . It is finished" (John 19:28, 30)." - Powlison, David. *God's Grace in Your Suffering* (p. 51).

B. Our Source for all we need as we suffer

1. Our Foundation

- a) "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." - 1 Corinthians 3:11

2. Our Comforter

- a) "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." - 2 Corinthians 1:5

3. Our Perfector

- a) "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the

shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” -
Hebrews 12:2

4. Our Reward

- a) “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” - Philippians 3:8
- b) “A christian must not expect two Heavens; it is enough if he possesses one. We must not travel to heaven through a bed of roses. It is not much though we go to heaven in a fiery chariot, having affiliations and calamities our companions all along the way.” -Andrew Gray, The Spiritual warfare, in Works, 388

V. Application Questions from Chapter 3

- A.** What hardship are you facing right now?
- B.** What life-giving word from God speaks to you?
- C.** What input have wise friends given you?
- D.** How can you honestly wrestle your way toward trusting God?
- E.** What should you do next?

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