

Tyson Ziegler

SESSION 4 | GOD'S ENDURING GRACE IN YOUR SUFFERING

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

A. John reminded us:

- The purpose of this book is to anchor your experience more deeply in God's goodness. Suffering reveals the genuineness of faith in Christ. And suffering produces genuine faith. Pg. 14.
- God's answer in our suffering involves changing you into a different person... Page 16.
- In chapter 1, Dr P reminds us that there is nothing more he can say than what he's already said. He has called us Saints and so we are. We get to run to him for refuge and so we do. He reminds us that in all of our growth and discipleship from reading to study to memorization to meditation, we don't necessarily learn how to need help. The hymn how firm a foundation teaches us to need help. God uses significant suffering to teach us to need him. And when we need him, we find him. Page 39.
- In our suffering, what does God want to give us?
- "(God) ...answers them with the monumental promise of his grace, "I am with you." He answers with himself." Page 55.

B. Andrew reminded us:

- Through the ministry of His Word and through the ministry of his people.

- In chapter 4, he reminds us that we embody Christ's grace to one another. Other people are part of the comfort God brings to us in affliction. Page 52.

C. J.D. reminded us:

- You are a mixed – mixed up! – Creature. 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. Page 78.
- In suffering, I learned to need mercy. From suffering, I learned to give mercy. The living faith that embraces Christ is formed in the crucible of weakness. The courage to carry on and the strong love that cares well, for others are formed in the crucible of struggle. Page 91.

II. HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION – ANNOTATED

Stanza 1

- *How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,* — 2 Ti. 2:19; Col. 3:12
- *Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!* — Psalm 119:89; Romans 10:17
- *What more can He say than to you He has said,* — Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Peter 1:3
- *To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?* — Hebrews 6:18; Psalm 46:1

Stanza 2

- *Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed,* — Isaiah 41:10; Ps. 23:4
- *For I am your God and will still give you aid;* — Ps. 46:1; 54:4; Hebrews 13:6
- *I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,* — Isaiah 41:10; Romans 14:4
- *Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.* — Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 63:8

Stanza 3

- *When through the deep waters I call you to go,* — Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 66:12
- *The rivers of water (woe) shall not overflow;* — Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 32:6
- *For I will be with you, your troubles to bless,* — Matthew 28:20; Romans 8:28
- *And sanctify to you your deepest distress.* — Romans 5:3–4; Hebrews 12:10–11

Stanza 4

- *When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,* — 1 Peter 4:12; Isaiah 43:2
- *My grace, all sufficient, shall be your supply;* — 2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:19
- *The flame shall not hurt you; I only design* — Isaiah 43:2; Daniel 3:27
- *Your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.* — Isaiah 1:25; 1 Peter 1:7

Stanza 5

- *Even down to old age all My people shall prove* — Isaiah 46:3-4; Psalm 37:25
- *My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;* — Jeremiah 31:3; Malachi 3:6
- *And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,* — Proverbs 16:31; Isaiah 46:4
- *Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.* — Isaiah 40:11; Ps. 23:1-4

Stanza 6

- *The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,* — Matthew 11:28-29; Heb. 4:9-11
- *I will not, I will not desert to his foes;* — Psalm 37:28; John 10:28-29
- *That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,* — Matthew 16:18; Romans 8:35-39
- *I'll never, no never, no never forsake.* — Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6

III. GRACE THAT ENDURES (THOUGHTS FROM CH. 7)

Psalms 71.

Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.

So even to old age in gray hairs, oh God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again;

from the depths of the Earth, you will bring me up again.

Increase my greatness and comfort me again.

“Growing old is not for the faint hearted.” Pg. 95

God is not intimidated by the things that make us quail. He encourages the faint hearted and, doing so, he teaches us how to encourage each other. Pg. 96

Every single reader who lives a long life will experience a landslide of losses and disabilities. Live long enough, and you may outlive everyone you love: parents, friends,

spouse – – even children and, perhaps, grandchildren. You will outlive your usefulness in the workplace and other productive arenas. You may outlive your money. You may outlive your relevance and no longer be part of what's happening. You may outlive your health as every bodily system breaks down. You may outlive your ability to walk, your toilet training, your ability to feed yourself; your memory and – toward the end– your ability to put thoughts together, to relate to others the way you wish you could, and even to remember who you are. Should you live long enough, you may lose every earthly Good. And then you certainly will lose your life. The last enemy still routinely kills us. Pg. 96

This is what we remember: God gets first say, and He gets last say. So everything in the middle — about which he expects us to have lots to say! – – Is anchored in sovereign, eternal unchangeable love. Pg. 97

Psalms 23:4 — when I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for (because) you are with me.

Through our entire hymn, God has been telling us that same truth from his direction. This allows the faith of verse four to say, “you are with me.” Faith listens well, and gives what it trusts back to God. Pg. 98

The route home to where the Lord lives passes through deep darkness, and we face many evils and many enemies. Like a sheep stalked by wolves, David lived much of his life under specific death threats. Like all of us, he lived knowing that death awaits. This applies powerfully to the hardships of aging. Death is coming nearer. Aging casts numerous specific shadows of approaching death: sickness, losses, weakness, helplessness, futility. In fact, if you're willing to think about it, whether you are young or

old, every form of significant suffering, every evil, leaves something of the bitter taste of death in your mouth. Pg. 98

Psalms 90:12 -- So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

But if you listen to your shepherd's voice, you will become fearless. If you listen, you will endure. If you listen, you will fight the good fight in the most terrible wars. If you listen, you will know that you need to be rescued. You will know that you need to be carried into the battle, and carried through the battle, and finally carried from the battlefield. If you listen to the good Shepherd, you will live. Pg. 99.

IV. GRACE THAT'S PERSONAL

Questions for the panel:

1. John reminded us from the book that God gives us more of himself in our pain and suffering. How has that been true for you?

Andrew spoke of the necessity of receiving comfort from God through His Word and the church community.

2. Is there a passage of Scripture that has resonated with you uniquely through your suffering?
3. How has the ministry of the Spirit uniquely comforted you in your suffering as you've walked together with brothers and sisters in Christ?
4. What counsel would you give us now to help us in our own experiences of suffering?
5. What counsel would you offer to help us wisely walk alongside others in their suffering?

Last week, JD helped us better understand the Lord's purposes in our suffering.

6. In verse 4 of the hymn, the lyrics include the line:

The flame shall not hurt you; I only design

Your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.

How have you seen the Lord gently, compassionately, yet relentlessly refine you even as he deals with the dross (the remaining presence of sin) in your life?

7. Knowing that there are competing voices, is there anything else you've done to train yourself to more consistently hear the Lord's voice over the voices of the world, the flesh, and your enemy, the devil?

V. GRACE THAT PREVAILS (THOUGHTS FROM CH. 8)

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

"When speaking of hellish foes that come after you, our hymn writer (like the Bible) is talking about reality — not the horror and fantasy genres in books, films, and video games. He willingly conceals his workaday identity behind veneers of marketable horror, fantasy, and superstition. He gives the illusion that there [is] nothing more to evil than meets the eye. He thrives when people do believe in him and picture a bogeyman. He thrives when people don't believe in him and instead dismiss him as a figment of overactive imaginations. Ordinary, everyday life under the shadow of death is lived under the power of the Evil One...the Evil One conceals himself in the fog of war. So unsuspecting people don't notice that he's in the morality business, however it happens." Pg. 108

You suffer in a world in which your immediate significant sufferings point to deeper, darker, deadlier things. The enemy within, the final enemy, and the Enemy — all three significantly afflict every one of us. They characterize the human condition. Pg. 109

Suffering reveals a set of existential questions: regardless of my suffering's intensity, brutality, longevity, can I trust the Father to carry me through, and the Son to lead with me through, and the Spirit to help me through the suffering I'm enduring?

And will my story end in glory as he promised it would?

Heb. 2:17-18

17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Heb. 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

1 Corinthians 10:13 – The tale of two narratives

1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV): *"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."*

#	Phrase in the verse	The truth	The enemy's lie	What the lie is meant to do
1	"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man" <i>(no set of circumstances/trial/affliction meant to entrap you and tempt you to sin)</i>	You are not alone. Others have faced this struggle, and so did Christ (Heb. 2:18).	"Your situation is unique. No one can identify with you in your struggles."	Tempt you to feel isolated/ashamed, and to wallow in despair and self-pity with no comfort to be had.
2	"God is faithful" (trustworthy, dependable, reliable, worthy of complete confidence)	God's character doesn't change. He's with you and for you in your suffering. He keeps His promises.	"Where is God? He's left you on your own. He can't be counted on."	It makes you distrust God and pull away from Him right when you need Him most.
3	"He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability"	The temptation has limits. God sets how far your trial can go, and it never goes past what His grace knows you can handle.	"This is the big one. It's too strong for you. There's no way you can handle this."	God has been unjust in what He's given you. You're bound to be overwhelmed by this experience.
4	"With the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it"	There's always a way out He gives with the temptation. The goal is to endure and grow to look like Christ.	"There's no way out. You're trapped, so you might as well give in. It'll never change."	It makes you feel hopeless, so you quit looking for the help God has already provided you.

At a glance:

Communion of the saints vs. isolation: "You're not alone" answers "You're the only one."

God's Character vs. abandonment: "God is faithful" answers "God has left you."

God's Ordinances vs. helplessness: "It's within your limit" answers "It's too much for you."

God's Providence vs. hopelessness: "There's a way out" answers "You're trapped."

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