

Chapter 3 – The Supremacy of God in Missions through Suffering

Reading and Reflection

Why does the author open this chapter by telling us of the life and suffering of Henry Martyn? How do stories of missionary suffering align with God’s ultimate purpose in missions? (p. 71)

In your own words, explain what it means to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). Explain why it is so crucial to have a right understanding of the call to be a Christian when reflecting on the task of missions. (pp. 74-77)

What does the author mean when he speaks of “the domestication of cross-bearing” (p. 74)? Why do you think cross-bearing has been watered-down and domesticated so often in the contemporary church? What reasons does the author suggest (pp. 74-76)?

What is the relationship between Christ’s suffering and death and our own suffering and death in world missions? Why does Christ’s suffering and death not exempt us from suffering and death? How is Christ’s suffering and death both substitution and pattern for our own, and why is the order (substitution before pattern) so crucial? (pp. 76-78)

According to 2 Peter 4:1, what “thought” are we to arm ourselves with (pp. 78-79)? How might we “arm ourselves” with this thought? What practical implications might this have on our daily lives?

Reflect on the biblical texts mentioned on pages 83-85. What causes the author to say God appoints (not simply allows) suffering? What other biblical texts suggest this to be so, or seem to conflict with this? List them out, examine them, and discuss them with others.

Write out the six reasons why God appoints suffering for his servants (pp. 82-102). How does each one encourage and embolden one in world missions? Which ones were surprising to you and why? Which ones were particularly encouraging or inspiring to you and why?

In your own words, what is “the American dream” and how does the concept of retirement fit into it? Respond to the following statement: The worldview in which the modern-day notion of retirement is a fitting conclusion distorts and/or contradicts the biblical worldview. What in the present chapter and Scripture supports such a statement? What are some winsome, Christ-like ways to challenge the pursuit of the American dream in our churches?

Why can there be “no talk of ultimate self-denial” in all our talk about the role of suffering in the exaltation of Christ’s supremacy in world missions (p. 107)?

Becoming World Christians

- The history of Christian missions is full of inspiring illustrations of this truth. This week, do some reading in the history of Christian missions, paying particular attention to the presence and role of suffering in the lives of missionaries. Biographical messages of missionaries like David Brainerd, Hudson Taylor, John G. Paton, Adoniram Judson, and Andrew Fuller are available at <https://www.desiringgod.org/biographies> or you may want to read a biography of another missionary like William Carey.
- Read and Reflect on Philippians 3:7-11.