

>> THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH. THIS IS GBN, THE GOSPEL BROADCASTING NETWORK.

>> AMEN. WE SHALL RISE ON THAT RESURRECTION MORNING WHEN THESE PRISON BARS ARE BROKEN. WE SHALL RISE, HALLELUJAH, WE SHALL RISE.

>> HELLO, AND WELCOME AGAIN TO COUNTERPOINT. I'M MIKE HIXSON, AND WITH ME TODAY AS ALWAYS, B.J. CLARKE. B.J., SO GOOD TO BE WITH YOU.

>> GOOD TO BE WITH YOU.

>> B.J., TODAY WE WANT TO TALK ABOUT A SUBJECT THAT IS PROBABLY FAMILIAR TO MANY OF THOSE WHO WATCH OUR PROGRAM, PAIN AND SUFFERING. JOB WROTE MANY YEARS AGO, MAN BORN OF WOMAN IS A FEW DAYS, AND FULL OF TROUBLE. THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE, AS YOU WELL KNOW, FILLED WITH PAIN AND SUFFERING. AND THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT THEY HURT DAILY, AND THE DEPTH OF THEIR PAIN IS UNIMAGINABLE IN MANY CASES. AND THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE THAT PROBABLY CONCLUDE, YOU KNOW, IF GOD REALLY CARED, I WOULDN'T SUFFER. HOW DO YOU RESPOND, HOW DO YOU COUNTER THOSE WHO HAVE THAT MINDSET?

>> I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMIND PEOPLE THAT WHEN GOD FIRST PLACED MAN ON THIS PLANET, HE PLACED HIM IN A PLACE WITH NO SUFFERING AT ALL. AND SO GOD WAS VERY CONSCIOUS OF MAN'S NEEDS AND DESIRES, AND GOD GAVE HIM A PERFECT PLACE. TRUTH BE TOLD, ONCE MAN VIOLATED GOD'S EXPRESSED WISHES ABOUT THE TREE OF LIFE AND PARTOOK OF THE TREE, THAT IS, THAT WAS IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDEN THAT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PARTAKEN OF, ONCE MAN DID THAT, IT CAUSED HIM TO BE REMOVED FROM THE GARDEN PARADISE; AND CONSEQUENTLY MAN STARTED LIVING IN A DIFFERENT PLACE AND WAS NOT ABLE TO ENJOY THE BLESSINGS THAT GOD HAD GIVEN HIM.

>> WE GO BACK TO THE GARDEN, AND AS YOU MENTIONED A MOMENT AGO, THAT'S REALLY WHERE IT ALL STARTED. SINCE THE TRANSGRESSION OF ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, THERE HAS BEEN A PROLIFERATION OF PAIN AND SUFFERING, AND OF COURSE DEATH MADE ITS ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD BASED ON ROMANS 5:12. AND WE TALK ABOUT ALL OF THE RAMIFICATIONS OF HUMAN SUFFERING, AND THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN OUR WORLD TODAY THAT EVEN QUESTION THE EXISTENCE OF A BENEVOLENT GOD BECAUSE OF THE DEGREE THAT PEOPLE SUFFER IN THE WORLD TODAY. AND AS YOU SAID, HUMAN SUFFERING IS NOT SOMETHING THAT WAS CAUSED BY GOD; BUT RATHER IT WAS THE PRODUCT OF SIN, WASN'T IT?

>> RIGHT. AND HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS. IN JOHN 16:33 JESUS SAID, IN THIS WORLD YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION; BUT BE OF GOOD CHEER, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD. AND SO WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO GET PEOPLE TO SEE IS THAT IN SPITE OF THE SUFFERING AND PAIN AND SORROW THAT IS PRESENT ALL AROUND US, THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT WHICH WE CAN STILL REJOICE, AND THAT IS THAT THERE IS A VICTORY THAT AWAITS THE CHILD OF GOD THAT WILL ALLOW HIM TO ENDURE SUFFERING HERE AND TO BE REMOVED FROM IT COMPLETELY HEREAFTER.

>> THAT'S RIGHT. YOU MENTIONED JESUS, AND I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT THE FACT THAT JESUS CLOTHED IN HUMAN FLESH SUFFERED.

>> HE KNEW SUFFERING.

>> AND SUFFERED IMMENSELY. HEBREWS CHAPTER 5, THOUGH HE WERE A SON, YET LEARNED HE OBEDIENCE BY THE THINGS WHICH HE SUFFERED. AND SO THE DEGREE THAT JESUS SUFFERED WAS IMMEASURABLE. AND SO HE CAN IDENTIFY WITH US, CAN HE NOT?

>> RIGHT. IN FACT, JESUS CHRIST EXPERIENCED EVERYTHING THAT A HUMAN BEING COULD EXPERIENCE EXCEPT FOR GUILT AND SIN. HE KNEW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO HURT. HE LIVED IN A FLESHLY BODY EVEN THOUGH HE WAS THE SON OF GOD IN THE FLESH. JOHN 1:14 TELLS US HE BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. THAT MEANS WHEN THEY SCOURGED HIM, IT FELT ACROSS HIS BACK LIKE IT WOULD FEEL ACROSS YOUR BACK OR MINE. HE WASN'T COSMICALLY PROTECTED FROM THE PAIN AND SUFFERING. WHEN THOSE NAILS WERE DRIVEN THROUGH HIS FLESH, IT FELT PHYSICALLY THE SAME WAY THAT IT WOULD HAVE FELT FOR ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING PHYSICALLY. BUT OF COURSE THERE WAS ANOTHER COMPONENT TO IT. HE WAS THE SON OF GOD WHO DIED IN THE FLESH. AND SO WHAT AN AMAZING EXAMPLE HE IS TO US THAT EVEN THOUGH YOU SUFFER, HE WAS ALWAYS LOOKING TO THE FATHER IN THE MIDST OF HIS SUFFERING.

>> WHEN WE GO BACK TO THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE, JESUS, AS A MATTER OF FACT THE BIBLE SAYS IN THE BOOK OF LUKE, BEING IN AGONY, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY. I'M NOT SURE THAT I CAN FULLY FATHOM THE DEPTH OF ANGUISH JESUS EXPERIENCED IN THE GARDEN; AND YET FROM THE HUMAN SIDE, HE RECOGNIZED THE CROSS AND OF COURSE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT WITH REGARD TO HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER. BUT JESUS DID BEAR THE WEIGHT OF THE CROSS. AND AS WE THINK ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE IS ABLE TO FULLY IDENTIFY WITH US, HEBREWS CHAPTER 4, THE FACT THAT WE HAVE NOT A HIGH PRIEST THAT CANNOT BE TOUCHED WITH THE FEELINGS OF THE INFIRMITIES OF THE FLESH THAT WE FACE TODAY.

>> AND YET AS YOU NOTED FROM HEBREWS CHAPTER 4, TEMPTED IN ALL POINTS LIKE AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN. SOMETIMES PEOPLE REACT TO SUFFERING IN A WAY THAT CAUSES THEM TO GET FURTHER AWAY FROM GOD. IN FACT, SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT YOUR SUFFERING EITHER MAKES YOU BITTER, OR IT CAN MAKE YOU BETTER. JOB WAS ONE WHO SUFFERED AND DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT HE WAS GOING THROUGH. BUT ONE THING ABOUT JOB THAT WE APPRECIATE IS HE NEVER DID GIVE UP ON GOD. HE WANTED TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH GOD AND GET SOME ANSWERS FROM GOD, BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP ON GOD. HE SAID, THOUGH HE SLAY ME, YET WILL I TRUST HIM, JOB 13:15. AND SO JOB WAS ONE OF THESE INDIVIDUALS WHO LOOKED AROUND AND LOST, I MEAN, IF YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT HE EXPERIENCED, MIKE, VERSUS WHAT ANY OF US HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED AND THE INTENSITY OF SUFFERING THAT HE EXPERIENCED IN SUCH A SHORT SPAN OF TIME, IT BOGGLES THE MIND. IT'S BAD ENOUGH TO LOSE ONE CHILD. IMAGINE LOSING ALL OF YOUR CHILDREN AT THE SAME TIME. IT'S BAD ENOUGH TO THEN EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, BUT THEN TO HAVE A WIFE THAT DOESN'T COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND OR SUPPORT YOU IN THE GODLY WAY THAT SHOULD BE DONE, YOU LOST ALL YOUR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS. THOSE ARE MINOR COMPARED TO THE CHILDREN AND OTHER THINGS, BUT PUT ALL THAT TOGETHER, AND THE WAY THE TEXT READS IN THE BOOK OF JOB, ONE OF THE MESSENGERS IS NOT DONE TELLING JOB HOW BAD THINGS ARE UNTIL ANOTHER ONE COMES IN RIGHT ON THE HEELS WITH MORE BAD NEWS. AND YET WHAT IS JOB'S ATTITUDE? HE CLUNG TO GOD AND NEVER WOULD LET GO.

>> YOU KNOW, THAT EXPRESSION, WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING, IS USED SOME THREE TIMES I BELIEVE IN THE TEXT. AND AS YOU SAID A MOMENT AGO, ONE

MESSENGER AFTER ANOTHER MESSENGER BEARING BAD NEWS. IN JOB 2 THE TEXT SPEAKS OF THOSE THREE FRIENDS WHO CAME TO MOURN WITH HIM AND COMFORT HIM, AND THE TEXT SAYS IN VERSE 12, AND I THINK THIS IS A VERY POIGNANT PASSAGE, WHEN THEY RAISED THEIR EYES FROM AFAR, AND DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM, THEY LIFTED THEIR VOICES AND WEPT. YOU KNOW, WHAT A PITIFUL SIGHT JOB MUST HAVE BEEN. AND MANY OF US, WE'VE BEEN WITH PEOPLE WHEN THEY'RE HURTING AND THEIR WORLD IS CAVED IN. AND THIS IS TO ME ONE OF THE MOST TOUCHING PASSAGES IN THE BOOK OF JOB.

>> HE MUST HAVE BEEN JUST A SHELL OF HIMSELF. AND THEN YOU THINK ABOUT THAT'S JUST THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS. THE VACANT STARE OF GRIEF THAT MUST HAVE BEEN EMANATING FROM HIM, THE CONFUSION, THE SHOCK, ALL OF THOSE THINGS, THE QUESTIONS, AND YET JOB SOMEHOW SEES THIS THROUGH. HE DOESN'T GIVE UP ON GOD. AND WHEN WE GET TO THE END OF THE STORY, JOB HAS SO MANY BLESSINGS RENEWED. IT JUST SHOWS US THAT THIS CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT A HUNDRED-YARD DASH. IT IS A MARATHON.

>> YES, SIR.

>> AND WE HAVE TO KEEP PUTTING ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF ANOTHER BECAUSE IT'S NOT GOING TO JUST BE OVER. IN FACT, ONE MAN SAID HIS FAVORITE PHRASE IN THE BIBLE WAS, IT CAME TO PASS. BUT IT HAS TO COME TO PASS. YOU DON'T JUST WAKE UP IN THE MORNING AND FIND THAT EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT AGAIN.

>> THAT'S RIGHT. B.J., YOU MENTIONED A MOMENT AGO THAT SOMETIMES TRIALS CAUSE PEOPLE TO THROW IN THE TOWEL, SO TO SPEAK. YOU TALKED ABOUT BREAKING A PERSON'S FAITH. AND THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE THAT BASED ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT THEY'RE FACING IN LIFE, THEY LITERALLY THROW THE TOWEL IN. SO HOW DO YOU COUNTER THOSE WHO WANT TO JUST GIVE UP AND WAVE THE WHITE FLAG?

>> RIGHT. I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE PSALMIST, DAVID, WHO CERTAINLY UNDERSTOOD HIS OWN BRAND OF SUFFERING. AND BY THE WAY, DAVID'S PROOF POSITIVE THAT SOMETIMES, AND I WOULD EMPHASIZE THE WORD SOMETIMES, SOMETIMES OUR SUFFERINGS, CERTAIN SUFFERINGS ARE BROUGHT ON BY OUR ACTIONS. UNQUESTIONABLY, THERE ARE SOME THINGS DAVID EXPERIENCED BECAUSE OF HIS OWN TRANSGRESSIONS. HE WAS PROMISED SOME CONSEQUENCES FOR HIS SIN WITH BATHSHEBA AND THE MURDER OF HER HUSBAND THAT WOULD NEVER LEAVE HIM. HIS FAMILY WOULD ALWAYS BE IN TURMOIL. AND SO THOUGH WE WOULD NEVER SAY THAT EVERYONE WHO'S SUFFERING IS SUFFERING ALWAYS BECAUSE OF PERSONAL SINS, WE CAN'T GO TO THE OTHER EXTREME AND SAY, WELL, THAT NEVER HAPPENS. BUT DAVID LEARNED SOMETHING FROM HIS SUFFERING. I BELIEVE THAT HE'S AS GOOD A CANDIDATE AS ANY TO WRITE PSALM 119. AND HERE'S WHAT HE SAID IN VERSE 71: IT IS GOOD FOR ME THAT I HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED, THAT I MIGHT LEARN THY STATUTES. WHEN YOU'RE ON YOUR BACK WITH NOWHERE TO LOOK BUT UP, SOMETIMES THE THINGS THAT MATTER MOST IN LIFE BECOME MOST REAL TO YOU WHEN YOU REALIZE, LOOK, HERE I AM. I KNOW OF A STORY, MIKE, WHERE A FELLOW WOULD NOT EVEN ANSWER THE DOOR WHEN THE PREACHER CAME TO VISIT HIM BECAUSE HE JUST DIDN'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN THAT RELIGIOUS STUFF, AS HE PUT IT. BUT THEN HE HAD A CAR ACCIDENT, AND HE WAS IN THE HOSPITAL, AND HE WAS LITERALLY IN A POSITION WHERE HE HAD NOWHERE TO LOOK BUT UP. AND THE PREACHER CAME BY TO SEE HIM, AND SUDDENLY HE'S VERY INTERESTED BECAUSE NOW HE'S THINKING BEYOND THIS LIFE TO THE NEXT LIFE. AND SO IN HIS CASE, HIS SUFFERING LED TO A RECEPTIVITY, WHICH LED TO HIM BECOMING A

CHRISTIAN, WHICH LED TO HIM BECOMING A DEACON, AND NOW HE'S A GOSPEL PREACHER OF THE WORD OF GOD. AND SO SOMETIMES SUFFERING IS THE FIRST STEP TO DISCOVERING THE GREATER BLESSINGS GOD HAS TO GIVE US.

>> I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO HIT ROCK BOTTOM, SO TO SPEAK, BEFORE WE CAN LOOK UPWARD. AS YOU WERE TALKING, YOU TRIGGERED A THOUGHT IN MY MIND WITH REGARD TO THE PSALMS. IN PSALM 120 THE PSALMIST SAID, IN MY DISTRESS I CRIED TO THE LORD; HE HEARD ME. DELIVER MY SOUL, O LORD, FROM LYING LIPS AND FROM A DECEITFUL TONGUE. IN PSALM 121 HE SAID, I WILL LIFT UP MY EYES TO THE HILLS; FROM WHENCE COMES MY HELP? AND THEN IN VERSE 2 HE SAID, MY HELP COMES FROM THE LORD WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH. AND I WOULD JUST SAY THAT WHEN I THINK ABOUT THIS PSALM AND THE FACT THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE THAT HAVE UNIMAGINABLE PAIN AND SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD, AND YET THE VERY CREATOR OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH HAS THE ABILITY TO PROVIDE US WITH THE COMFORT AND CARE THAT WE NEED.

>> THAT'S RIGHT. AND TO BE BALANCED. JOB'S SUFFERING WAS NOT CONNECTED TO ANY TRANSGRESSIONS HE'D COMMITTED, EVEN THOUGH HIS FRIENDS ASSUMED THE WORST FIRST. AND GOD HAD TO CORRECT THE FRIENDS AT THE END OF THE BOOK AND SAY LOOK, THEY HAVEN'T SPOKEN OF ME THE THING THAT IS RIGHT LIKE MY SERVANT JOB HAS. THEY ASSUMED THAT IF JOB WAS SUFFERING, IT HAD TO BE FOR REASONS THAT WERE OF HIS OWN DOING, HE PROBABLY DID THIS, HE COMMITTED THIS TRANSGRESSION. IN JOB'S CASE, IT WASN'T BECAUSE OF ANY PERSONAL WRONGDOING. I REMEMBER THE MAN THAT WAS BLIND IN JOHN CHAPTER 9, BORN THAT WAY, AS A MATTER OF FACT. AND THE DISCIPLES WANTED TO KNOW, MASTER, WHO SINNED, THIS MAN OR HIS PARENTS, THAT HE WAS BORN BLIND? AS IF BEING BORN BLIND HAD TO BE THE RESULT OF SOMEONE'S PERSONAL SIN. NOW, DON'T GET ME WRONG. WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND THE SIN THAT WAS COMMITTED THERE IS THAT WHICH BROUGHT US TO A WORLD OF SUFFERING AND SORROW; BUT AS FAR AS PERSONAL TRANSGRESSION IS CONCERNED, IT'S NOT ALWAYS THE CASE THAT SOMETHING WE'RE SUFFERING IS BECAUSE OF SOMETHING WE'VE DONE. SOMETIMES IT'S BECAUSE THIS WORLD IS GOING TO HAVE THAT IN IT. IT MAKES US LONG FOR A DIFFERENT AND BETTER WORLD.

>> YES, IT DOES. B.J., ONE OF THE MORE PERPLEXING PASSAGES IN SCRIPTURE WITH REGARD TO HUMAN SUFFERING IN THE MINDS OF MANY PEOPLE, JAMES 1:2, WHEN JAMES SAID, COUNT IT ALL JOY WHEN YOU FALL INTO VARIOUS TRIALS. NOW, YOU KNOW, ON THE SURFACE OF IT, THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT SAY, WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHY SHOULD I REACT FAVORABLY TO THE VARIOUS TRIALS OF LIFE? HOW WOULD YOU COUNTER THAT THINKING?

>> I WAS THINKING ABOUT PSALM 73 AS YOU WERE READING THAT, BECAUSE HERE'S A MAN AGAIN WHO WAS SUFFERING NOT BECAUSE OF ANYTHING THAT HE'D DONE WRONG. IN FACT, THE PSALM BEGINS WITH, GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL, EVEN TO SUCH AS ARE OF CLEAN HEART. SO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PURE PEOPLE HERE. BUT HE SAID, BUT AS FOR ME, MY FEET WERE ALMOST GONE. HE TALKS ABOUT HOW HIS STEPS HAD ALMOST SLIPPED. AND HE WAS ENVIOUS AT THE FOOLISH WHEN HE SAW THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED. IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THEY WERE SUFFERING AT ALL IN THEIR DEATH, AND THEY WEREN'T IN TROUBLE LIKE OTHER MEN, VERSE 5, AND THAT MADE THEM EVEN MORE ARROGANT. THEIR EYES WERE STANDING OUT WITH ALL THE FATNESS OF THEIR PROSPERITY. AND HE SAID THEY WOULD RAGE AGAINST THE HEAVENS, AND NOTHING BAD WAS HAPPENING TO THEM. HE SAID WHILE THEY'RE MOCKING GOD AND LIVING UNGODLY LIVES, THEY'RE

PROSPERING, INCREASING IN RICHES. BUT HE SAYS I'VE CLEANSSED MY HEART IN VAIN, WASHED MY HAND IN INNOCENCY. ALL DAY LONG I'VE BEEN PLAGUED, CHASTENED EVERY MORNING. AND HE SAYS I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THIS OUT LOUD, BUT I'M AFRAID I WOULD OFFEND THE GENERATION OF GOD'S CHILDREN. AND HE SAID WHEN I THOUGHT TO KNOW THIS, IT WAS TOO PAINFUL. THAT'S HOW WE STARTED THE PROGRAM, TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE IN UNIMAGINABLE PAIN. THIS MAN IN PSALM 73 SAYS, IT WAS TOO PAINFUL FOR ME UNTIL. UNTIL I WENT INTO THE SANCTUARY OF GOD. THEN I UNDERSTOOD THEREIN, AND HE STARTS REALIZING, HEY, WAIT A MINUTE. THESE FOLKS THAT SEEM TO BE LIVING IT UP IN THIS LIFE, THEY'RE BROUGHT INTO DESOLATION IN A MOMENT. AND HE SAID, MY HEART WAS GRIEVED, I WAS PRICKED INSIDE, I WAS FOOLISH. HE SAID, GOD, YOU ARE WITH ME; YOU'LL GUIDE ME WITH YOUR COUNSEL. WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT THEE? ONE OF THE GREATEST QUESTIONS. TELL ME, MIKE, IN THE MIDST OF OUR SUFFERING, WHERE CAN WE GO BUT TO THE LORD, AS THE SONG ASKS?

>> WELL, NO BETTER SONG, REALLY, TO THINK ABOUT. PETER IN 1 PETER 5:7 WOULD SAY, CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM. AND THEN HE TELLS US WHY: FOR HE CARES FOR YOU. AND SO AS YOU SAID, THERE ARE TIMES IN LIFE WHEN OUR ONLY RESOURCE IS THE LORD. I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT PAUL. IN 2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4, YOU REMEMBER PAUL POSSIBLY HAD FACED SOME PRELIMINARY TRIAL, AND AS HE CLOSES OUT HIS WRITINGS BY INSPIRATION, HE WOULD SAY, AT MY FIRST DEFENSE NO MAN STOOD WITH ME, ALL MEN FORSOOK ME. I PRAYED GOD THAT IT MAY NOT BE LAID TO THEIR CHARGE. BUT THEN HE SAID, BUT THE LORD STOOD WITH ME AND STRENGTHENED ME. AND YOU KNOW, B.J., WHEN IT'S ALL SAID AND DONE, REALLY THE GREATEST ALLY WE HAVE IS THE LORD, ISN'T IT?

>> ABSOLUTELY. WHAT A WONDERFUL TEXT, I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU, HEBREWS 13:5-6. AND I KNOW THAT STORY HAS BEEN TOLD A THOUSAND TIMES ABOUT THE MAN THAT WAS LOOKING OVER THE FOOTPRINTS OF TIME, AND HE WOULD SEE IN HIS LIFE TWO SETS OF FOOTPRINTS, ONE REPRESENTING HIS OWN AND THE OTHER THE LORD'S. IT'S A FICTITIOUS STORY WITH A POINT TO BE MADE. BUT HE NOTICES DURING THE MOST DIFFICULT HOURS OF HIS LIFE, DIFFICULT MOMENTS IN HIS LIFE THERE'S ONLY ONE SET OF FOOTPRINTS. HE RASHLY ASSUMES THAT GOD ABANDONED HIM DURING THOSE TIMES. AND AS THE STORY IS WRITTEN, HE IS TOLD, NO, MY CHILD, MY CHILD, I DIDN'T ABANDON YOU; IT WAS THEN THAT I CARRIED YOU. AND EVEN THOUGH THAT'S A FICTITIOUS STORY, IT ILLUSTRATES WHAT IS A LITERAL BIBLICAL TRUTH, AND THAT IS GOD SAYS I'M WITH YOU. IN FACT, PSALM 56 IS ONE OF THE MOST TOUCHING TEXTS IN ALL OF THE BIBLE. PSALM 56:3, WHAT TIME I AM AFRAID, NOTICE THE STATEMENT THAT IS MADE, I WILL TRUST IN THEE. WHEN I'M AFRAID, I TRUST IN GOD. AND HE WILL BE THERE WITH ME TO HELP ME THROUGH THE DARKEST HOURS OF MY LIFE, JUST LIKE HE WAS HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON.

>> YOU KNOW, B.J., I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THOSE VERSES UP, AND PARTICULARLY HEBREWS CHAPTER 13 IN LIGHT OF PSALM 56 BECAUSE WHEN I THINK ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF GOD, AND I MENTIONED PAUL A MOMENT AGO. IN PHILIPPIANS 4:5 PAUL SAID, THE LORD IS AT HAND. AND I THINK ABOUT PAUL IS WRITING FROM A ROMAN PRISON CELL AND HE'S TALKING ABOUT HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD IN HIS PRESENCE. AND I THINK ABOUT AS CHRISTIANS, TO RECOGNIZE WITH CONFIDENCE WE HAVE THE LORD AT OUR SIDE. GOD SAID TO JOSHUA, THE LORD THY GOD WILL BE WITH THEE WHEREVER YOU GO. WHEREVER HE WENT, GOD SAID I'M GOING TO BE WITH YOU. AND THEN I THINK ABOUT THE CONSTANCY OF THAT PRESENCE. IN PSALM 139 THE PSALMIST SAID, YOU'VE SEARCHED ME AND KNOWN

ME. YOU KNOW MY SITTING DOWN, MY RISING UP; YOU UNDERSTAND MY THOUGHT FROM AFAR OFF; YOU COMPREHEND MY PATH AND MY LYING DOWN AND ARE ACQUAINTED WITH ALL MY WAYS. HE SAID, THERE'S NOT A WORD ON MY TONGUE BUT BEHOLD, O LORD, YOU KNOW IT ALTOGETHER. YOU'VE HEDGED ME BEHIND AND BEFORE, LAID YOUR HAND UPON ME. SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME; IT IS HIGH, I CANNOT ATTAIN IT. THE WRITER, DAVID, HERE TALKING ABOUT THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD, THE FACT THAT HE KNOWS EVERYTHING.

>> YES.

>> BUT THEN HE TALKS ABOUT HIS OMNIPRESENCE. WHERE CAN I GO FROM YOUR SPIRIT? WHERE CAN I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE? IF I SEND UNTO HEAVEN, YOU'RE THERE; IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL OR IN SHEOL, HE SAID BEHOLD, YOU'RE THERE; IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE MORNING AND DWELL IN THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE SEA, EVEN THERE YOUR HAND SHALL LEAD ME, YOUR RIGHT HAND SHALL HOLD ME. HE SAID, IF I SAY SURELY DARKNESS SHALL FALL ON ME, EVEN THE NIGHT SHALL BE LIGHT ABOUT ME. INDEED, THE DARKNESS SHALL NOT HIDE FROM YOU, BUT THE NIGHT SHINES AS THE DAY; THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT ARE BOTH ALIKE TO YOU. JUST THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A MINUTE. THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOWHERE WE CAN GO TO ESCAPE THE PRESENCE OF GOD. NOW, POSITIVELY, THAT SAYS WHEREVER WE GO, THE LORD'S WITH US.

>> AND WHAT WOULD THAT HAVE MEANT TO THE APOSTLES WHO WERE SENT OUT TO PREACH TO A HOSTILE WORLD WHEN HE SAID LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS. WE CAN REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS BECAUSE HE'S WITH US ALWAYS. AND YOU THINK ABOUT THE STATEMENT THAT HE MAKES, I AM WITH YOU. AND HOW MARVELOUS THAT WAS FOR PAUL WHEN HE IS IN A PRISON AND HE'S THINKING I'M ALONE. BUT WAIT A MINUTE, I'M NOT REALLY ALONE. AS THE WOUNDS ON HIS BACK FROM HIS BEATINGS ARE HEALING, AS HE'S IN THE MIDST OF SHIPWRECKS AND IN COLD TEMPERATURES LACKING SUFFICIENT CLOTHING, AS HIS MIND IS CYCLING THROUGH ALL THE OPPOSITION HE'S RECEIVING FROM THE BRETHREN, HE CHRONICLES IN 2 CORINTHIANS 11:23 AND FOLLOWING ALL THE THINGS HE'D GONE THROUGH, THE BEATINGS, THE STONINGS, THE SHIPWRECKS, THE DEPRAVATION OF CLOTHING AND FOOD AT TIMES, THE WEARY NIGHTS; AND YET THROUGH ALL OF THAT, WHAT DOES HE KNOW? GOD HAS BEEN WITH ME, GOD IS ON MY SIDE. AND HE WAS ABLE TO FIND HOPE IN THE MIDST OF HIS SORROWS AND TROUBLES BECAUSE OF THE EVERLASTING PRESENCE OF GOD.

>> THAT'S RIGHT. B.J., I WANT TO MAYBE JUST CHANGE GEARS FOR A MOMENT OR TWO. I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE SAID THUS FAR. IN HEBREWS CHAPTER 12 THE WRITER THERE TALKS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE BECOMING WEARY AND DISCOURAGED, AS HE SAYS, IN YOUR SOULS. AND YOU KNOW, WHEN PEOPLE HAVE PROTRACTED ILLNESSES OR DEBILITATING DISEASES, IT CAN BECOME VERY DISCOURAGING AND IT CAN WEARY THE SOUL. AND YET THE WRITER THERE ENCOURAGES CHRISTIANS TO RUN WITH PATIENCE, TO RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT'S SET BEFORE US. YOU MENTIONED A MOMENT AGO THAT CHRISTIANITY, LIVING LIFE IS A MARATHON, IT'S NOT A SPRINT. AND SO HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO HANG ON WHEN TIMES ARE REALLY, REALLY TOUGH?

>> YEAH, YOU KNOW THAT HEBREWS 11 TEXT IS A GREAT PLACE TO GO, BECAUSE IF I ASK MYSELF WHEN HAVE I GONE THROUGH - JUST THIS PART RIGHT HERE IS ENOUGH TO GET MY ATTENTION. IT TALKS ABOUT THOSE WHO THROUGH FAITH, THERE'S THE ANSWER, SUBDUED KINGDOMS, WROUGHT RIGHTEOUSNESS, OBTAINED PROMISES, STOPPED THE MOUTHS OF LIONS, QUENCHED THE VIOLENCE OF FIRE,

ESCAPED THE EDGE OF THE SWORD. OUT OF WEAKNESS WE'RE MADE STRONG, WAXED VALIANT IN FIGHT, AND TURN TO FLIGHT THE ARMIES OF THE ALIENS. SOME WERE TORTURED, NOT ACCEPTING DELIVERANCE. OTHERS HAD TRIAL OF CRUEL MOCKINGS AND SCOURGINGS; YEA, MOREOVER OF BONDS AND IMPRISONMENTS; STONED, SAWN IN HALF, TEMPTED. YOU KNOW HOW MANY OF THESE THINGS I'VE ACTUALLY EXPERIENCED, MIKE? NOT ANY OF THEM IN THE DEGREE THAT I'M READING ABOUT HERE. IF THEY CAN DO IT, AND THEY'RE THE ONES DEPICTED IN THE VERY NEXT CHAPTER AS BEING THAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES. WE'VE OFTEN DESCRIBED IT AS THEM SITTING IN THE STANDS CHEERING US ON AS WE RUN OUR RACE, SAYING, YOU CAN DO THIS, YOU CAN DO THIS. WE DID IT. GOD WAS WITH US. HE'LL BE WITH YOU. YOU CAN DO THIS.

>> THAT'S ENCOURAGING. B.J., WHEN WE LOOK AT HEBREWS CHAPTER 11, CHAPTER 12, WHEN WE THINK ABOUT RUNNING THAT CHRISTIAN RACE, TO KNOW THAT THERE IS A BETTER DAY AND A BETTER PLACE AWAITING US. AND SO THE KEY TO LIVING IN LIFE IS TO LIVE SO THAT WE CAN HAVE A BETTER LIFE ONE DAY IN A PLACE THAT IS FREE FROM THE PROBLEMS AND SUFFERINGS THAT WE FACE HERE ON PLANET EARTH. TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT IF YOU WOULD THAT INHERITANCE THAT PETER TALKS ABOUT IN 1 PETER CHAPTER 1 THAT IS INCORRUPTIBLE, UNDEFILED, IT FADES NOT AWAY, AND HE SAID IT'S RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU.

>> YOU TALK ABOUT RESERVATIONS TO THE BEST PLACE YOU COULD EVER GO? I MEAN, SOMEONE MIGHT TRY TO MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR SOME EARTHLY RESORT. IT COULD NEVER MATCH THE INCORRUPTIBLE, UNDEFILED, THAT FADES NOT AWAY RESERVATION FOR THE INHERITANCE THAT AWAITS US ACCORDING TO 1 PETER CHAPTER 1. THAT'S ALL PREDICATED UPON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD, VERSE 3. AND SO WHAT DO WE HAVE? WE HAVE THAT WHICH CANNOT DECAY. EVERYTHING THAT I SEE AROUND ME IS GOING TO DETERIORATE AND DECAY. THE HOUSE IN WHICH I LIVE NEEDS REPAIRS. IT BREAKS DOWN AFTER A WHILE. THE CAR I DRIVE, THE CLOTHES I WEAR, ET CETERA, ET CETERA. BUT HERE'S SOMETHING THAT'S SO BEAUTIFUL. THE OUTWARD MAN MAY BE PERISHING, BUT THE INWARD MAN CAN BE RENEWED DAY BY DAY. SO I CAN LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SAY, WHOA, I DON'T LOOK THE WAY I USED TO LOOK. I'M GETTING OLD, OLDER. AND YET INSIDE I'M BRAND NEW.

>> RIGHT.

>> AND I'M HEADED TO A PLACE WHERE WE'LL NEVER GROW OLD. AND HOW BEAUTIFUL IS THAT?

>> THAT'S A GREAT THOUGHT.

>> NEVER SUFFER, NEVER GROW OLD.

>> THAT'S RIGHT. B.J., WE'VE GOT ABOUT TWO MINUTES LEFT IN OUR PROGRAM. AND I THINK ABOUT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE SUFFERING AND HURTING THAT ARE WATCHING THIS PROGRAM. WHAT WOULD A PERSON NEED TO DO TO BECOME A CHILD OF GOD AND TO ENJOY, AS YOU SAID A MOMENT AGO, THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD IN THEIR LIVES TO EXPERIENCE THE PEACE THAT PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING? WHAT WOULD THEY NEED TO DO?

>> YEAH. YOU MENTIONED EARLIER THAT HE SUFFERED AND BECAME THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION UNTO ALL THEM THAT OBEY HIM. AND SO THE QUESTION IS, IF I MUST OBEY HIM, WHAT SHOULD I OBEY? HE'S COMMANDED ME TO BELIEVE HE'S

THE CHRIST, ELSE I'LL DIE IN MY SINS, JOHN 8:24. HE'S COMMANDED ME TO REPENT IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE GOODNESS. AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD MAKES ME WANT TO REPENT AND GRANTS ME REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE, ROMANS 2:4 AND ACTS 11:18. AND SO AS I BELIEVE AND I REPENT, I WANT TO TELL THE WORLD THE SAME THING THE EUNUCH TOLD PHILIP, I BELIEVE JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD. AND BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT, I'M WILLING TO GO DOWN INTO A BODY OF WATER, TO THEN BE BURIED WITH MY LORD, TO COME UP OUT OF THAT BODY OF WATER, AND TO GO ON MY WAY REJOICING AS THE EUNUCH DID IN ACTS 8. ABOUT WHAT WAS HE REJOICING? HIS SINS HAD BEEN WASHED AWAY. REVELATION 1:5 SAYS THE BLOOD OF CHRIST LOOSES OR WASHES OUR SINS. AND WHEN DOES IT DO THAT? SAUL OF TARSUS WAS TOLD, ARISE AND BE BAPTIZED AND WASH AWAY THY SINS. THAT'S HOW YOU CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD, ACTS 22:16. AND SO WHATEVER THE REASONS ARE THAT SOMEONE WATCHING THIS PROGRAM RIGHT NOW MIGHT BE SUFFERING, WHETHER THEY ARE SELF-INFLICTED, WHETHER THEY'RE JUST THE HAPPENSTANCE OF LIVING IN AN EARTHLY WORLD, THE GOOD NEWS IS THE SALVATION THAT COMES THROUGH CHRIST CAN CURE ALL OF THAT.

>> THAT'S RIGHT.

>> AND JESUS CHRIST CAN CHANGE YOUR WORLD HERE AND HEREAFTER. AND IF YOU LIVE FOR HIM HERE, YOU'LL LIVE WITH HIM THERE HEREAFTER.

>> AND YOU KNOW WHAT, B.J.? THAT'S SO IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT THE LORD WILL BLESS YOU, YOU'LL ENJOY A BETTER LIFE.

>> YES.

>> AND REALLY, THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE BEST LIFE BECAUSE IT'S THE BLESSED LIFE.

>> AMEN.

>> SO WE'RE SO GRATEFUL TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH YOU EVERY WEEK. HOPE TO SEE YOU BACK HERE AGAIN NEXT WEEK. UNTIL THEN, MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU. GOD BLESS.

>> WE SHALL RISE ON THAT RESURRECTION MORNING WHEN THESE PRISON BARS ARE BROKEN. WE SHALL RISE, HALLELUJAH, WE SHALL RISE.

>> HALLELUJAH, THINE THE GLORY. HALLELUJAH, AMEN. HALLELUJAH, THINE THE GLORY, REVIVE US AGAIN.