

God's Great Purpose in Suffering, Trial and Pain

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us, as we learn to become spiritual beings and are conformed to the image of God's Son.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:20, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 15:46, Philippians 3:21

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Suffering Purpose"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. preaches on the purpose of God for humanity, emphasizing the transition from being a 'natural' man to becoming a 'spiritual' being as intended by God. He highlights the futility and frustration that comes from living on a natural basis rather than growing spiritually. Beach discusses how suffering is used by the Lord to remove falsehood in us and make way for the truth found in Christ, ultimately leading to a humanity conformed to the image of God's Son.

Transcript

For the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us. Rom. 8: 18 When God created man, He had a great purpose for him. That purpose was not realized when the man first came from the hand of God: that was only setting him on a course, in the way of Divine purpose. If you ask what that was - and still is - it can be summarized from what we have now in the Bible, and particularly in the New Testament, like this. God intended that the man should graduate from the stage and the state in which he was made, into something else, into something more.

God made him what the New Testament calls 'the natural man'. Paul says: '...first that which is natural' (1 Cor. 15:46), and there is nothing wrong about that. The word, as you know, in the original, is 'soulish', 'soulical', 'of the soul' - he was made like that. But God's intention for that man was that he should become a 'spiritual' man. The New Testament draws that great distinction between the 'natural' and the 'spiritual'. The 'natural' is that in which we are born; the 'spiritual' is that into which we are born again.

And God intended that there should be this graduation from the 'natural' to the 'spiritual', that the man should become a 'spiritual' being (with all that we understand from the New Testament that that means): beginning in his own spirit, growing up into spiritual maturity, and consummated with a spiritual body, 'like unto the body of His glory' (Phil. 3:21). 'Not that which is spiritual is first', says Paul, 'but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual'. That is the order.

But man cut short his own intended way, and he remained just a 'soul' man, a 'natural' man - that is how we find him, and ourselves - and did not go on to full growth, to become a spiritual being. And so God says: 'Man has defeated the very purpose for which I have created him. He has turned aside' (there are many ways in which the Bible speaks of this arrest); 'he is less than I intended him to be.' God said therefore: 'Therefore, futility!' Looking away from the story, is it not true in experience, right up to date, that if you and I, as the Lord's people, live on the natural basis, there is frustration and futility?

It is only as we emerge (if I may put it that way), and become more and more spiritual, that the seal of God is upon us, that the pleasure of God is found in us. He is saying, It is very good; I can accompany that; I can associate Myself with that; I can go on with that. Spiritual men, spiritual women, are those to whom the Lord can commit Himself, with whom He can speak, commune, and have fellowship. The purpose of God lies there, and if it is in any way arrested, or diverted, or violated, it is futility.

It is the tragic story of much in Christianity, in what is called the Church, and in Christian lives - futility, vanity, confusion, not arriving, held up, waiting for something. And there is a good deal of groaning in this creation, for something that is not, that we know ought to be. We close this brief survey with a reminder of the Way and the End of Hope. You see the immediate context of our verses: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward" (Rom. 8:18).

Suffering - what is it for? It is just to dispose of this false thing that has come in. Suffering is to dispose of a false state, a false condition, a false position, that has come in. Everything is false, you see; it is not what God intended. It was a lie, an untruth, a falsehood, that brought about all the vanity and the judgment. It is a false world, a false creation now. The suffering that the Lord brings into our lives has this one object - to dispose of that which is false in us, and to make way for that which is true in Christ, who is the Truth.

We are not the truth, and this creation is not the truth, but Christ is the Truth, and the false has to be disposed of, removed, and it is only done by suffering. This selfhood is the root and spring of all the trouble, is it not? By the suffering or the discipline under the Lord's hand, the selfhood is set aside, and the way is made for Christ. Through suffering, the virtues of the Lord Jesus are inculcated in the believer and in the Church. It is the only way. We only learn patience through demand for it - and what demand!

We only learn faith by having to have faith. And all the virtues of the Lord Jesus - meekness, and all the others - are only inculcated in us through suffering. The sufferings of this present time - what is the goal? Well, the original purpose is still the goal. It is a humanity conformed to the image of God's Son, a world cleansed and purged by fire from all this falsehood, and ground of vanity and futility, and then peopled and filled with those who are an expression of the Son of God - conformed to His image.

The Lord has to pronounce vanity upon all else, or there would be no going for His object at all. And as we go on with the Lord, the one thing that we become more and more aware of is that there is nothing else but the Lord. We are losing all hope in every other direction, all expectation; it must be the Lord, just the Lord! And our hearts, through disillusionment, through disappointment in many directions, through much that we shall just have to call 'vanity', futility - our hearts are being drawn to the Lord as our only object, our only goal, our only hope. So it becomes true: "He is thy life, and the length of thy days" (Deut. 30:20). Towards that the law of vanity works, and therefore it is 'in hope'.

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