

The Mystery of Suffering

by Stephen Kaung

Believers suffer because of the conflict between their sinful nature and God's will, and also because of the sympathy they have for others who are suffering.

Duration: 1:08:13

Scripture: Romans 5:1-5, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Topics: "Suffering And Hope", "Christian Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, Stephen Kong begins by reading Romans chapter 5, verses 1 to 5, which speaks about having peace with God through Jesus Christ and boasting in hope. He then references 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 17 and 18, which talks about suffering leading to perseverance, character, and hope. Kong explains that suffering is not strange for believers and that there is a purpose behind it. He also highlights the significance of Romans chapter 5 as a transitional chapter, bridging the gap between justification and sanctification. The sermon emphasizes the atoning suffering of Christ and the importance of accepting and receiving the benefits of His sacrifice.

Transcript

Stephen Pong begins with the reading of Romans, Chapter 5, verses 1 to 5. Romans, Chapter 5, verse 1. We have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have also access by faith into this favor in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works endurance, and endurance experience, and experience hope. And hope does not make a shame, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

Now, in the New International Version, it says, Sufferings works perseverance, and perseverance character, and character hope. 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4, verses 17 and 18. 2 Corinthians, Chapter 4, verses 17 and 18.

For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen, eternal. Let's look at the Lord.

Dear Heavenly Father, we do thank Thee for the privilege of gathering around Thy table to remember Thy beloved Son, and what He has done for us. Our Father, if it is not because of Him, we would not be here.

We do praise and thank Thee, knowing that everything comes from Thee.

And to Thee we give our thanks and worship. Now, Father, as we continue in Thy presence, we pray that by Thy Holy Spirit, Thou will open Thy Word to us, and open our hearts to Thy Word, that Thy Word may become life and spirit to us, that we may be strengthened, that we may be able to glorify Thy Name while on earth. We commit this time into Thy hands, trusting Thee.

In the Name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. Recently it has been upon my heart this matter of the mystery of suffering.

I think suffering is always a mystery. It is a mystery to the unbelievers, of course, and it is a mystery to the believers. We often hear people of the world ask this question.

If there is God, and God is loving, how can all these sufferings happen in this world? They try to put the blame on our God, as if He has brought all these sufferings we see around us upon this world, not knowing that if you read the Word of God, you find that suffering is not God's original purpose for mankind. On the contrary, you find that God's original thought for man is glory, not suffering. After God created man in His own image, He gave them dominion over all the created beings.

There is not one word of suffering there. And also we find that He put the man in the garden of Eden. And the word Eden means pleasure.

In other words, God's intention for mankind is pleasure. Real pleasure. Not pleasure of sin, of course, but real pleasure.

So God's intention, God's original thought towards man, is not suffering at all. You remember the psalmist, David, in Psalm 139. He said, How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O Lord.

God's thoughts towards us are very precious. And there are many. But of course, for man to really enjoy pleasure and dominion, there is one condition.

And the condition is obedience. God put man in the garden of Eden for pleasure, but on the condition that man should obey God. And that is what man should be.

But unfortunately we find that man rebels against God and sin. And because of this, suffering has come into this world. So put it very frankly, suffering basically is the result.

The wages of sin is death. And of course that includes all kinds of suffering. So we have to see that man has brought suffering upon themselves.

We ourselves are to be blamed, not God. But I think this is not what we really want to talk about. I think what we really need to understand before God is, why is it that we as believers suffer? You know, oftentimes we have a wrong idea, thinking that after we have believed in the Lord Jesus, after He has saved us, surely now, being our loving Father who cares for us, He will never allow us to suffer anymore.

So when suffering comes to a believer, oftentimes we think it is strange. Sometimes we rebel against it. We murmur.

Because we have the wrong concept that we as Christians should not suffer. God will never allow us. But that is wrong.

Now in order to know this matter of suffering, I think we have to go back to see our Lord Jesus. You know, our Lord Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Slain that suffering.

He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Because God in His full knowledge, He knew that the man whom He would create would rebel against Him. And because of this, suffering became a necessity.

But instead of letting men suffer as they should suffer, God Himself suffered. Now brothers and sisters, we have to see that because of our sins, God Himself suffered. He suffered in the sense that He spared not His only beloved Son.

Now if we only think a little bit, you know, God has only one beloved Son who has pleased Him always. They are one. Absolutely one.

Together from eternity. And yet you find God had to give up His Son and made His Son the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Now how much suffering must be involved with God? The suffering of God far, far surpasses any suffering that we ever pass through or we ever can imagine.

God is the first one who really suffered. Even before He created man, He knew He had to suffer. And before the foundation of the world, He knew that.

And from the foundation of the world, His Son was destined to be the Lamb slain. Think of our Lord Jesus. How much suffering He must have gone through.

He who was equal with God emptied Himself. Now that's suffering. If you are very full and then you have to be emptied, what suffering that must be.

He emptied Himself. And He became a man. He humbled Himself.

Even unto death, the death of the cross. So dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that. Even though it is not God's original purpose for man to suffer, but after sin has come into this world, suffering is unavoidable.

It is a necessity. And for this reason, God Himself suffered. And He is only begotten Son.

So suffering should not be something strange to us today. Now of course, when we think of the sufferings of Christ, we know that the sufferings of Christ are of two kinds. And this is something that we must distinguish.

The sufferings of Christ can be vicarious, that is atoning. And there is the other kind, non-vicarious, non-atoning suffering. If you read Isaiah 53, and you will find that in that prophecy concerning the sufferings of Christ, you can see the two different kinds in that prophecy.

For instance, in Isaiah 53 verse 5, But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His strife we are healed. And then in verse 10, Now that is vicarious, atoning suffering.

In other words, His suffering is to atone us for our sins. There you will find our Lord Jesus, the One who knew no sin, was made sin for us. He had offered Himself as a sin offering.

And because He offered Himself as a sin offering, therefore you will find God Himself crushing, bruising. It is because He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. There on the cross, we know that the cross, the time when our Lord Jesus was on the cross was approximately 6 hours.

He was crucified at 9 o'clock in the morning, and He expired at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. But the Bible says from 12 noon, suddenly you will find the scene completely changed. There was darkness.

The sun hid itself. And our Lord Jesus cried out, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? It was during those last 3 hours that God accepted His beloved Son as the sin offering for the sin of the world. And it was these 3 hours that God crushed Him, bruised Him on the cross.

There He tasted death for everything. That's atoning suffering. And in that suffering He was alone.

Nobody could be with Him. He tread, He tore the winepress alone. He suffered alone.

You and I cannot have any share in that. All we do is to accept and receive the good of His suffering, His atoning suffering. He is the only one who suffered in our state.

That's the atoning suffering of Christ. And in that we have no fellowship. We can only believe and receive and be in the good of it.

But you find that the suffering Christ has another kind. And the other kind is non-vicarious, non-atoning suffering. Of course it can best be illustrated during the first 3 hours He was on the cross.

He was crucified by the Roman government, by the Jewish nation, by the world. The world crucified Him. Man did it.

And then you find that not only man mocked Him while He was on the cross, but in the unseen world all the evil forces surrounded Him. If you read Psalm 22, you will find that. That all the unseen evil forces together with the world, you find they all mocked Him, deserted Him and crucified Him.

He suffered not from the hand of God. He suffered from the hand of man and of the enemy because of the conflict there. Now this kind of suffering we as believers are called into fellowship with.

You remember in the Philippines it said to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. We are called to fellowship with the sufferings of God. Not of the vicarious kind.

We are not called to that because we cannot atone other people's sin. Not even for our own sin. Christ alone does it.

But we are called into the fellowship of His suffering of the non-atoning kind. Therefore brothers and sisters you find in the word of God it always says do not think it is strange when you suffer, when there is tribulation upon you. In the word you have tribulation.

But the law says do not be afraid because I have overcome the world. Now if we believers think that we are only called to go to heaven to be saved and not called to have fellowship with the sufferings of Christ then we are really in a very dangerous situation. We are not mentally, spiritually prepared to suffer.

And that is the hardest part. But if we feel that we are called to have fellowship with the sufferings of Christ then your whole outlook will be different. You will see suffering from a very different perspective.

Now when you think of the sufferings of Christ in the non-vicarious kind actually if you read the gospels you will find they include a number of things. Number one, you find Christ suffered in order to learn obedience. You know as God He never knew obedience.

You cannot think of God, you cannot think of putting God and obedience together. You can only put God and command together. God is to command, never to obey.

So as the Son of God, as God Himself, He never really knew obedience. He learned obedience while He was on earth in the days of His flesh. Now you find that in Hebrews 5. It says, verse 7. Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to Him who was able to save Him out of death with strong crying and tears and having been heard because of His piety, though He was Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered and having been perfected became to all them that obeyed Him author of eternal salvation.

When our Lord Jesus was on earth in the days of His flesh for 33 years, in the days of His flesh He learned one thing, obedience, from the things which He had suffered. Now of course we know that our Lord Jesus, while He was on earth, He was perfect. Not like us.

We have a fallen nature in us. Our flesh is ugly. We want to do our own things in our own way, but it's always opposing God's will and God's way.

But our Lord Jesus, as a man, He was perfect. Even with His sinless human nature or sinless self. His self is sinless.

If He desires to do anything out of His own self, there is no sin involved. He can do it. Not like you and I. When we try to do something out of our own self, you'll find that we sin against God.

But with our Lord Jesus it's different. He is the Holy One. His self is a holy self.

He can do things out of His own, and God will not hold Him as sinful. But even with His sinless self, holy self, you'll find that He needs to learn obedience from the things which He has suffered. In other words, you'll find again and again in the Gospel of John, He said, I can do nothing out of myself.

I cannot say anything out of myself. I do not judge of myself. You'll find that again and again throughout His life He denied Himself.

And you know, when you deny yourself, suffering is involved. I think there is no suffering greater than denying yourself. But in denying Himself, even His holy self, sinless self, He is willing to be in such obedience to the Father.

He suffers. In a sense, yes, He learned obedience through the things which He has suffered. Now, do not think that our Lord Jesus, in obeying the Father, He does not suffer.

He does. He does suffer. Many things He can do.

For instance, even when He was twelve years old, He knew for sure that He must be occupied with His Father's business. He stayed back in Jerusalem for that purpose. But when His earthly parents found Him, they couldn't understand.

And the Bible says He even obeyed them and went back with them and stayed there until He was thirty years old. Now, someone make a suggestion, saying that if you only think, during those days, from His twelve years old to thirty years old, there He was hidden in Nazareth. There He was a carpenter, making things.

Probably He made a number of many coffins, while He could raise the dead. What suffering it must be to Him! He could easily raise the dead, but now He was there making coffins for them. Why? Because the Father's time hasn't come yet.

He had to learn obedience to the things which He has done. During those years, you can see that He looked around, He saw people, He saw things that shouldn't be. He could easily do something about it.

And one day He will. But He couldn't. You know, if you think of Moses, when he was forty years old, he went out, he thought God was going to do something to him, and He started to do something, He couldn't wait.

Because there was that inward conviction there. But think of our Lord Jesus. He had the same conviction, stronger than Moses, and yet you'll find there He learned obedience, from the things which He has done.

Throughout His life you'll find that He denied Himself, His Holy Self, to learn obedience. You know, man, through disobedience, enters into suffering. But here you'll find a man.

He suffered to learn obedience. And I think this is one of the sufferings of Christ that we are called to fellowship with. If you read 1 Peter, you'll find Peter, he speaks a lot about suffering.

And then in 1 Peter, in chapter 3, he said, Think of Christ, how He suffered. And there you'll find the word he uses, chapter 2, verse 21, For to this have ye been called, for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye shall follow in His steps. The vicarious suffering of Christ is not a model, is not an example for us to follow.

It is salvation, redemption. But you'll find there is a part of Christ's suffering which He sets before us as a model, as an example, for us to follow in His steps. And, brothers and sisters, we are called to suffer.

In this particular sense, that we are called to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. Who wants to do that? It is not because we are constrained by the love of Christ, nobody wants to do that. And it is not because of the sufficient grace of God, nobody can do that.

But it is very clear in the word of God. The Lord Jesus said, now, unless you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. You cannot be where I am.

And if you are where I am, then you are honoured, respected by the Father. Even though we are saved, and yet we know this fallen nature, this self, is deeply rooted in us. Now, why must Christians suffer? Why does God allow suffering to believers? One reason is, through suffering we may be delivered from this self-centeredness.

And we may learn obedience. And through obedience, through suffering, character may be built. We will come back to that later on.

But then you will find that suffering Christ, there is another kind. I mean, the non-vicarious suffering includes another thing. And that is his tremendous sympathy towards mankind.

Our Lord Jesus' heart is so big. He literally embraces the whole world. And if you read the Gospels, you will find that, no matter who you are, whether you come from a high society, or whether you come from the lowest place in the world, whether you are grown-ups, or whether you are children, you know, no matter who you are, you will find that our Lord Jesus has tremendous sympathy with mankind.

And that is one reason why he is so attractive. You know, he attracts the children. He attracts everybody, in one sense.

Because his sympathy is so full and so open. And because of such sympathy, he suffers. You know, if a person is cold-blooded, you know, he can look around all the sufferings of the world and it's nothing to him.

He doesn't feel anything. But the more you are sympathetic, even though the suffering may not be directly upon your life, but you suffer. You suffer with those who suffer.

And our Lord Jesus has tremendous sympathy. You know, in Hebrew it is said that our high priest is full of sympathy for us, because he has been tempted in all things without sin. Anything, everything that human being ever has gone through or will go through, he has.

He was tempted in all things without sin. So his sympathy is towards those who are being tempted. And because of that, he suffers.

And dear brothers and sisters, we are called into fellowship of his suffering in this man. As the Bible said, as one suffers, we all suffer. We are members of one body.

When one member suffers, how can the rest of the body feel glorious? Nothing. Even in our physical body, if a little finger is pricked, the whole being, the whole body suffers. And how much more in the spiritual reality.

Now oftentimes we think that the church is the body of Christ. Or we think that church is as the body of Christ. But actually you find the scripture never put it that way.

It never put it that the church is as the body. The church is the body. And this physical, this spiritual reality is much more real than the physical reality.

So the body of Christ, the church is the body of Christ. If one member suffers, as we find in 1 Corinthians, then the whole body suffers. If one member is glorified, then the whole body shines.

That's sympathy. And we are called into that kind of suffering. To suffer for that reason.

And of course in connection with that, you find that Christ, he suffered for the church. He gave, he loved the church and gave himself for it. How he desired to sanctify it, purify it by the washing of the water with the blood, that he may present it to himself as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any of such thought, holy and without blameless.

So we find that for the church, our Lord Jesus, he suffered, he gave himself for the church. And we are called into fellowship with him. In this area.

In Colossians chapter 1 you find Apostle Paul said, I am to feel of that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body that is the church. In other words, you find Christ suffered for the church. He gave his

birth to the church.

But there is a part of that suffering which he called us to enter into with him. And that part is to feel of that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for the body's sake. And that is, you find in the life of Paul, how he labored, how he travailed, how he worked, how he prayed in order to present everyone perfect in Christ.

In order to see that the church is really built up to the glory of God. And you find this is suffering. And the suffering of Paul in that area is tremendous.

And we are called into fellowship of that kind of suffering. Not only in sympathy with people, but for the completion of the body of Christ. All that we may give ourselves to prevail, to pray, to labor in love, to share what Christ we have with our brothers and sisters.

And in doing that you find that you do suffer. You have to bear people in your heart and prevail for them. And this is part of the suffering we are called into.

And then another thing is in the sufferings of Christ, of the non-vicarious kind, we find that he suffered from the world because he is so different. He is not of the world. He is otherworldly.

Therefore the world cannot understand him. And because he does not belong, therefore the world persecutes him and casts him out. So you find there is a great area of the sufferings of Christ that come from the world because he is otherworldly.

And our brothers and sisters, of course, we know that. In that area we are also called to share with him in his suffering. He said we are not of the world as he is not of the world.

And because we do not belong to the world, that world hates us. And if anyone who desires to live a godly life, he will be persecuted. The apostle Peter said, now do not think it strange when tribulations come upon you.

If you suffer because you are a Christian, if you suffer for Christ's sake, if you suffer for the sake of righteousness, if you suffer for the kingdom of God, rejoice! We are not only called to be saved, we are also called to suffer. And are we prepared for that? You know, sometimes we suffer a little bit from the world and we already feel uneasy and strange. If we do not suffer with him, we cannot reign.

Christ must suffer first and then enter into glory. And this is an area again we are called into his fellowship. And of course there is another area, and that is our Lord Jesus was engaged in a tremendous battle, a conflict.

It is the battle of the ages. That is the conflict between God and the enemy. And you find the enemy throughout his life trying to kill him, get rid of him.

And he suffered a great deal from that. And in a sense, we are called into fellowship with his suffering. Brothers and sisters, we have to realize that there is a spiritual conflict going on.

And this spiritual conflict, we are not spectators. We are very deeply involved in that conflict. Whether God is to get his kingdom, or whether the enemy is able to frustrate and to delay the kingdom of God to come upon this earth is an issue.

And this issue is very real in our daily life. Not only in big decisions, in small things of our life. You know, in such a warfare, every little thing... The enemy is trying to move us away from standing for God and for his kingdom.

And because of this, if we stand, we suffer. You know, sometimes you wonder why. There doesn't seem to be any visible reason, rational reason to suffer.

But there is reason. In the unseen world, something is going on there. You know, think of Job.

It's a good illustration. Something is going on in the unseen world. And Job has to suffer because of it.

So, brothers and sisters, let us remember that. To us believers, suffering is nothing strange. On the contrary, you will find that there is good reason why God allows believers to suffer.

Now let's go back to Romans, chapter 5. Now, Romans, chapter 5, you know that it is a chapter. A transitional chapter. In other words, before Romans 5, you'll find justification.

And after Romans 5, you'll find sanctification. And Romans 5 stands in the middle of it. So, it is in a sense bringing us from justification into sanctification.

From being saved into being conformed to the image of God's beloved Son. And Romans 5 stands in the middle. In other words, it makes the transfer.

Now, let us look at it. It says, therefore having been justified on the principle of faith. Now, we are justified by faith.

We have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, thank God for that. Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

There is nothing between God and us through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom we have also access by faith into this favor in which we stand. Now, today we stand in favor.

In other words, we are accepted. We have been accepted in the beloved. God has accepted us.

And we stand in God's favor now. And we boast in hope of the glory of God. Now, having been justified and having peace and being in favor with God.

Now, what is our hope? We boast of a future hope. And the hope is the glory of God. One day there will be glory.

You know, that is the ultimate. Glory is the ultimate word. Not just justified.

Justified is the beginning. But being justified, we look forward to the glory of God. Now you read verse three.

And not only that, but we also boast in suffering. You see, when we are boasting of the hope of the glory of God. At the same time, we need to boast of suffering.

Boasting suffering. Now, we do boast of the glory of God. Of the hope of the glory of God.

But do we boast in suffering? We cry in suffering. Now, it doesn't mean that we try to court suffering. In other words, we try to make ourselves suffer.

No, that's foolish. And some people are doing that. You know, even Peter said, Now, do not suffer because you did something evil.

If you did something evil and you suffer, there is nothing to it. It is just vain. Vanity.

You know? And even among believers, you find that, well, some mystics, you know. They try to court suffering. You know, as if suffering has merit in it.

Suffering does not have any merit. But why do we boast in suffering? Suffering itself has nothing to be boasted of. When you suffer, you suffer.

But it says we boast in suffering because suffering works out something. Now, that's where the boasting is. It says suffering works endurance.

Or in other versions, suffering works patience or perseverance. And perseverance works experience or character. Now, dear brothers and sisters, this is something very important.

What is the purpose of God in allowing His children to suffer? We say that suffering is not the original purpose of God for mankind. Mankind suffers because of their sins. And they do suffer.

But why do Christians suffer? There is one reason. And the reason is, through suffering, God is to work in us. You know, God's eternal purpose is that we may be conformed to the image of His beloved Son.

And in only that, we can be the eternal bride of the Lamb. That is God's purpose. God's purpose is glory.

One day, His beloved Son will lead many sons into glory. But you cannot get into glory without character. Now, do not think that.

We always say that if you are saved, you go to heaven. Yes, you go to heaven. But think if you walk on the street of gold.

Oh my, that's wonderful. But it's transparent gold. In other words, everything in your heart is being exposed.

Now, do you dare to walk on that street? Everybody will see your heart. Probably you will try to find a place to hide yourself. You won't enjoy heaven.

You don't have the character. Brothers and sisters, what God intends is to build up character in us. And the best way to build up character is suffering.

Isn't that wonderful? We don't want to suffer. In other words, you don't want glory, do you? To a believer, suffering is entirely different. It is not because of sin.

It is because God is determined to work character that is Christ's character in us. That we may have that character and may be fit to be His bride, to enter into eternal glory. That is the meaning throughout history.

You can see that. People who suffer more, they seem to be deeper in their life of Christ. Now, of course, sometimes suffering can crush a person.

That's true. But God really has measured our suffering. And if we only trust Him, you'll find He will never allow us to suffer more than we can bear.

In other words, He measures it beforehand. He puts His grace in us enough to endure or over. Endure simply means you can outlast it.

If that temptation or that suffering is 10 days, then you can stand for 11 days. That means endurance. You endure it.

Endure temptation. You outlast it. You see, the grace of God in us that He has put in us, or the Christ in us, God knows how much Christ there is in you.

He was tempting all things without sin. So God knows how much Christ is in you. And He will measure your temptation.

He will measure your suffering. And He knows that the Christ in you is sufficient for that to endure it, to outlast it. If you trust Him.

But if you don't trust Him, of course, you fall. So actually you find suffering works out character. Christ's character is being built in you.

Our selfish, old character was built up through the years before we were saved. After we were born, you know, we have an old life. And that old life has an old nature.

And because we always live according to our nature, therefore, gradually, gradually, we develop all kinds of habits. And put the habits together, you have a character. And that's what we were.

But now you have to remake it. We are a new creation. If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation.

Old things have passed away, and all things are new, and all things are of God. Therefore, you find with a new life in us, having a new nature, now we need to learn to follow that new nature. And let that nature be developed into character.

But of course, you have the conflict between the old nature and the new nature. That's why we need to deny ourselves. Take up our cross and follow the Lord.

Then you'll find the character of Christ will gradually be built in us. And that makes us fit for the kingdom. And fit for the glory.

Now the wonderful thing is, verse 5, And hope does not make a shame, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. And all the time you'll find that. When we suffer, the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, He is shedding abroad in our hearts the love of God.

In other words, it's only by the power of love that we are able to suffer. Able to endure. And able to have character building.

And able to... Without the love of God in our hearts, suffering will crush us. But thank God, the Holy Spirit, He will shed abroad in our hearts the love of God. Even though we suffer outwardly, inwardly, we are flooded with the love of God.

We know that God loves us. And because He loves us, He chastens us. And that love gives us the endurance.

And eventually work out. And now you find in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. And it is said, For our momentary and light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory. You know, the suffering we have today are momentary.

That is short-lived. Temporally. And in light.

Now, of course, when we suffer, we think it's very heavy. But when you think of glory, you know, suffering and glory, they go together. When you try to measure weight, suffering, glory, and in one verse it is said, glory outweighs suffering.

Glory is heavier. It outweighs suffering. Why? Because suffering is momentary.

And glory is eternal. One is light, the other is heavy. We are not looking at the things that are seen.

If we look at the things that are seen, we will faint. We will be crushed. But we look at the things that are unseen.

Because the things seen are temporary. But the things that are unseen are eternal. Dear brothers and sisters, what are we looking at? And what are we looking for? If we are looking at the temporary, the seen, then there is one way to live our life.

We try to escape, avoid as much suffering as we can. We try to compromise with the world so that we will not suffer in that area. We will not suffer for righteousness sake and so on and so forth.

And because we are so useless, even Satan does not care about us. Or if we are looking at the things unseen, and we are looking for the eternal glory, we will be involved in all these sufferings. But then God is working out something glorious.

You know, you look at the Old Testament or the New Testament, and you can pick up anyone who is used of the Lord, and you find invariably in their lives you find suffering. For instance, Joseph. How much Joseph suffered.

And he suffered not because of his fault. He suffered because of his good. Because of his righteousness.

Because he fears God. And yet you find the suffering, tremendous suffering, long sufferings, but out of the sufferings without glory. You see glory in Joseph.

Think of David. How much he suffered. If you read Psalms, you can see the sufferings that David had gone through in his life.

But through these sufferings God is working some character in him. The kingly character has to be worked out. Now Saul does not suffer as much as David.

But there is no character in him. You think of Paul. You read Corinthians, 2nd Corinthians, and he mentions all the things that he suffered.

And also how he suffered for the church. And such a character of Christ is built in him. And he can say now, there is the crown of righteousness waiting for me.

And think of Peter. How he suffered. And you find that eventually he becomes one of the foundations of New Jerusalem.

So whether you look it from the Bible, or you look it throughout the centuries, and all the men and women of God, you find that suffering is part of their life. But because their attitude towards suffering is not negative, their attitude towards suffering is positive, therefore you find they gave God opportunity to work in their lives something, which will register in eternity. So dear brothers and sisters, as we live in this world full of sufferings, and as we think of believers who suffer, all we ourselves have gone through, I mean sufferings of all kinds.

Not only physical sufferings, some sickness, or some predation, or some weakness, or some mental suffering, or spiritual suffering, all kinds, all kinds of sufferings. When we think of all these things, brothers and sisters, I feel that we need to settle it once and for all. Knowing deep down in our heart, that it is the love of God.

He loves us as sons, therefore He chastens us. That we may be made partakers of His divine nature. Because this is the purpose of God, that we may be conformed to Christ, and be His bride forever.

So let's remember, suffering is unto glory. And if this is true in the life of Christ, certainly this principle must apply. Dear Heavenly Father, we just ask Thee to give us a right attitude towards this whole mystery of suffering.

That we may not be like the people of the world, blaming Thee for their sufferings. But instead we may submit ourselves under the mighty hand of God, knowing that after we suffer for a little while, You will establish us, and lead us into glory. Oh, how we do pray that the character of Christ may be built in us through the fire of suffering, to the glory of God.

We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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