

SUFFERING FOR GOD – September 27, 2020

We have talked about the enemies of God the last two weeks, and how they are our enemies too, and how they hate us and are against us and attack us. And today we will be focusing on how we suffer because of our enemies, how life can be hard, can be very difficult because of them. And there's a lot in the Bible about how we suffer as Christians - and to be honest, God's people have been persecuted and have suffered since the beginning, going way back to when Abel was murdered by Cain.

John 15:19 says we are not of the world anymore, for we don't do the things they do, and therefore, we are hated and persecuted. And when people hate us, they really are hating Christ. Sinful people can't hurt God, and so they try to hurt us. Well, today we are going to look at the book of Psalms and see what it says about how we suffer, and how we should respond to suffering.

Psalm 11. Here we learn that the enemy is after us, and wants to hurt us. And let me say, much of the persecution we go through is led and driven by the devil himself. That is, the devil is behind the scenes, instigating a lot of the persecution that takes place. And when we are being attacked, and are suffering, we feel like we need to flee to some physical refuge. But we need to know that God is our refuge. That is, we need to be thinking of spiritual refuge, of going to God, of fleeing to Him, for He is our real protector, the only One who can really help us.

This talks about the foundations being destroyed, and this is happening right now in our country, and it's evil people who are behind this. And what is the answer?

1. We need to know that God is sovereign over all evil, over all wicked people, that ultimately, He is in control, and that no evil, no suffering happens apart from Him. And if God allows there to be persecution and suffering, it is for His purposes, for His glory, and let me add, for our good, for our benefit as well.
2. We need to know that God sees all evil, all the wickedness in the world, and He'll judge the evil person who doesn't repent, and it will be everlasting judgment in the lake of fire.
3. The righteous person, the one who's suffering, will see the face of the Lord, which means he will have a close relationship with the Lord, and be encouraged by Him. Heb. 11:24-27

Psalm 17. Here we read about enemies who are deadly and who surround us. It says they have an unfeeling heart, which means their heart is hardened, their conscience is seared – they have no sense of right and wrong. And they hate us. And what is the answer? We are to pray? Vs 13. And as we draw close to the Lord, we learn that we will behold the face of the Lord, we will have a close relationship with Him, and will be satisfied by Him.

Psalm 18. Again we read about David being attacked by his enemies, and he is suffering. Vss 4-7. And so what does David do? He prays to God. He believes that God will help Him, and God does help him. Verses 14-19

- Verses 20-24. What do we learn about David? That he's righteous, obedient, and is looking to God's word, that he's holy and staying away from sin. And when we talk about going through suffering, we too need to be holy, obedient and trusting God's word.

- Vss. 28-42. We see here that God rescued David from the enemy so he could serve the Lord. Acts. And so too, God will rescue us so we can serve Him. In these vss., we see David's courage, and how he is a fighter, a soldier for God. And we need to ask God to help us so we're not afraid of the enemy, and aren't afraid to suffer, but are willing to fight for God, to be a soldier for God. 2 Tim 2:4

Psalm 22. This Psalm focuses on Jesus and how He suffered on the cross. 1 Peter 2:21. And what do we learn from Jesus' example? Jesus felt like He was forsaken, that God had left Him. And sometimes you may feel that way too, that God has left you, that you are all alone, and you don't sense, you don't feel His presence; you don't think that He really cares for you or loves you. And this is a common way to feel when you are suffering, but God wants each of us to learn to trust Him whether we feel like it or not. 2 Cor 5:7

Jesus knew God was holy, that His heavenly Father was perfect. And there's no doubt that during His life on earth, Jesus was continually looking to His Father. John
- Jesus prayed to God, and in spite of the fact that He felt terrible, felt awful, for it was, on one hand, the worst day of His life. And this Psalm describes what Jesus was going through, how He was physically suffering and emotionally suffering. But most of all, Jesus was spiritually suffering and dying, for our sins and for all the sins of all the believers who have ever lived. Isaiah 53

Psalm 22:8. Jesus committed and entrusted Himself to His Father's care, for He knew that His Father cared for Him. And this meant that Jesus was trusting God, had faith, was depending completely on His Father, and was believing that His Father was going to work all things together for His good and for the good of others, which includes us. And when life is beyond our control, we need to give ourselves to God, and believe that He will take care of us, and that everything will turn out all right.

- Vss. 19-21. Now this prayer of Jesus shows that He was trusting God.

And so we see Jesus' faith, for He was seeking God, and giving glory to Him.

Psalm 22:27-29. Here we see that Jesus had hope. He knew that what He was doing would result in God's purpose being accomplished, and that a world of people would be saved. And the time would come when He would be the King of the whole earth, and would be reigning over the world, and would be worshiped by the world. Phil. 2:9-11

Psalm 31. The theme of being persecuted and suffering is seen throughout the Psalm, but we also see David's prayer to God, and that he was asking Him for help. In this prayer it's obvious that David knew the Lord well, and really understood His character.

- Vs 1 – David was taking refuge in the Lord, which means He was not looking for deliverance or protection from anyone or anything else, but only from the Lord.

Vss 2-5 – David knows he is weak, but he sees God as His stronghold, as his rock of strength. And he wants God to rescue Him quickly. He also knows that life wasn't about him, but about the Lord. It was for the Lord's sake that David was living and suffering. And David was confident the Lord would rescue him – *"You will pull me out of the net."* We see that David committed his spirit to God. For David, life wasn't just a physical thing, and indeed, he was physically suffering, but more importantly, he was spiritually suffering.

Vss 6-9. Here we see David's heart and faith, but we also see that he hated those who trusted in idols, which means he was righteous, for he trusted in God, and not in idols, in any worldly thing. I love that phrase – *"I trust in the Lord,"* and this is such an important thing for people to do when they are suffering. 1 Thess. 3:1-8

- But it wasn't just that - David was also thinking about God's love for Him, and he was rejoicing, he was glad that God loved him so much. And knowing that God loved him was one of the main reasons David could keep going even when he was suffering.

Vs 7. David knew God had seen his afflictions, which refers to his external problems. But his external afflictions resulted in internal troubles. And he knew that God was also aware of the troubles of his soul, his spiritual, emotional and internal struggles. But David knew God was very concerned about him and really loved him. Luke 7:11-13

And vs 8 expresses David's confidence in God's ability to get him out of trouble, both physically and spiritually.

Vss 9-13. You can see how this suffering David was going through really affected him. He was in distress and crying so much that he felt like his eyes were wasting away. And this suffering, as I mentioned, affected both his soul and his body. Indeed, David was a man of sorrows - for much of his life, for many of his years, he was suffering. But it wasn't just that - he knew he had sinned against God, and he was sad about that.

David laments because his neighbors saw how sad he was, how hard life was for him. His acquaintances dreaded seeing him; they didn't want to be with him, and wanted to get away with him; they didn't want him part of their lives. And David was slandered by his enemies; and not only that, but they were plotting to kill him. 1 Sam. 15-18

Vss 14-18. Again David goes to God - he knows God is his God, and he trusts Him. I tell you, faith is so important, especially when you're suffering. James 1:2, Rom. 5:3 Then David says, "*My times are in Your hand,*" which means David knew that God was in control of his life, that God was sovereign, and he believed that God would take care of him, that God's will would be done, that He'd work all this together for good. Now David knows God is sovereign, but he stills prays, for the truth of God's sovereignty didn't negate his responsibility to pray. And David's prayer is based on God's character, that God loved him, and therefore would save him, and silence his enemies, and that he wouldn't be shamed, be a reproach to God.

Vss 19-21. And David knew God's character, that God was good, and that His goodness towards him was great. And David was excited, for he was trusting God, taking refuge in God, and God came through for him, and protected him. And he blessed the Lord, he praised the Lord, he gave credit to God for how He had shown His great love to him.

Vss 22-24. And here is the conclusion, that God heard his prayer, that God had rescued David from his enemies. Therefore, David is telling the believers to love and worship God. And he tells them that God will preserve, will save those who have faith, who trust in Him. And not only that, but God will punish the proud, the evil doer. And finally, David tells them to be strong, to be courageous, to hope in the Lord.

Psalm 37. What this says is that life is not just a matter of God delivering us from evil, but it's also doing what God wants us to do. Life is defense and offense, being defended from our enemies and doing what is right. Let me sum up the main points from this chapter:

1. We are not to fret, we are not to worry about the enemy.
2. We are to trust in the Lord, we are to depend on Him.
3. We are to cultivate faithfulness – we are to keep doing what God wants us to do.
4. We are to delight ourselves in the Lord, that is, we are to be loving Him.
5. We are to wait for the Lord, for His timing, for He knows what He wants to do and when He wants to do it, and this relates to suffering and being delivered from suffering.
6. We are not to be angry at the enemy, we are not to take matters into our own hands.
7. We are to know that God will deal with the enemies, that He will punish them.

Vss. 9-10, 12-15, 20, 35-38

8. We are to be holy, to do good, to have God's word in our heart, to speak forth wisdom, to be gracious, and to lend to others.

9. We are to know that we will inherit the land. Psalm 37:9, 11, 22, 29, 34; Matthew 5:3