

WHY?

SERIES DEVOTIONAL

"SUFFERING, HONOR, GLORY" | SUNDAY, MAY 31, 2020

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

KEY THOUGHT

#1

Jesus endured brutal suffering for our eternal benefit.

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus suffered severely throughout His trials, torture, and crucifixion (Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19).

- His suffering was physical: *"Many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind."* (Isaiah 52:14)
- His suffering was emotional: *"All the disciples deserted him and fled"* (Matthew 26:56).
- His suffering was spiritual: *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus' brutal suffering was amplified by His having to bear the guilt of the sins of the entire world and die to pay our penalty (1 John 2:2; Romans 5:8).

Isaiah predicted Jesus' suffering: *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..."* (Isaiah 53:3-5). Psalm 22:14-18 prophesies some details of the suffering of the Messiah. In order for this and other prophecies to be fulfilled, Jesus had to suffer.

Jesus told His disciples that His suffering was certain: *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life"* (Luke 9:22; cf. 17:25). Note the word "must"—He must suffer, and He must be killed. Christ's suffering was God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Why did Jesus have to experience so much suffering? The principle of the innocent dying for the guilty was established in the garden of Eden: Adam and Eve received garments of animal skin to cover their shame (Genesis 3:21)—thus, blood was shed in Eden. Later, this principle was set in the Mosaic Law: *"It is the blood that makes atonement for one's life"* (Leviticus 17:11). Jesus had to suffer because suffering is part of sacrifice, and Jesus was *"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29). Jesus' torture was part of the payment required for our sins. Jesus suffered and died in order to secure salvation for all who would believe. The night of His arrest, Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, committing His all to the task: *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done"* (Luke 22:42). Christ drank fully from the cup of suffering—there was no other way for us to be saved.

TALK ABOUT IT:

- It has been said that at the cross we see man at his worst and God at His best. What do you think this means? Do you agree or disagree with the statement? Why?
- In what ways can understanding the suffering of Jesus affect our view of our own suffering?

KEY THOUGHT

#2

The resurrection of Jesus greatly impacts our view of our own current suffering.

When we look at our suffering through the lens of Jesus' victorious resurrection from the dead, it affects our thinking in several significant ways:

First, Jesus' resurrection shows that God is able to bring the greatest good out of the worst evil. Certainly, the worst crime ever committed was the execution of the sinless, innocent Jesus Christ on the cross. And yet, out of this unspeakable injustice, God brought forth through Christ's death and resurrection the greatest good that could ever be accomplished: forgiveness and eternal salvation for lost, rebellious sinners! *"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins"* (1 Corinthians 15:17). If God can bring the greatest good out of the worst evil, then He can surely work all things in your life—including your pain and suffering—together for your good when you love Him and are committed to His purposes (Rom.8:28).

Second, because Jesus rose from the dead, life does not end at the grave—we have eternal life. This means that our suffering today will not be worth comparing to an eternity of blessings and joy with the Lord. Romans 8:18 says, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."* Imagine that on January 1, 2020 you had the worst day you've ever had in your entire life. Everything that could go wrong went wrong, and nothing went right. From the time you got out of bed in the morning until you went back to bed that night, the entire day was miserable. Now imagine that beginning on the next day, January 2, 2020, and every single day thereafter for the rest of the year, you experienced the best days you've ever had in your life—each day was more terrific than the day before during the entire year. A year later on New Year's Day 2021, someone asks, "How was your 2020? It started off pretty bad for you, didn't it?" You'd likely reply, "Yes, that first day of 2020 was painful! But when I look over the entire year, that one day sort of fades away—the other 364 wonderful days far outweigh that one bad day." That's an analogy of heaven. It's not to deny the suffering you're enduring right now, but it's to remind us that in heaven, after thousands of years of pure bliss—with an infinite number more to come—we can look at our present suffering and say, "In light of all of God's goodness, today's suffering doesn't even compare with the blessings and joy that I will enjoy in Heaven forever." 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."*

Third, because Jesus rose from the dead, we can choose to turn to the living Christ for peace, strength, and hope when suffering rather than becoming bitter and angry. In John 16:33 Jesus said, *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

TALK ABOUT IT:

- It seems that suffering ends up making some people better and some people bitter. What do you think makes the difference?
- In your own words, describe the difference Jesus' resurrection makes in your life, especially when you are suffering.

KEY THOUGHT

#3

We look forward to Heaven not only because of what will be there, but also because of what will not be there.

Through His suffering, death, and resurrection Jesus opened the way to Heaven for us. One of the most appealing realities about the New Heaven and New Earth is the various things that will be missing—things that will not be there: “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away...²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there...22:3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.*” (Revelation 21:1, 4, 25; 22:3)

- No more *tears* (21:4a) means nothing in Heaven saddens us!
- No more *death* (21:4b) means nothing in Heaven grieves us!
- No more *pain* (21:4c) means nothing in Heaven hurts us!
- No more *night* (21:25) means nothing in Heaven frightens us!
- No more *curse* (22:3) means nothing in Heaven corrupts us!

Life will finally and once again be as God intended it to be—all because of Jesus!

A young lady named Anne often spent time visiting with an old bedridden Christian woman and was always amazed by her cheerful disposition. Anne was also friends with a very wealthy woman who always seemed to view things from a negative perspective. Although her friend professed to be a Christian, she always seemed downcast, and Anne thought it might do her good to meet her other friend, the bedridden saint. The saint lived in an apartment, five stories up. At the bottom of the stairs, the wealthy woman looked around and said, “This place is filthy.” Anne replied, “It’s better higher up.” When they got to the second floor, however, things were no better, and the woman again complained. But Anne only replied, “It’s better higher up.” The third floor actually seemed worse than the first two floors, and the woman again complained, but Anne’s response was the same: “It’s better higher up.” At last they reached the fifth floor, where the saint’s bedroom was located. As they entered the room, the wealthy woman looked around at the beautiful, thick carpeting, flowering plants in the window, and little birds singing in their cages. And there she also saw the bedridden saint beaming with joy. The wealthy woman said to her, “Isn’t it difficult for you to just lie there? How can you be so happy?” The saint smiled and pointed her finger to the heavens, “It’s better higher up.”

TALK ABOUT IT:

- What is it about Heaven that you are looking forward to the most?
- Colossians 3:2 says, “*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*” How would you encourage a new Christian to set their mind on Heaven?