

PEACE IN PAIN

A Study on the Suffering of Christ and the Sufferings of Believers in Time



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PEACE IN PAIN

I was introduced to Christianity as an unbeliever, at a time when I was not interested in anything like "religion." At the time, as an unbeliever, I didn't distinguish the principle between "Christianity" and "religion." I was under the misbelief that you were either religious or non-religious. At that time in my life I saw the professional religionists and I was sure I didn't want any part of that, and that at that time was couched in Roman Catholicism. My introduction to Christianity came through suffering. Not my own personal suffering, even though I was related to it in a way, in that I watched someone suffer for many years and saw them gradually be eaten up by cancer.

I recall as a child, being very young, and not knowing the circumstances that were existing about me at the time. But I recall that I was in a room and it was dark and there was a woman lying in a bed. From all that I could gather, this woman was sick and it was serious from the expressions of the people around the bedside. I didn't know at that time why I was called into the room, or why I was there, but there was someone in that bed who was ill, apparently they were dying. That is all that I can recall of that scene, and I don't remember to this day whom the woman was, or why I was in that room.

But there must have been some reason for me to be there. Maybe through this study of Christianity we can see that in the matchless GRACE of God I was there for a purpose and perhaps the purpose was of Divine origin. But later on in life, another suffering occurred in my life, something that I was well aware of, in personal daily contact with and that was when my wife was dying of cancer.

One circumstance I remember vividly, which I suffered only by someone who knows of suffering from without, and not merely as she knew it from within. I can remember how my dying wife, slowly undid her nightgown and bandages to show some skeptical Christians, the great yawning festering wound that cancer had made in her breast.

Now don't think that I am heartless in bringing this scene to an already sorrow-stricken, pain-fleeing world. This was my entrance into Christianity. This was my first lesson as a Christian as to why Christians suffer. **This woman, before going to be with the Lord, was able to convince me that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world, and that as a Christian I had to depend wholly upon the Word of God for my Christian way of life.** This was my introduction to Christianity, never knowing that at that time I would be ministering Christ to others who suffer. So my very first lesson of suffering reminds me of Jesus Christ, who Himself cured the outcast leper with His touch.

During my life I have had many masters. Yes, but I cannot accuse myself of ingratitude for their teaching and their patience with me. But gradually as a believer-priest my ministry has taken me to those who also suffer. **I have learned that those whom the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified Saviour, had invited to His side at His royal banquet of pain, they were the most beloved and the best.**

This is a booklet to more or less discharge a debt I have to those who suffer in any way, as more or less a widow's mite. One of the most glorious professions of pain whom I was honored to serve in her dying and in her death, has given me to end my own halting words, by words that flame and sing because it was from a cancer burning throat that said to me, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." "I AM WITH THEE." "I AM THY GOD." "I WILL STRENGTHEN THEE." "I WILL HELP THEE." "I WILL UPHOLD THEE WITH THE RIGHT HAND OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS." "YEA. YEA." ("All the promises of God in Him are yea, and amen.")

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

"What man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, HOW MUCH MORE WILL YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN GIVE GOOD THINGS TO THEM THAT ASK HIM?" Matthew 7:9-11.

One of the problems which seems to give the lie to this truth is the great problem of human suffering. Suffering seems to give the lie to the GRACE of God.

Much compassion must be given and must be felt for those who, under pressure of bodily or mental suffering, find that a cloud has come between them and the Lord's GRACE.

God is gracious, and sometimes it's best when the soul that loves Him is asked to go into the "valley of the shadow of death." When we do, we never go alone. We always have company. We are in His company. "I am with thee." "Fear thou not for I am with thee." in the valley of the shadow of death. So we never, as it were, die alone. If we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is with us while living or dying. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "FOR I AM PERSUADED THAT NEITHER DEATH, nor life, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Our poor old sin nature, which has almost lost the art of reasoning, thinks that we within Christianity who understand the GRACE of God in suffering and in death are morbid about suffering. Of course, the contrary is the case. They see we do face it. In a sense, to quote the Greeks at their best, "All philosophy is the philosophy of death." There is no chance of thinking clearly at the time like this unless you begin to face the facts.

The fact is this, WHETHER THERE IS A GOD OR NOT, THERE IS SUFFERING. And

so suffering, in a way, is like a principle of God-consciousness, where we become aware of a **unique suffering of our Saviour**. When someone suffers or dies, you are once again reminded of the unique death and suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "in all our afflictions He was inflicted." To deny the gracious Lord is to quench the only light of consolation in the "Egypt night of suffering."

The bewilderment of the mind nowadays is so great people think the person who will deal with the difficulty is creating it. Some men have their hands clean because they are making the world unclean. Others have their hands unclean because they are making the world clean. The paradox is not anyone's. It is just plain fact. This is the world's paradox.

The poor suffering bewildered world thinks somehow the Church is causing suffering, because it accepts it as a fact, to be accounted for and counteracted. The Church is never allowing suffering merely to reign, but it tries to counteract it. It has not such a manichaeian view of suffering as to say it is an evil so great that no good could be made of it. But it faces the fact as it is. **It is not a final fact, because God is gracious.**

Let's examine it quietly and see the attitude of the Lord in it. **We do not look at suffering as a final thing, nor any kind of evil or defect as a final thing. The Lord and His Word would not allow that.** God, in His very essence, is gracious, and some evil things He can do nothing but permit, like for example moral evil. **But all other evils, even pain of body, can never be directly willed by God. God can only permit moral evil, to save man's free will, and human volition.** Other evils He allows, never for their own sake, but always for some good. "All things work together for good."

God couldn't allow the slightest moan of a child, in a moment's pain, as an object of desire. If there is any pain we have of any kind, God can no more desire it for its own

sake, than we can desire that. He can inflict it, but only as, on the child, a teacher or guide inflicts pain as necessary for its good. "Whom the Lord loveth He chastens."

Nowadays, I think people ought to realize that great aspect of God, because often, in an unintelligent way, they are causing great pain for some ultimate physical good. So that the modern world might be expected to understand a group that could not regard a sigh or moan as inflicted by God on His beloved children except for some good or other. The modern world is avoiding the difficulty and thereby creating it.

Never in the history of our own people were there so many suicides. The world is flying from suffering and death, seeking to dull, for those that die and to some extent for those that nurse the dying, the approach of death. It is easier to nurse a drugged patient than one that isn't drugged. That comes almost close to murder. Some of us expect to see almost regularized official murder as the world's bewildered answer to the problem of suffering.

Psychologically, too, the proper way of meeting fear is to stand up to it. Fly and it haunts you. That is the psychology of fear. **The world is flying from suffering and increasing it.** It is afraid to look on the fact of death coming to ourselves and to those who are akin to death. **Fear is a very poor substitute for love.** "Perfect love casteth out fear."

GOD IS GRACIOUS. I am putting that first because it is first. **If suffering comes upon us and God is blotted out, and GRACE then is blotted out, then everything goes with Him. Take God out of suffering and you have no reason for suffering and all that is left is fear, and not love.**

The Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, was on the cross on Calvary. It is not just a hill of skulls, shrouded in darkness, it is a mountain lit up as a spring morning with the rising sun, bright with youth, clothed with a white garment, honey sweet, rose sweet, **with forgiving and forgetting love. The loveliest thing in the whole world is the**

hill were Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world.

SO THAT GOD IS GRACIOUS. And if no other things went with us into the garden of agony, at night, alone, that we can never be alone. "Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not afraid for I am thy God. I will help you. I will uphold you. Yea, yea." **GOD IS GRACIOUS and our hand is in His.** We can feel the print of the nails, and in the stillness, almost hear them breaking saying, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

He is so much. He is all. Take Him away and there is no other. **THOSE WHO TAKE GOD OUT OF SUFFERING HAVE TAKEN AWAY ITS ONLY RELIEF.** They leave us stark, hopeless, fallen, without a Saviour, no Redeemer, no Fellow-sufferer. Alone, as He was alone. And not only alone, but alone in a world that, perhaps in its bitterness, is wishing us out of its care. **But with the Lord Jesus Christ, our God, death itself has an answer and suffering takes on a new meaning, and a new purpose,** with Him who is ever so near as to those who are taking up His cross and following Him.

What about us as believers? Let us quietly go into the psychology of it. We shall find that it is sometimes quite easy to do an act of virtue without having that virtue. But the opportunity of acting only from that virtue is when no other motive is present for the doing of the act. If there is a command and no other motive is available for obeying it except the command, then we have to exert the virtue of obedience only. So in that sense, **the great opportunity of exercising a virtue is when it costs.**

This life is only preparation, a short, brief span before we step into eternity. Here in this time of preparation we have to form ourselves, and the only opportunity quickly to form ourselves is to accept some suffering. Without opposition, and suffering is the greatest opposition, it is impossible for us, on the whole, to exert our power to its fullness. It is like hot water that you place your tea in, in order to get a flavor or an aroma. It is like fertilizer that produces the green grass, flowers, etc. It is the breaking

up of the "fallow ground" for production. It is the trimming of the wicks in the temple, the trimming of the trees, as it were, for production.

A life of pleasure is not necessarily a life of sin, but is it always lower than the heroic. NO PAIN, NO PROFIT. If you watch suffering come to a soul, you can see that soul striving to grow. It is like growth after a long winter, when spring seems less than a day and summer follows on the heels of winter. The trees seem to leap into life, before almost the buds are out the blossom is there, and before the blossom is off the tree, the fruit is in profusion.

The Lord, talking about Israel as His vineyard said, "And I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned, nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." **To some souls their's is the invitation, and now their life is only the Lord, only God. He is "ALPHA and OMEGA," the First and the Last, and straight to Him the believer's mind goes.** There are no by-paths. Straighter even than the arrow to its mark goes the soul that has now accepted that invitation. And the peace that comes.

No peace is equal to accepted sorrow. **There is a sense of poise, power, and stillness, control.** Nowhere else is it equalled in the world. When you go to a bed of illness, you can see what is strong. There is the sense of weakness that smiles at the onslaught of what seems the greatest thing in the world, death. That is strength, like a strong woman who could laugh in the day of death. There is perfect poise and power of control.

If then, you want to see the essence of peace in this world, look into the tear-misted eyes of accepted suffering, suffering as they say, sent by God. **There is no peace to behold other than the manifestation of one who watches the heroism of accepted suffering.** When watching, you know, as even the heroines and heroes themselves do not know, the strength of their apparent weakness. So then suffering is necessary for heroes and heroines, that souls may soar.

He said unto me, "My GRACE is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness... Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Corinthians 12:9. "Nothing begins and nothing ends, that is not pain. We are born in other's pain, and perish in our own."

As things are, there must be suffering. Very often those who suffer refuse to call it anything but joy. **One aspect of our own personal suffering is to reassure others that suffer.** There are few tests whether we love God. We could only be certain if God Himself gave us the revelation. Almost equal to that revelation, though a little less, is partnership with Jesus Christ in suffering. The fellowship of His suffering. No other test comes so near to absolute certitude when, so quickly, though with a sense of pain, the soul says, in suffering and in sorrow, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." If a soul loved God, or loved to love God, and would care to know, not that it loves but that it is loved, the great test is partnership with Jesus Christ in the "valley of sorrow," or on the hill of death. Gethsemane or Calvary.

One or other of those two partnerships must one day be ours. May the Lord grant us, in our hour of suffering, whatever it may be, the consolation of accepting it and having thereby the reassurance that we love Him. May we love Him not just in the day, lest it be the day we love rather than the Lord. Nor just in health, lest it be of limb we love. **But when the night of darkness and pain comes to limb or mind, may we think of His wounded limbs and His sufferings and then, in our love, our suffering will seem but a little to accept beside His for us.**

"Beloved I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." "Though skin worms destroy my body, I know I will see the Lord face to face." "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SUFFERING

"And they cast dust upon their heads and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, alas, alas, that great city wherein all were made rich that had ships at sea, by reason of her princes, for in an hour she is made desolate." Revelation 18:19. "After these things I heard as it were the voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia, Salvation and glory and power is to our God," Revelation 19:1.

For the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ these chapters of Revelation are supreme. They leave behind for us the greatest craftsmanship of words in any nation, and yet the man who wrote them scarcely spoke his own language correctly.

Here is a vision, a great vision. And it has, of course, an immediate reference to the great city of Rome, which had a position not since occupied by any city.

John has given us a list of delicacies and riches and luxuries, a picture of seafaring men sailing out into the Mediterranean, all bartering on her riches. I wouldn't wonder if the most valuable thing, when we are discussing the peace of the world, and world peace, if it would not be the most valuable to read these chapters. Is this great city our model? And is this what we are looking for? If that great city remains the model of peoples and nations, sooner or later they will all say, "Alas, alas, Babylon, the great city is fallen."

Well, to the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ there is one thing about John which is this: he belongs authentically to the great line of Hebrew prophets. He is brother to Isaiah and Jeremiah and the rest. If you read those old prophets you would be brought by them through almost a welter of misery and pain. They are painting the "deserved miseries of their people" with a realism never equalled. They describe all that sickens our minds. From time to time there is a little lyric note just helping us on to bear the most terrible things that are coming. The historic fact is that the great stream of Hebrew prophecy

burst forth when the Jewish people went forth to exile, then there was a gust, a flood of prophecy. The prophet always is the one practical man of the day. He sees things in the round. **To see things in the round is to see them in their eternal issue.** Today is not rounded by today. Today is a snowflake in the great round of eternity.

These prophets are attempting not just to console their people, but to strengthen them in their weaknesses. They paint things with almost gruesome reality at times, but in the end there is an almost lyrical description of the days that are to come. There is always a closing note of hope. They are not pessimists. The world's optimists are those who can face things at their worst. **The optimist is looked upon, even by his friends, as a pessimist, because he looks on realities, and, believing in a gracious God, he knows that the last note must be a note of hope,** not heard in its sweetness without the noise that has gone before, the noise of the clash of free wills.

John is nowhere so much the brother of the old prophets as in this note of hope. Here in Revelation is the classical expression of hope. No other pages of the New Testament are so lyrical with the last great hopes. We cannot possibly appreciate the sweetness until our ears have been put to death by the thunder and our eyes blinded by the lighting of these great prophetic evils.

John's vision represents God as putting to death the Great Roman Empire. It is very good of God to let it be put like that. They are really woes put upon the world by "human beings." The great kings drawing nigh destroyed the city. Rome seemed the one stable thing in the world, when Jesus Christ stole in like an interruption. In the end, it was the most sacked city in the world.

The problem of all souls is the problem of difficulties, evil, pain, and suffering. Let me put down the real essential attitude of God towards evil. It is so important that St.

Thomas gives it as one of the two objections against the existence of God. We have to deal with this individually within our own souls. Souls can't get an idea that God is too hard. It is difficult enough to bear things when we know they have to be borne and are rational. But they are almost unbearable when they seem irrational. One of the great sayings of Oscar Wilde was that he could bear sorrow, but he could not bear it if it were meaningless.

There are various kinds of evil, just as there are various kinds of activity. Bodily and mental activity, for instance. Usually those two are not compatible. If we want bodily activity, we cannot have mental activity at the same time, or lower forms of mental activity with the higher. If we are engaged in the getting of money, we cannot at the same time be occupied with great problems of ethics.

It is like an athlete, if you have been one, and you play baseball. You find that you could almost see the diamond even in your meditation. It was so absorbing. So you have to say, "thank you baseball, but you cannot be sovereign in my mind. Out you go. I am afraid I cannot have anything with you at all." I still think it is a good game, for the sheer pleasure of it, but you find yourself that it is quite impossible to devote yourself to that and at the same time to the highest mental activity.

In the same way, there are various kinds of evil; mental, body, moral. We have to ask ourselves which is the worst of all evils. There are those words, bad, worse, worst. They all mean something. Simple people can use them. Words that simple people cannot use are not of much consequence.

"Ichthyosaurus" is only an old fossil. But good and bad are words people use. Good is most important as a word. We say, "Good boy." We say, "He is a good student." Both mean something different. Now there are many kinds of evil; physical, mental, moral. We speak of mental deficiency, and even of moral deficiency, a dangerous term. Each is different and God's attitude toward each is different.

1. We can inflict physical evil for the sake of mental good. In the lives of great thinkers, we see that they almost deliberately shortened their lives for the sake of mental good. There never was such an age in the world as today when people inflicted so much, one physical evil to prevent a greater, even in the matter of slimming (or dieting). It may do untold harm to physical bodies.

In point of fact, great physical evils are now being inflicted to prevent worse. We should never lose sight of that. It is very difficult to remember principles. But if we can actually inflict lesser physical evils to prevent greater physical evils, take off a limb to save a life, so can God. There is good coming out of it.

2. God can never rest in any evil as such, not even as physical evil. It can't be done. God has His impossibilities, too, you know. **The GRACE of God has more impossibilities than we have. There is no possibility of God desiring evil.** He wished the good that will come out of it. If anything comes of that description to us, let us once go and see the good that is in it. Our relation to the evil may be very good for us. So that all the physical evils that come can be turned to good, even mental evils, like ignorance.

St. Thomas said, "There is no good so absolute that a bad will cannot get bad out of it." In the same way, sometimes we can get good out of some evil. The recognition of our ignorance may lead to humility. GRACE thinking. GRACE orientation. God can inflict physical pain, but only for a "good." **Hence, the idea of a revengeful God is not accurate at all. THE EVILS OF THE WORLD ARE BROUGHT ON PEOPLE BY THEMSELVES, SOMETIMES BY THE WEALTH AND JEALOUSY OF OTHERS.**

God inflicts no physical pain, or any description, unless there is a good, a higher good, coming out of it. It is the same with a mental evil. God would never allow that if there were not some higher good in the moral order coming out of it.

3. The greatest of all evils is the moral one, which is sin. **A physical or mental evil**

God could inflict, but God never can cause a "moral evil." Most people are not concerned with sin. **But that is the real problem of evil.** Suffering is only one aspect of evil. The greatest of all evil is moral evil. There human thought begins to be baffled. How can God be related to moral evil? God only "allows" that. He never causes it.

Sin is a defect. Defects haven't causes. God never directly loves or works any evil. His will never rests in evil. **His will directly rests in the good that will come out of it.** Just as when a parent gives a child a painful medicine, the parent is thinking of the good that will come. We who have had parents have had to submit even to chastisement know quite well that the parent never wishes the pain. Even small children very soon recognize that. If they are ill, there is nobody like Mommy, even though they may have been chastised for being naughty the day before. They know "I was naughty." The child's instinct recognizes that. And that is the solution of the problem of evil.

When we get to talk with intelligent people we have difficulties. Poor people never have difficulties like that. Now in your life and in mine there is always some element of suffering. **It is important for you to know that it is an important thing, and it is only in our lives for some good to come out of it.** With physical pain, perhaps we cannot even think. Is there any good in it? Yes, there is going to be even mental good.

"He who has not suffered, what does he know?" What do we know of the ends of human life, till we have lain on the bed of suffering? **WHEN WE ARE STANDING ON OUR FEET, I DON'T THINK WE SEE QUITE SO FAR.** We now begin to have a kind of mental far-off sight. We see, we weigh, we measure. **WE CAN NEVER REALLY MEASURE THINGS WHILE WE ARE STANDING ON OUR FEET.** You get a better view when you are laying down. You can look up. When you are up you mostly look down. **"He maketh me to lie down."** **"He that is weak in the flesh ceases from sinning."**

What does physical pain allow us to do? Never think that because a thing is difficult

therefore it is necessarily better, that the most difficult thing is therefore the best. The most difficult act is not necessarily the best. The best act is "the one with the most love of God in it." But in point of fact, **it is very hard for us to bring out our love of God to the utmost except under suffering.** It is very hard for us to exert our will to the utmost, except under opposition. Even faith never reaches heroic degree until there is some sort of persecution.

That is a fact. So there is a very great difficulty when a whole nation is endowed for the faith. **But a little group of isolated believers have an influence because in professing their faith, it is in the midst of opposition.** Most of the times with the Remnant most of the social things are against you, too. The principle of the early Church and the martyrs and Stephen, etc., and all the persecutions under Nero, and even the Remnant in the midst of opposition has an influence on other members of the body.

Today there is no great opposition to the teaching of the Word of God, just lack of attendance. **In the same way, there is one advantage in any physical or mental evil. The soul is more likely to act from a real supernatural motive. It is very difficult for the human will to bring out its power to the utmost except under opposition.**

The trophies of perfection which I have witnessed in souls have been only in conjunction with some sort of suffering. I think I have never seen that except in conjunction with some sort of suffering. And no one can mimic that perfection and disregard some kind of suffering.

That is a fact. **Only under opposition can we bring out our power to the utmost.** It is not a necessary fact. It will not be the fact of heaven. But here it is a fact.

"Therefore will I glory in my infirmities, THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST MIGHT REST UPON ME." This is one of the great advantages of suffering. **The value of the act is not because it is brought out under pain, but because the human soul is more likely to exert itself to the utmost under**

pain. If we could get across the room by using only 10% of our power, we should only bring out 10% of our power, if there was no opposition. But under suffering we have no power of our own as evidenced in our suffering and our weakness, but we can now manifest God's power. That is a very important spiritual thing.

We should beware of trying to prepare a state where we are free from all anxieties. The second one is more dangerous in a sense. **It is only through suffering that we can have any assurance of our love of God.** Without suffering, there is very little chance of our being assured that we do act from a spiritual motive. That is not of very much value in the spiritual life. **It is far better to have faith than to know we have it.**

The knowledge in itself is not of any particular value, hence the danger of too much self-examination. There is no good in our testing our spiritual temperature, and if self-examination tended to give us just some knowledge of our spiritual temperature, it might be a positive danger. An examination of conscience that told us we arrived at so and so would be diabolical.

We don't care where we are. We want to go further. I don't know if I am loving God, but I want to get to Him. When we do things under opposition we are more assured that we are doing them for the right motive. But I don't think that is of much value, though perhaps of consequence to those having difficulties.

There is the solution of the problem of suffering. But things only are certain to those who will see. The splendid professionals of pain see very intuitively. Only we lesser ones have to jerk ourselves to see the obvious.

The great suffering souls see that God is gracious. One suffering soul bearing untold suffering, says, constantly, "isn't God beautiful?"

Someone wrote from the hospital saying, "I can hardly see the paper I am writing on, from the ward of the hospital..." The problem of suffering for her, for such a soul, does not exist. They just say, "isn't God beautiful?" This great God, so overwhelming amongst apocalyptic thunders and lightnings, is very beautiful.

And before we are all through we will see the beauty of the fairest of all the sons of men. None other than our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the unique Sufferer.

"IT IS GOOD FOR ME THAT I HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED. THAT I MIGHT LEARN THY STATUTES." "BEFORE I WAS AFFLICTED I WENT ASTRAY. BUT NOW HAVE I KEPT THY WORDS."

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted..." Why? Well, before the affliction this Christian went astray, away from the Word and from the Lord, but now after being afflicted, the afflicted Christian has gotten with the Word of God. "I have kept Thy Words," Psalm 119:67, 71.

In Joseph's life there were many who meant it for evil. And he said, "They meant it for evil. but God meant it for good. so that many souls were saved alive," Genesis 50:20. It is good for you to be afflicted.

Through someone else's affliction I got with the Word of God and study it now daily. Before I was astray, but now affliction has brought me to the Lord and to His Word. "All things work together for good." **I know they do.**

THE TEARS OF CHRIST AND THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

"When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was, seeing Him, she fell down at His feet, and saith to Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, MY BELOVED BROTHER HAD NOT DIED." "Jesus therefore, when He saw her weeping, GROANED IN THE SPIRIT, AND TROUBLED HIMSELF. And said, Where have you laid him? They said to Him, LORD, COME AND SEE. AND JESUS WEPT."

We owe this record of this scene to John. He is the only one that God the Holy Spirit chooses to record it, knowing the instinct for our desires. So this is selected by God the Holy Spirit and it is recorded for our instruction and edification. And it records the tears of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every incident in the life of Jesus Christ may be made a study in the problem of evil and suffering. Here are two sisters and a beloved brother living in a home, joined together in a great bond of love. Now the brother dies. This is the principle when someone loses someone that is dear to them, the loss of a loved one. This brother means much to these two sisters. And their grief is supreme.

The unselfish love that sisters can give to a brother is well worth living over again and again in literature. Maybe it is even too private and personal a sacred for fiction. The very perfect love that occurs in families of love of sister for brother, a close family relationship in the Lord. All kinds of human affections are mentioned in the Bible. We could go through them and find all the various kinds of pure human love immortalized by the pages of Scripture.

There is a great happiness in studying these two sisters and their relationship one to another and to a brother who has died. It is the end of a part of their human happiness when their brother dies. It is absolute, as is the death of the only child of a widow. Mere

human sympathy is useless. **Such grief can only be understood by the Lord.** Life itself can offer it nothing except distractions. How can we offer such sorrow, more sorrow, but mere distractions?

It is like blasphemy. We can't ask those who have been pierced through the heart by a sorrow like losing a brother, just to forget. And if they could forget, we would think much less of them. All these dear sisters are asking is that their brother could be given back to them. They are asking why the only One who might have kept him in this life had failed them. This is something that more than human sympathy can answer. This is the problem of evil and suffering. That is not the ultimate problem of evil. **The problem of evil as sin is the ultimate thing.** Mere suffering as such might be an exceedingly valuable thing. Here is then a study on the great problem of suffering.

In their bewilderment they turn against the only One that can help them. They turn against God, like the poor brain that turns against the one it loves most and loves it most, the one most calculated to help it, and fiercely fights against the hand that is stretched out, still. In the bewilderment of suffering these sisters turn against the only One, who in Him omnipotence of love and GRACE alone could help.

OUTSIDE OF GOD THERE IS NO HOPE. Remove God and you have touched one of the sufferings of the world. This is what the world is like without the Lord. **And not only that, but in your grief dismissing the Lord from your suffering you have added another one.** You have not touched one of the pains and pangs. You have only removed the One who might help you. The disease is untouched. You have taken away the remedy.

OUTSIDE OF CHRIST, THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING IS INSOLUBLE. To de-

throne God in a throw of anger and bewilderment is merely to hasten death by indeliberate suicide. So a scene like this is to some of us the only answer and God the Holy Spirit knew that, and that is why we have it here for us. There is no other. If Jesus Christ and His weeping does not answer, then there is no other. **If in Him there is not found hope, elsewhere there is only despair.**

The story that John gives us here is full of profound truth and emotion. The Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity, in His Deity, is concerned with suffering. He is not taking any delight in suffering as such. He delights in some of the good that might be distilled from the problem of evil. We have in this study in which John employs that very uncommon word, telling us that the Lord Jesus Christ, "Groaned in His Spirit, and troubled Himself." It is amazing. The verb is very active. **He distressed Himself.**

Some souls say, "I shouldn't feel joy. I should feel sorrow." They take upon themselves sorrow, as the mystics and ascetics take upon themselves physical pain saying, "I will inflict pain." Something akin to that is in this passage. Our Lord was at pains to be troubled. He didn't just shirk this scene. He took upon Himself the burden of sorrow.

Not as a stony hearted philanthropist can move about and do good without feeling, or as a great surgeon can hardly allow himself the emotion lest he should fail in his work (like, "I can't get involved with my patients."). How wonderful if a great surgeon deliberately took upon himself the pain of your suffering. I think that nowadays that great profession must feel from inside, or it will become absolutely soul-less seeing principles of disease rather than the cure, thinking the cure not so important as the finding out of laws.

The patient becomes an object of experiment, and as we might tend, very, very carefully some plant we are experimenting on, so they might give great care to the human form that is only the object of discoveries. It is the degradation of the profession. I can only live if in some way it shares in the suffering. Some physicians have as many as 60 operations a day. And consequently some doctors

get quite casual. I think to put yourself in the place of a person, as a doctor, would shape well the profession.

OUR LORD WAS TROUBLED TO BE TROUBLED. He almost scourged Himself that He might feel the suffering.

Then we have the unique thing mentioned, "The tears of Jesus Christ." When He weeps over Jerusalem, the Greek word may mean tears or it may not. It is "crying." Sometimes there are sorrows without tears. But here God the Holy Spirit, in the book of John only, is at pains to tell us that the Lord's tears flowed, and whether with moans or sobs we do not know.

Now, tears, without sobs are often most moving, unendurable. If only we have here the tears of the Lord Jesus Christ it would be the very depth of compassion. Tears under perfect control, self-control, no sound, but the eyes beyond control. It is terrible to watch a man's tears fall down his face under perfect self-control that allows no moan or sorrow.

"We sorrow not as those which have no hope." We sorrow, yes, but not as those who have no hope. No moan, then hope. Here then is the compassion of God. And they said so quickly after they saw the tears of Jesus Christ, "Behold how He loved him." Tears are not always signs of love, but in this case they were.

There are tears of disappointment, and of anger, masked tears, bidden to flow that we may have a show of sorrowing of love. Now for the first time we have the recorded tears of God, the tears of God not just at moral evil, which must have been more than God's tears. It took God's blood. Here is the loss of a beloved brother by death, and the gap it makes. **Here we have the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ showing us the quality that later on would keep it fixed to the cross.** This is the passion, in little, the compassion of God for human suffering.

THESE TEARS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST SHOULD END THE WORLD'S WEEPING. **When God weeps for our tears, we may dry our eyes.** The same John inspired by God the Holy Spirit who wrote this,

speaks in the book of Revelation and says, "That God dries our tears." He dries our tears by Himself weeping. When we see Jesus Christ sorrowing we want to say what once He said to the poor widow, "Weep not." So the human being almost dries its tears and says to God, "Don't cry, I will not cry any more. I will make no moan. I will say, Thy will be done,' for Thy will is always love." That great Gospel of God's sympathy with suffering and God's answer, which is the only answer, had always been needed in the world, in every human life. There is no human life that does not in the end come to death.

They are very rare and very blessed that find it easy just to accept death. So into every soul this thing of suffering and death must come. Therefore to every soul the answer must be of account. This answer of Christ's tears. In every age there is a time when the answer seems most needed. I don't think it was ever so much needed as today. If not today, then it will be needed in the inevitable tomorrow.

In our day we have been so headstrong that we have heaped up a flood of suffering. It is now a thing registered in the world with daily broadcasts. In a country like this there is a problem with unemployment, the pursuit of a livelihood. Having no place to lay your head, hardly a home. Not even having the luxury of privacy. There is a sort of involuntary Communism, with no compensations, and with it all, an intolerable loneliness.

There are people who have worked all their lives and end up not having a penny in their pockets and not knowing anybody, thinking that God has forgotten them. The loneliness of that. The poor old soul thinking that he had been forgotten them. But in a sense he has been very specially remembered, invited by God into the inmost circles of loneliness of His Son.

When they wished to make Jesus Christ King, He fled into the mountains Himself alone. His last cry from the cross was almost the cry of being forgotten like any of us at any time in our lives. And He said the same

thing many of us have said, "Why have You forgotten me?"

The modern world is driven to involuntary Communism. You can't lift up your window to get the sun without being forced to take part in something you detest. There is the hunt for a livelihood of tenderly brought up people who should be sheltered to the end, but are hardly a month away from starvation or the dole.

Our Lord was thinking about Lazarus, and Lazarus's love for his sisters, and his sisters' love for Lazarus, when they came out to see Him on the way to Calvary, wailing and lamenting. They worshipped Him with their tears. He turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me but for yourselves and your children."

This seems something of what He may be saying today over this country. We seem to have put the words in His mouth. "Blessed are the barren." One day a woman said, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee." Now the world says, "Blessed are the barren." **These are some of the world's diabolical beatitudes, calling good evil and evil good.**

Looking at life from the human viewpoint there is no hope. But when we lift up our eyes to the Lord, there we see His tears. **Not tears of despair, but tears of hope, to guide us to that which is good.** Each of us has our suffering, and if we do not feel it for the moment, we shall feel it in one way or another. There may be no tears. Our eyelids may be dry. But our heart must suffer something one way or another before we leave this Earth. Don't let your suffering blot out the tears of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let it turn us to those tears, just as when we are thrown upon a bed of suffering we turn to Christ's bed of suffering, the cross.

One time a woman was suffering in every way, physical suffering of the most appalling kind that defied expert doctors. They thought it had no other cause than nerves. Before she died, they found it was from awful physical causes. It was mistaken for nerves.

The medical opinion was wrong, excusably wrong. I knew her and I also came to know the anguish she was going through. God did not allow her to have any consolation of any sort, no physical consolation, no mental consolation, no moral consolation. I could only tell her about the cross. We how are not on the cross can only recommend it in all academic fashion. Only Jesus Christ can console you. I asked her to accept Him as her personal Saviour, and she did. **She had been placed on that bed of suffering to come to the only consolation that was eternal and that is Christ as personal eternal Saviour.** And in that room not visible to the naked eye, God came and flooded her soul with peace, perfect peace, after all those

long hard years and a life totally without help and hope, consolation came at the end.

There is only one answer to suffering. Poor sufferers who have denied God, take Him back again. There is no balm in the world without Jesus Christ. **If the tears of Jesus Christ do not answer, your tears then are valueless and unanswered.** If the cross says nothing to you but torture, everything else in the world will torture you still more. **Do not think that God has any joy in your sorrow. For your sorrow He has only sorrow. For your pain, only pain. For your patience, great wonder. And for your love, His love.**

"Lazarus come forth!"

MOURNING AND JOY

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven," Matthew 5:5, 12.

Let's look at these two passages that seem to be almost contradictory, the place of mourning and the place of joy in the Christian way of life. We must always rejoice. **The ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is perfect joy.** Sometimes only joy enables us to bear with sorrow. **Sometimes some believers brood over much lesser sorrows, and therefore, He cannot entrust them with a great cross. Others are happy to the point of mirth, and so are able to support insupportable crosses.**

"Blessed are they that mourn." "Be glad and rejoice." That is not a contradiction. **Untruth contradicts itself and never fulfills itself. It only empties itself.** The great spiritual truths of the Word of God never contradict themselves, but they actually fulfill themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ who is "The Truth" said "I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill." Fruit doesn't destroy the flower, it fulfills it.

So there is a place first of all for mourning in this world, and then for perfect joy. There is a place for mourning. **We must mourn over the right things.** "Blessed are they that mourn," "Blessed are the afflicted." These are then the subject of sorrow, mourning and affliction. That, of course, is true. The cross is this vale of tears and is one of God's highest blessings. And we believers own that cross, giving us an opportunity of perfect love, which in itself is blessing, happiness.

We must then try to have the right sorrows about the right things. We must not sorrow about the loss of this or that or the other, of no particular consequence, temporal losses, even trivial mistakes that seem to be bringing shame, almost a ranking sore. We must learn the art of mourning aright, or assuming to ourselves a kind of sorrow when we ought to mourn.

I have known greatly afflicted persons who have never been downcast about their own suffering, but who have wept for a long time, all night, because some other soul was very much suffering. They never shed tears for themselves, only for others. **That is a special sensitivity of GRACE.**

There is a great place inside the Church for this sort of true mourning. There is a sort of assumed sadness which is a very beautiful thing. We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ "began to be heavy." He took it upon Himself. Some people say, "I am not going to be sad any more," like "I am going to stop being sad. I am going to bed. Now I have to go and look after the children. No more sadness please. I must pass into the house of mirth."

When the Lord, the Redeemer, wanted to be sad, it was night, and only three were with Him at that time. Then He said, "I won't be sad anymore. I will go and kiss the cheek of the one who is to betray Me." The next day there was no sadness. "Sorrow comes at night, but joy comes in the morning." Jesus Christ went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him. **The GRACE of God enables souls to rejoice after sorrow has taken place in their lives as a pain.** The following of Jesus Christ therefore was perfect joy. His greeting mistranslated "All hail" is "Joy."

In the catacombs the Church began its corporate life under condition of gloom. The Christians were driven like rats almost into sewers of the great city, forbidden the light of the sun. Some never saw it until for the last time they were brought up into the Coliseum to be devoured by wild beasts. In the catacombs you expect to see fierce lions or tigers yearning for your blood. It seems almost blood stained.

The place where Rome took its pleasures in the catacombs you can weep with joy. The sweetest things were carved in the stone in the doorways of the little tombs. A desert above on the Earth, and down in the

catacombs a garden of delights and scents. You have to go down into the catacombs to recover your mirth and joy. Upon the Earth outside it is impossible not to hate your fellowman. But in the catacombs it is impossible not to love your fellowman.

Our ministry in the modern world is to teach it how to rejoice. It no longer seems to have the gift of smiling. Its smile is almost a grimace, all its comedy is a burlesque. "Rejoice then," says the Lord, "for your reward is very great in heaven." Why didn't the Lord say, "Rejoice because I love you?" Is He playing a game of hide and seek with us, behind some simple word.

Heaven to some is like a grain of wheat, infinity in a span. **But the Lord bids us to rejoice even in our deepest sorrow.** He spoke of peace to His disciples even when they were looking on the very print of their betrayals that hardly brought about a change of mind.

Jesus Christ is the world's best news. Jesus Christ risen! Jesus Christ smiling! Jesus Christ forgiving. Jesus Christ almost forgetting. Dante talks of the "smile of the world." But he might have made a great thing of it, if he stated that Jesus Christ is the Smile of the world. It is not the sun that is the world with a smile, but Jesus Christ rising from the tomb where we laid Him dead, and rising with forgiveness.

Did St. Peter, when he saw the risen Lord, have sufficient contrition to get absolution? He never begged our Lord's pardon. Because that would have been an insult to the smiling forgiveness of Jesus Christ. So

we must rejoice. If we do take sorrow upon ourselves, it must be for a very brief space.

You and I must study the Word of God so that we can rejoice. **Study to smile.** And when the world seems to be crashing down, we must laugh. Some meet the fear of death by gathering themselves together and laughing at the danger, with a kind of a perfect confidence in the Lord. They trust He is with them always. The very flower of perfect trust will lead us to love. May we see the GRACE of God in the Lord Jesus Christ to be able to take a Word from our Redeemer, and to dry our own eyes with His Words. He will dry all tears, by giving us the power to dry our own eyes, and to be able to stop our weeping, and our mourning, and to turn into a melody of praise, with thanksgiving and great joy.

When Christ arose He greeted the believers with the word "Rejoice." **We can rejoice because our Saviour is living and is risen and is interceding on our behalf.** Sorrow truly comes at night, i.e., the cross, but joy comes in the morning, i.e., the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are living in the newness of life, the risen life of Christ, so the way of life is REJOICE.

Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." We may sorrow and mourn temporarily about some tragedy in life, but we "sorrow not as others which have no hope." We have hope, the Lord is called our "Blessed Hope," our hope of rejoicing, and the Lord is called our "Purifying Hope." **We do have hope. Hope is the Lord, a joyful anticipation of being with Him forever through Christ.**

THE THINGS THAT BEFALL YOU

"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem. AND JESUS WENT BEFORE THEM AND THEY WERE ASTONISHED, and FOLLOWING WERE AFRAID. And taking again the twelve. HE BEGAN TO TELL THEM THINGS THAT SHOULD BEFALL HIM," Mark 10:32.

Here we have Mark's account, which is Peter describing the indescribable scene of the Lord going up. There is an idea of hastening here. Luke says, "WITH DESIRE I HAVE DESIRED," Luke 22:15. We now see the very swift steps of desiring love, so swift and light in its steps. **There is no fleeing here from what it dreads, but love flying to the help of the desired.** And so we find a certain swiftness in his words. "Jesus went before them," The Shepherd was going before His timid and footsore flock.

"And they were astonished." There was something uncanny about Christ. It is rare to find that expression of astonishment which the souls of these men are expressing in the company of Jesus Christ. They saw something they had never witnessed before. And so you can notice a graciousness about the Lord and His words toward them.

Now He has something of the GRACE of death upon Him, in the sphere of dying in GRACE. That means that some believers can experience the sweetness and the GRACE of approaching death just as the Lord did here. Just as if you are in a very dull day and it is made beautiful by the setting sun.

"And followed, they were afraid." There is some strangeness when the Lord strides ahead, leading, hardly even beckoning. They follow along swiftly, and they are afraid, afraid that He will ask them too much. **When He calls anyone to follow Him swiftly, He gives them the strength of foot,** and they are yet still afraid. **YET ALL OF HIS ASKINGS ARE GIVINGS IN A WAY.**

Now the Lord begins to speak about His passion and death. He had already spoken to them twice about it, under very striking circumstances. First when Peter had made his glorious confession, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." It was a moment of climax, when the chosen people made a great public profession through the mouthpiece of Peter. No sooner had that been made than Jesus Christ began to teach them "He must suffer," and "after three days rise again."

Always in Mark there is the closing note of rising again. It was perfectly plain in its literal meaning. The moral meaning seemed so different, a mystery of futile suffering. It seemed such a loss in every way, that their Hero, the only One fit to save the world in ruins, should be put to death, that it should all come to nothing in a so short a time. No sooner did He receive from them that magnificent profession than He said, "I have to die."

The second very solemn prophecy was when "He taught them," Mark 9:30. What a wonderful expression that is. Perhaps the highest lesson we could be taught **here below is the lesson we shirk most, the lesson of the value of suffering.** I wonder if we are refusing to be taught? Some quite good listeners are very bad pupils. They listen by the hour and never learn anything. **What is the good of listening if we never learn anything?** We should learn more by doing, on our knees cleansing the floor than sitting in an arm chair listening to Tannhauser.

Peter tells us that the Lord taught them He would suffer. HE, Christ, NEVER JUST TALKED. HE TAUGHT. HE NEVER CEASED TO BE A TEACHER. Just before, there is one of the tragedies, of course, that "they passed through Galilee, and He would not that any man should know it," Mark 9:29. His own beloved Galilee, alone.

One of the bitterest things is to go back to some beloved spot of childhood and to be

entirely alone, to go back to the old family possession, entirely alone. It is a very bitter thing. "A prophet is without honor in his own home." I think the Lord Jesus Christ deliberately chose all the great forms of human sufferings. This is a human suffering some can hardly bear, to go back to some spot where the very stones seem to speak the name of the beloved dead, to return to some day of childhood's sunshine, and to be entirely alone.

And it was at this time, that with extraordinary GRACE and sweetness, He told them of the sufferings that would come. "The Son of man shall be betrayed." Could the cup of suffering be more brimming than that? "Betrayed." He is trying to save Judas from Himself, offering life to this poor lost one, who will betray Him with a kiss, making the scarlet of his sin twice-dyed.

Then for the third time He tells them, as they go up to Jerusalem, I wonder why He told them? I suppose, like everything else that He did, it was for their sake. I suppose He was giving Himself to them, preparing them for the valley of the shadow of death, with the promise of life at the end of the dark valley.

It is important that believers today understand that, while unbelievers do not understand that. Maybe there are some believers who still do not understand that. Outside, the unbeliever thinks that the believer's insistence on suffering is extraordinarily gruesome, like dabbling one's fingers and the tresses of one's hair in blood. A bloody religion. They do not understand it, a Church that set up the cross as a standard seems a gruesome thing. They see only its insistence on suffering. **They do not see that it really is the wiping away of all tears.** It isn't just taking an interest in the joy or suffering, **it is accepting the fact that He is no longer on the cross.**

The believer doesn't see, for instance, the poor wounded man on the road to Jericho, and say, "I can't bear to see anyone wounded," and pass over to the other side. No, the good Samaritan instantly represses a certain natural feeling of repugnance and

goes up and staunches the wounds. That is what the believer is trying to do in this world today. You know suffering is not only a fact. It is "the fact." **The One who suffered for you.**

The Creator and Saviour and Redeemer of the world has redeemed the world from suffering. The whole world is running away from it. The believers are trying to tie up the wounds, and are getting the reputation of being a dark-minded person insisting on suffering.

It is the exact opposite. **By running away from suffering, the world is causing somebody else to suffer.** Just as one person running away from poverty makes ten other persons poor, and so on.

The Lord Jesus Christ insisted on nothing so much as the fact that He is going to suffer. Peter is at pains to show that **Christ never alluded to His sufferings without saying that He was going to rise again.** John gives us the Lord's last discourse a few moments before He is going to die. It is a message simply charged with joy, joy and peace, while He is sitting waiting to be betrayed. The acceptance of suffering.

This thing is in its heart joy. Our Lord is dealing with the great fact of suffering which is inevitable. **If a person sets out deliberately to have pleasure, that person must suffer more than anybody else.** Just as a selfish person has more pain than an unselfish person. **I think more people have lost their mental balance through selfishness than through unselfishness.** Of course, some unselfish people neglect themselves to such an extent that their mental balance goes. But often the selfish person ends with mental fatigue and a final breakdown.

I think that it is a fact that when you set out for joy, you get more sorrow than joy, i.e., Solomon. The sorrow deepens as life goes on. The opposition hardens and multiplies so that in the end some people think the whole world is against them. **But they have no enemy like themselves.** I think the complete study is here.

James and John no wise understood the situation. Yet they were listening very respectfully while Christ was talking and while He was telling them that He would suffer. They thought that this was a good opportunity to bring in their own plan. They sought a mere temporal favor. Peter's account makes it rather less of a fault by not introducing the mother. If they got their mother to ask for them, that really added to the shamefulness. It was really too much.

James and John asked first of all that Jesus Christ might grant them whatever they asked. They had almost entirely misunderstood Him. For the moment they were fundamentally wrong on the whole conception of life. Imagine the gall. James, the first martyr, and John, the last of the apostles, if they had ended up as they put it here, James head of Galilee and John viceroy of Judea, dying comfortably in their beds.

It is awful to think that when the word of suffering came to them it didn't disturb them from their own plan of successful human life. The beheaded they couldn't think a success, or see a certain joy in suffering. If we accept suffering now, we are often looked on as rather freakish fanatics.

No wonder Mark says that our Lord "taught them" the lesson of suffering. This is the third time He had to teach them this lesson. It was not His word of mouth that teaching them that finally prevailed. It was His message on the cross. He opened not His mouth. He didn't say anything. **His death, burial and resurrection was the final lesson.** When they saw Him dead, almost everything seemed dead in the world. Their weakness in His hour of suffering almost took away their right to live. They had turned their backs on the way, who was "The Way and the Truth and the Life." **They had deserted the Lord in the hour of His need.**

It doesn't do them credit that in the hour of His death, the hour of their complete despair and contrition, they did not remember that He had said He would rise again. They

had no comfort in their contrition, except that they were contrite. For the moment they couldn't remember that He had said He would rise and they would see Him again. They never knew that He would greet them with His old friendship. They never really fathomed the depth of the mind of Christ. They never expected Him to come again with forgiveness, almost forgetfulness. They did not know what it was to be a Redeemer, nor how He did love the thing He had fashioned with His own hands and His love. They never dreamed that, after they had deserved only death for their cowardice and denial and betrayal, that He would come smiling into their midst and greet them with the word "JOY."

They thought that He was telling them three times of cruel and futile suffering. When He said that He would wipe away all tears from their eyes, they thought He was adding to the "tears of things." He didn't come into this world to add to sorrow, but to lessen it by taking up His cross.

So we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ can see His thoughts as to suffering, and let these thoughts always be in the background of our thoughts, the measure of all, underlying all our judgments of everything that happens to us. Sooner or later we must take that measure or we shall have failed to judge life at its truest (as it really is).

We can never think that the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ was meant to overcast our souls. Of course, any soul that loves must suffer in the suffering of the Saviour. But love would not seem to be worthy of the name if it did not insist on the sharing in the suffering. **There is a certain peace and joy and contentment in being privileged even in thought to bear a little of the cross of suffering.** "The fellowship of His suffering." Remember, "He is risen." And He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to Him.

"Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden and labour, and I will give you rest."

THE JOY OF SUFFERING

“Now of the fig tree learn ye a parable, When the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves are come forth, you know that summer is very near. So you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know ye that it is very nigh, even at the doors.” Mark 13:28, 29.

This very simple parable must have struck the imagination of the apostles living in a time under an agricultural economy. It seems to suggest the graciousness of the Lord, a joyfulness, too, which allures us in our Christian way of life.

Just before this, there had been the saddest thing, the cursing of the fig tree, and the Lord, as you know, never injured any human being. But He symbolized what happens when we turn away from the Lord, by the cursing of the fig tree, i.e., Israel. He was able to use this as a symbol of the terrible fate of those who go away from the Lord, the fate they bring upon themselves by their human free will, the fruit of their own desires. The Lord almost seems to commend the fig tree.

Very few passages are so extraordinarily lyrical even in English, coming after the terrible thunders and lightning of His prophecy of the end of the world. It is a very dear parable. We cherish it, or should. The leaves are tender, summer is near. Our Lord ends His terrible prophecies on a note of lyrical sweetness and GRACE. Summer is just knocking lightly at the door, as if any door would be shut against summer.

Out of the many principles of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, one of the principles is its ultimate quality of joy. **We have not entered into the mind of Christ until we have found, under the surface of great pain, a mind of joy and peace.** John tries to comfort us by telling us of Christ's words for joy. “Your sorrow will be turned to joy.” This is really the essence of the incarnation. **The incarnation is God's effort to turn human sorrow into joy, the joy that lasts.**

Sorrow does not last. Joy lasts. “No more sorrows, no more tears, no more pain, no more death, all things have passed away.” Our Lord said to some weak-hearted men, “A

woman when she is in labour hath sorrow, but soon she remembereth not the sorrow for joy.” He said, “I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice.” He said, “Your joy no man shall take from you.” This is an eternal everlasting joy, set beyond the cast or misfortunes or the attacks of this world.

There is a necessity in the spiritual life for sorrow and suffering. If no sorrow or suffering enters the life, then we have no salt, and there is then no flavor. We are the salt of the Earth. We never get away from the principle of suffering in life, **but it has to be something positive, and so we must use wisdom.**

There is something of the necessity of adding to life something of pain or of sorrow. One of our early Church fathers said, “He that hath not suffered, what doth he know?” **There is a lack even of knowledge in the one who has not dealt rightly with some kind of suffering.** Some people are never themselves till they have had a great sorrow. “Jesus Christ learned obedience through the things He served.” So sorrow must enter in. But it is not a final thing. But there is something that happens to human beings, so that now it is an absolute necessity. **Some impurities have to be washed away by suffering. But it is never the final thing.**

Sometimes people are frightened away from the Christian way of life. They think that it makes a person miserable. **It was interesting to me to find out that the Word said that as a Christian I could be happy and enjoy life and have a good time, and to find out from the Word of God that sadness was never considered by the Lord as one of the products of the Christian way of life.**

Galatians 5:22, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY...” Long faces are not considered outward and visible signs of Christianity. John shows us that almost the last note of the Lord was a note of joy, joy when He is going to be put to death. In our spiritual life we are going to have sorrow. People think that the Christian way of life is a chamber of horrors. But it is a house of joy, a house of bread. Christianity's very joyousness makes it

able to support what breaks other people. The greatest and most undisturbed joy will be found in those who suffer most. With those who do not suffer, if something trivial goes wrong, they are almost ready to deny the existence of God. Something crosses them, something is not cooked properly, there is a collision with the kitchen, and someone gets a weeks notice.

No, there must be suffering. Christ suffered. **There must be suffering and sorrow, and pain, and loss. And when it comes we must not seek to relieve it or even comfort. We must seek God.**

If the fruit of sorrow isn't joy, then we are not taking it right. We must avoid two extremes: 1. Of thinking the gallity to pursue is just joy and we must get rid of anything against that. 2. The other things, that we must always have sorrow and be downcast.

Well, look at the Lord's parable here. It is one of the most gracious parables He has ever given us. It ranks with "I am the Good Shepherd." He speaks as if He loved that fig tree, and saying to it, "I had to wither you to show something, but I will make you immortal." When we think of joy coming after sorrow, the everlasting joy of heaven, we forever think of the fig tree with its tender leaves sighing for the summer, a summer that is never ending.

I love to think of the Lord and the fig tree, because it had its day of sorrow, it seemed to be dead. He said, "May no man eat fruit of thee any more forever." But He gave it immortality. We shall eat it forever. Very few things have set up such a spring of joy as this fig tree. We are overwhelmed with the thunder and lightning, the stars falling. It is awful. What are we going to do?

Then there is this little fig tree, this little withered fig tree, and summer knocking at the door. "Come in summer." It's been winter up to now, and its been an awful winter. Well, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall all have anxieties and sorrows. **We will bear them better if we don't recognize them, if we turn the sorrow in to joy.** The love of God has the transubstantiation of turning sorrow into joy. This is the particular function of the incarnate Word. One of the simplest expressions of our whole spiritual life is not, not getting rid of sorrow, but "turning sorrow into

joy." If we put sorrow out the door, it comes back in through the window. We cannot fully expel it. But we can turn it into joy.

"Love your enemies." A sorrow is an enemy, but you love your enemies, you have a mental attitude of love, it means that you are not bitter when it comes, or feel sorry for yourself. You just have a mind that is relaxed. **Our fullest victory is turning our enemy into our friend.** If through some assiduous seeking we were able to oust sorrow from our life, I think it would be a very sad life. **We mustn't desire joy. We must desire GOD.** Yet the joy which will follow and which will come to our soul when after delays of refusal we accept it, accept what has been refused, then it is beyond our merits, and then we have joy unspeakable. It is almost ecstatic.

WHAT AN ADVENTURE CHRISTIANITY REALLY IS, A GLORIOUS ADVENTURE OF NOT TRYING TO OUST SORROW, BUT TURNING IT INTO JOY. Jesus Christ didn't come to alleviate suffering or sorrow, but He came "to seek and save that which is lost." Therefore **only believers in the Lord Jesus Christ can come under the principle of GRACE, where sorrow is turned into joy.**

This type of victory in the Christian way of life makes you sensitive to the real sorrows of others. And then you desire to dry tears and to comfort those really sorrowing. They are full of compassion, not just trying to lighten the burden, but to take it away, and to rid the patient of the sickness. May we as Christians learn the parable of the withered fig tree, so that even when sorrows come, we may be able to turn them into something as joyful as the green leaf of the fig tree when summer is near, very near, almost knocking at the door.

The fig tree is Israel in Scripture, cursed, withered, disciplined, and dispersed, but at the Second Advent of Christ, Christ comes back with all His glory and the fig tree, Israel that was withered, will blossom again, and will be fruitful in the Millennium. **That is the joy of gladness that we can have in the midst of pain.** So think it not strange that these fiery darts are to try you. When you are tried, as so by fire, you will come forth more precious than silver and gold that perisheth. "Rejoice and again I say rejoice in the Lord." Summer is nigh.

THE SIN OF SUFFERING

"Now then He had ceased to speak. He said to Simon. Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said to Him. Master. WE HAVE LABOURED ALL THE NIGHT. AND HAVE TAKEN NOTHING. BUT AT THY WORD I WILL LET DOWN THE NET. AND WHEN THEY HAD DONE THIS. THEY ENCLOSED A VERY GREAT MULTITUDE OF FISHES. AND THEIR NETS BROKE. And they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking. Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,'" Luke 5:4-8.

Notice a basic Bible principle here in this context before we even get any further with the principle of sin in suffering. There is a connection:

1. They laboured all the night.
2. And have taken nothing. So much for works and human good, which is no good.
3. But, contrast, "At Thy Word I will let down the net." According to His Word, according to His plan, following the principle of the Word, they willed and were successful. They had so many fish it broke the net and the boats almost sank.

You must be in fellowship when you work and want to produce for the Lord. That is the way to catch fish. And when you are out of fellowship as a believer, there is not only lack of Divine production, but there is also a principle of suffering involved.

When people talk about men in the Bible, well the best known of all in the New Testament are Peter and Paul. There are many churches in our country in various denominations named after them, separately and jointly. And because they are no longer on this Earth but with the Lord, it does not negate their message. They have a dateless, deathless message for all of us today. Their

message could be called a united feast. They could bring us a united feast of thought for us to think about.

Here is that saying of Peter in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Now that kind of a statement did not come out of Peter without a lot of preparation. John tells us that before this incident, Peter had already been in the company of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ had given him the name of "PETROS," a piece of the rock, and nothing seemed so unlike a piece of the Rock, Jesus Christ, as the character of Peter who was more a less a reed. It was only after being with the Lord for some time that Peter broke into the cry of cries, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Now that was not his first thought, though I imagine it was in his mind from the day he first met the Lord Jesus Christ. Here again, **Peter is once more asking the Lord to do something He would not do.** He told Christ not to go to the cross, and he tells Jesus Christ to depart from him, which Christ will never do. **Once you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, "He will never leave thee nor forsake thee."** But Peter did recognize his condition at the time and that he was out of fellowship with the Lord. You can't catch fish when you are out of fellowship.

It is much the same with Paul. We have a similar phrase when Paul was writing to Timothy. "A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." This is a most beautiful saying, which I think we all should use, especially those who communicate the Word of God to others, because this is the only right we have for teaching His Word.

That saying of Paul's is similar in a way to that of Peter's. They both recognized they were sinners. One recalling his past, Paul, and Peter his present condition. **We are**

once saved and always saved, but we become sinners at birth because we acquire an old sin nature and we always are sinners, but saved, until we get a resurrection body and lose our old sin natures.

It is almost similar to the leper's cry, "I am a leper." In each case there has been a time of preparation. This was probably Paul's daily meditation. How before he became a believer he was a self-righteous religious unbeliever with a lot of misspent zeal. Thinking he was doing the Lord a service as a Pharisee, but he was really doing Him a disservice, **similar to the believer when he is out of fellowship and trying to produce for the Lord, but it is always wood, hay and stubble.**

As the believer's soul is "growing in GRACE by the knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ," and reaching for maturity, it seems to be growing to the point of despair in the conviction of its own sinfulness. That is very true in supernatural psychology.

The Israelites had four great qualities. First, they realized **they were chosen by God.** Secondly, that **they were not chosen because of something on their side or for any goodness of theirs.** On the contrary they were good because they were chosen. The third thing was their **conviction that everything they did good was God's doing through them.** Paul said, "I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me." Then the fourth great conviction, which just completed all the rest and made it perfect, was that **whatever evil they did was "theirs."**

WHATEVER THEY SUFFERED THEY DESERVED. **They took responsibility for their own decisions and actions, a principle of heading toward maturity.** Now, that is a perfect way of meeting suffering. Many times suffering is met by a rebellious attitude. "I didn't deserve this." "Why did this happen to me?" "How come everything happens to me, and not to him or her?" "Why do the innocent always suffer? Is there no justice?" But others have a perfect way of meeting suffering.

Some people teach it and some people live it. **But beds of suffering are far more important than chairs of seminaries.** I have known both. The wisdom that one picks up from those who suffer is much nearer the heart of the unique sufferer, and much, much wiser altogether. The Israelites, when anything horrible befell them and they suffered, if famine came, if pestilence, they said they deserved it. That was their wonderful attitude even towards so-called natural phenomena. They said they deserved it. It was the Lord's way of reminding them that they had done wrong.

We ought to be very grateful to the Lord for reminding us. If someone told you you were going down the wrong street, we should at least thank them, and not run over them and say, "Mind your own business."

Souls in Scripture and even in our day have an extraordinary perfection when they are aroused to their sin by an earthquake. I often think agnostics make great fun, blaming God for earthquakes. It is rather comic. It is a wonderful state of soul that beats earthquakes by saying, "I thoroughly deserve it. I have not been a good husband or a wife. I takes an earthquake to remind me to live the Christian way of life." That is the effect made on certain souls by the proper association of so-called natural phenomena.

Isaiah 29:6, "Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire." In Zechariah 14:4 the Mount of Olives cleaves in two. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." Revelation 16:19, "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath."

So when anything extraordinary happened, the Jews looked upon it as a punishment and said they thoroughly deserved it. If it was a good thing, like a net full of fishes, then it was the hand of God. But in both cases, whether discipline or blessing, they would say, **"I am entirely unworthy."** If they had victory in the field, they began at once to thank God and to say they were entirely unworthy.

Now that is the marvelous thing here. **To see God in the earthquakes and in the abundance of fishes.** But today people are more interested in what the TV has to say, and outer space. If, during the war, Germany had dropped bombs on England, they wouldn't say "those so-n-so Nazis." We would not blame Germany. We would say, "We deserve it. We are unworthy." **We blame all that happens to this country, on someone else**, i.e., Russian, China, etc., but we deserve it, and more.

I, for a couple of years, had a ministry in prison in Florida. One of the prisoners, I remember, was very angry. He said, "They put me in here. I didn't do it." And then later on he laughed, and said, "There were many times they didn't catch me." It was a kind of an alternating current. But between both of those statements he was perfectly contented. And then there were some prisoners who didn't complain. And I thought that they were on the way to recovery. You can ever learn something from a prisoner. Some know they are guilty and admit it. And they know they deserve to be in jail. And the suffering they are going through in jail is because they deserve it. Because they, like the Jews, are unworthy.

The principle of thinking in this type of suffering when it comes to the Lord is, **"This is child's play compared to what I should be receiving."** Peter and Paul therefore had the same idea with this old Hebrew idea, "we are sinners." They had this tremendous consciousness and conviction of sin. Unless all of us have, we have not begun to start the alphabet of suffering. The A, B, C's. It is hard not to see that our hands are dirty and we can clean them with a little soap and water.

But it requires GRACE thinking, and honesty, to see that "our soul is dirty," especially if you don't know that you have a soul.

One time in England during the War, I heard someone speaking in Regent's Park, the outdoor orators. He was telling the crowd there how ridiculous Christ was in coming to save souls, since we don't have souls. He was quite insulted when he was told that he had a soul.

Peter and Paul teach us the importance of realizing our own sinfulness. That itself is not sufficient. It might have a tendency to almost paralyze the soul. Peter and Paul both went into their ministry for the Lord with the deepest conviction of their own old sin nature, but it never in any way dimmed their eye or slowed their pace. It seemed to awaken their anxiousness lest it should hinder their great ministry for the Lord. **We should not be too occupied with trying to perfect our souls. As individuals, we should be thinking more about doing the will of God.** And that is confirmed by the statement that Jesus Christ said on the cross. I HAVE DONE IT. "IT IS FINISHED" "Thy will be done." "I have finished My course."

Now the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to us as we could not. But the lesson is exactly the same. The perfection of doing the will of God, the perfection of our ministry for the Lord. We should say, "I am undone. I am a sinner." **I want to be more and more conscious of my old sin nature.** But being aware of it, that will not interfere in the slightest degree with the course that I have to run. I can control that old sin nature simply by CONFESSING MY SIN, and "God is faithful and just to forgive me of that sin and cleanse me from all unrighteousness." **Then being in fellowship, I can really produce the character of Jesus Christ on this Earth in whatever it is that I do. I do it all as unto the Lord.**

When you sin, you have to take responsibility for your sins and confess them to the Lord. He restores you back into fellowship with Him. THAT IS THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUFFERING WHEN

YOU SIN, AND YOU ARE OUT OF FELLOWSHIP AND “WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS.” And “no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but it bringeth forth the fruit if exercised thereby.”

Now, you find yourself in a very small type of ministry, but you are in full-time Christian service at the point of salvation, and it may appear to be a little work, absolutely nothing, comparatively speaking, maybe even lying on a sick bed and even being a little lonely. **But if that is your work for the Lord, then you do it “AS UNTO THE LORD,” and at the same time the angels who are watching, are witnessed to** while you are confined to that bed. And then sympathetic friends will visit you and you can tell them how you wish that your body prospered as does your soul. And you can out of a sick body tell them of the hope that is in your soul. And even where your soul is going when it leaves this temporary body.

If He wants you to be alone, then be perfectly lonely. Whatever it is, I am going to do it as unto the Lord.

Well, these lessons of Peter and Paul are very sublime lessons. Peter's character is sketched with greater detail than any other in the New Testament, with the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul's character is self-revealed in his epistles. That is the charm of Scripture. They are not only valuable for their revelations about Jesus Christ, but for their revelation about the writer, Paul. He is actually saying to all of us in Scripture as you read it, “My heart is open to you.”

Paul has always, if you have noticed, worn his heart on his sleeve. His emotions come up very easily and spontaneously. We can see his progress in his spiritual life. At first we see him strong, and headstrong. Then there begins the gradual mellowing through suffering. “My GRACE is sufficient for thee.” Praying three times to have his buffet removed, but no, “My GRACE is sufficient for thee.” He couldn't heal himself, and God wouldn't heal him either. “My GRACE is sufficient for thee.” If we knew what kind of an ailment Paul had, if we had the same ail-

ment, we would put ourselves in the spiritual league with Paul. But we don't know the suffering, but what we do know is that **GRACE is sufficient for any suffering.**

Until Peter denied the Lord, and Paul ends up in prison, then both of them become GRACE oriented. “Woe is me. I am undone. I am an unclean thing.” You can readily notice that Paul's prison letters are full of GRACE. Just read Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians; and then think they were written in prison. **GRACE in prison. PEACE IN PAIN. They are bound but the Word isn't bound.**

If we were in prison, like some are today, would we or they write prison epistles? No, we would be demanding our civil rights, and denouncing the state and the government, petitioning to be released on some technicality in the judicial system like “He didn't read me my rights.” And if we had any visitors at all, we would be constantly pointing out the injustice and the prejudice of the whole establishment.

Paul is almost sweet in prison. **Paul discovered himself in prison.** The chiefest of all sinners. Paul had been a persecutor, one who used the sword and died by the sword. He would say that he thoroughly deserved it. He had used the sword. I think that at the end he would do something very touching, and say, “Let me die by the sword.” “I ought to be crucified downwards like Peter. But I used the sword, so let me die by it. I thoroughly deserve it.” He probably did something like that.

When people came to visit Paul and to console him, he would say, **“You ought to congratulate me. I deserve much more than this.”**

Two men, John Fisher and Thomas Moore, when imprisoned, in their suffering both added disciples and hairshirts. Believers are funny people. They seemed to say, “It is really too comfortable in the tower, like a first class hotel. We must add a little bit of humiliation.” Maybe that is one of the things wrong with our prison system today.

It is really great when a believer has a sense of sin. Peter said to the Lord, "Go away from me, I am a sinner." **But Christ came to seek and save sinners.** Paul said, "Christ died to save sinners, I am the chief." A sense of sin that produces unrest is unreal. It ought to produce a sense of peace. Paul says, "**I really deserve to go to hell, but I am going to heaven. I am not relying on anything I do, but what Jesus Christ did for me. He died for me. He suffered for me. What then is my suffering?**" "A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." That seems almost to be pride. It almost transfers him to the head of the list. Or is that the bottom? Jesus Christ came to save a certain group called sinners, and I am the chief.

There is a peace that rests on conviction of sin, not on any good, but on the conviction of evil. Paul seems to put himself first. But he is not the first sinner. And, of course, he is really never first when Peter is

around. And Peter, with a full heart, when everything around him was far from suggesting it, said, that he was a sinner. **How welcome death is to a soul like that convinced of his own sin.**

How God molded this reed Peter. Simon Bar Jona was a little reed. All the cruelty of Caesar could not take him from his place in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. He went into the presence of the Lord. As Paul wrote of in 2 Corinthians 5:8, "Absent from the body and face to face with the Lord." **Since Paul is on record as being the chief sinner and God saved the worst, then it would be a snap for Him to save you, because you are not the worst, and you never can be.** Paul was.

You can accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and repeat what he said, "By the GRACE of God I am what I am." Because it is "for by GRACE are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast."

TO SUFFER FOR HIM IS A GIFT

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” “Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him.” Philippians 1:21, 29.

Here we have before us that deathless phrase of Paul, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Then he ends up that phrase which must have bewildered the Roman world and even now bewilders many of us, “UNTO YOU IS GIVEN, FOR CHRIST, NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE IN HIM,” and who would think that the sentence ends as it does, “BUT ALSO,” now here is some great gift, “TO DIE, TO SUFFER WITH CHRIST.” Here are crowded thoughts to jostle themselves in our minds, life and death. Faith and suffering, thinking and directing our attention to the cross. **Life and death in that cross, and death and life in that cross.**

Now we all talk about having “our crosses to bear,” but **the best way of bearing a cross is almost to forget we have it.** The cross is death in a sense, but it is not really death. **It is a wounding of a human being that is tearing itself through thickets of sin to life. Suffering and sorrow are inevitable, but the cross is a thing of hope.** On Mount Calvary we first heard “Alleluia.” Everything begins to sing when the cross has done its best.

The idea of the cross is not one that adds the slightest shadow to life. **It lightens the shadows that are already there. It chases them.** It leaves a world that was all eclipse and darkness, full of spring and morning light. This new Paul, born now in prison, has a light-someness and joy unknown in him before. He says that something most glorious has been given to us, “Not only to believe, but to suffer for Christ.”

Faith is a great gift to us. We often think of it as a great gift that we give to God. People who count the cost of becoming a believer and serving the Lord, are not quite what the Bible calls a believer. **Only when we think it is a gift far beyond our desire**

are we really in. Some people think that being a Christian and attending church is a great sacrifice, as if coming to Christ, you are making a great sacrifice. **But we are really receiving more** than the Magi’s gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. **The soul begins to grow in the spiritual life when it looks upon faith as some glorious thing God has given it. It is a royal gift to be exercised. And that causes us to go out and tell others about Him.** Most of us have not arrived at the point of view of suffering. Paul links faith here with suffering. **To suffer for Christ transcends even faith in being a gift from God.** It is the perfect likeness to the Word made flesh.

Nowadays few lives have the cross. **If the cross finds a place in our life, we do not make the most of it until, somehow or other, we look upon it as a gift of God,** an invitation to sit down and eat at the King’s table and drink from the King’s goblet.

Many people I think have mistaken the message of St. Francis. And they sometimes notice the wrong Francis. The converted Francis would hardly ever look on any natural beauty. “He was enamored with the beauty of the Lord. The Francis who composed and sang the deathless canticle of the sun was a blind Francis that could not see the sun. He had no ‘joie de vivre.’ He was an outcast. Every fiber of his was an avenue of pain. He sang at midnight to the Lord, thinking it was a great gain, and a great gift from God to suffer.”

That is the message we have here on the fellow-crucified Paul. Paul bore upon his body “the mark of Christ crucified,” and for each suffering believer and for every anguish, it is a gift of God, for which Paul or Francis or you deemed themselves worthy.

What a lesson to us. **A gift, given to suffer. Given to believe and given to suffer. Faith to believe in Christ and faith to believe that through your trial of faith you will come forth more precious than gold**

or silver which perisheth. These are the little pains or sufferings that we so often balk at, the humiliations that seem to be impossible barriers, and yet in the overall picture, a gift from God. **If we could only count it as gain, as a gift. “What have we received that we haven’t received it of the Lord, and why do we act as if we haven’t?”** The wall of Jericho would fall down at once, if we just trumpeted out, “This is a gift from the Lord.”

I remember one believer who was in the sphere of dying in God’s matchless GRACE. He had tremendous recall, and he was able to tell you every facet of this long avenue of pain that he was going through. When death finally came to him, he was a father of a couple of children, and he saluted his pain and anguish with “Thanks be to God.” “Thanks be to God.” His children were around him in that room, and as a Father, the thought of each and every one of his children probably wrung out his heart. But when the call came from God to go home, and for him to leave this world and his family, that which was all the world to him, he realized at that moment this world was not his home, and that he was finally going home. And therefore there was a sense of God’s great gift and God could only be thanked for taking him home at the right time. If it was possible for him to sorrow, he would have sorrowed over leaving his family here on Earth. But when you go home “there is no more sorrow, no more tears, no more pain, and no more death.”

Most of my memories of Christianity is the way in which a believer goes home. I feel sure that each and every one of us who are “growing in GRACE by the knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ,” when death comes to us, and we know we are going into the valley of the shadow of death, we will, like this man, emulate his desire to go to his real home. In each of our lives the acceptance of suffering and death must come.

Maybe our reaching the height of acceptance of pain and suffering and death will not be as grotesque as some are. But his was no gesture. It was the full desire and achievement of his own soul. His soul’s desire was

to be with the Lord, which is far better. He was no longer in a strait between remaining here on this Earth and going to be with the Lord.

One of the epitomes of joy is when a believer under some great cross of suffering, bears it as unto the Lord as a gift.

There is a great deal of patient suffering in the world, even suffering patiently and even edification by those who call themselves atheists, but that isn’t suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ. We all suffer in time, believer and unbeliever. **The believer will no longer suffer in eternity, but the unbeliever suffers in time and in eternity,** the Lake of Fire, torments. **The only time a believer suffers is in time, NEVER in eternity.**

But when unbelievers suffer, that is not the unique suffering for Jesus Christ. Some lady desired more suffering in her infirmity. At her bedside she said that she felt that her past was not at all what God had wanted for her. Well, I said, the Lord knows everything and He will take you home at a full age. Yes, I know, she said, but I hope not yet. I thought she was saying that she didn’t want to die, but she added, I ought to suffer more. I said that is what the Scripture says, “Suffering for My sake,” for Christ’s sake. And then she said something very interesting, which only an afflicted person could say with a smile. She said, as they were taking yards and yards of bandages out of her mutilated bosom, “I never understood before the taking of the clothes off our Lord’s back. Now it has helped me to bear this.” I thought to myself, who is the teacher here, she or me? It was obvious it was her and I was the student. The Lord was teaching her and she was teaching me.

The cross of Christ is the chair of the Master. **We are all learning to suffer for Christ.** We can almost hear Paul in prison, and we want to take the chains off of him. And we want, as it were, to take his place for awhile. But Paul raises his manacled hand to my head, refusing to have his chains struck off. Because he is going from the prison cell of life to the hill of death. Singing with music

on his lips and in his mind, "For me to live is Christ," in prison, in pain, "and to die is gain," home, no more pain.

If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. "Persecutions," afflictions, "which came unto me at Antioch, at Jerusalem, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured, but out of them all, the Lord delivered me. Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers,

having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turned into fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing," 2 Timothy 4:3-8.

THANKSGIVING IN SUFFERING

"But the things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ," Philippians 3:7, 8.

I think that as you read the book of Philippians you will not only see, but detect a **note of joy springing out from the soul that is on trial**. Such music ringing from a prison cell can only be spoken of in words that turn the music into discord. But I offer the music to your souls anyway.

There is here this tremendous quality of thanksgiving about Paul here. Everything is turned to thanks. "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you." He is not thanking God for his sin, but for every human humiliation which came from him into his own weakness. And all that now is made the matter of thanksgiving.

He had suffered the loss of all things, and he counts that as gain. All his own ideals and his aims for his people, the Jews, are all gone. He is now counted as an enemy among them, even as an outcast. Death will meet him far from his birthland. No one could have given up more. He is now exiled, poor, and appointed unto death. And he says, "Thanks." Why? **He sums it all up as "gain."** He thanks God for it all. **There is something in that beyond the power of the natural.** Quiet thanksgiving is the Lord's work in our souls. **One of the quick ways to perfect union with the Divine will is to try to become experts in the art of "thanking God."** We should soon then be saints. **Those who thank God swiftly are running to God. Their life then becomes eucharistic.**

So that an exercise for our soul at such a time as this is to examine our thanksgivings, and to see whether we are thanking God for the right things. **What are we thanking Him for?** And then when we realize what to thank Him for, we get to the perfect act of thanksgiving, **thanking Him even in our weakness, and our cowardice, for suffering, be-**

cause of the hand of the Lord in it. He leads us, He guides us, through the valley, and leading and guiding over some rough terrains it must bring some pressure and some pain. Suffering then in one sense is the **pressure of God's hand, inviting the soul to come up higher,** as it were.

Our suffering is sometimes nothing more than refusing to take in the Word and apply it to our present circumstances. We resist God's touch, and there is just sufficient resistance in us, to make it result in pain. It is almost a temporary heel in the making. **We must therefore examine our thanksgivings, and question whether we have been thanking God for the wrong things. He may have smiled at our mistakes. We may be thanking Him for the wrong things. Or those things which are not as important as the real issue.**

The psalmists thank God for all sorts of beautiful things. He praised God for the sun and moon. We could also thank God for the things that we can see in creation with any reserve. **It would really be thanksgiving, and more perfect to praise Him for the things "we cannot see," and things we cannot see to enjoy.** Blind eyes that thank God for the sun outshine the sun itself. We might praise Him for the sun and the moon, but perhaps our thanksgiving would be more perfect if we did not seek to enjoy the sun and moon.

For the various powers God has given us, we thank God best by using them for Him. Limbs weary in God's service are the very music of thanksgiving. It is a little dangerous to thank God for just human joys. We can leave that to Him. **We are on safer ground when thanking Him for all the "loss" and counting it all gain. We do not thank God for the loss, we thank Him for the gain. All our loses can't be compared to what we gain in Him. What the world counts as gain, the soul enamored with Christ sets down as loss. That is a true scale of values.**

So, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ on this Earth, **if we are in any little difficulty**

in our spiritual life, if for one moment we are hesitating, let us begin to thank God for the pain and the sorrow of it, and we shall just fly to Him. Thanksgiving has wings. It flies to God.

This is an extraordinarily practical thing. **We have tortured minds because we have not begun to try to thank God.** Souls are almost bedridden, bewildered, tortured, because they have not learned to thank God for the little sufferings of this world, the lesser things of life. If our souls would only easily learn this principle, thank God, its trouble would be almost at an end.

There is a human illustration to this principle. If your car skids, you turn it in that direction. If when trouble comes, we turn them into thanksgiving, our soul regains its balance at once. There will be a graciousness, strength, a honey in the mouth of the lion.

There is no greater secret than the secret of thanksgiving. You don't have to wait until November either. We can thank the Lord for everything except our failures. Even then we may thank God for the humiliations that failures bring in our life.

It is almost like when you confess your sins and you are forgiven, and cleansed, that we are sickled over with a sort of soreness, as if we were fine believers with a dirty trick that has been played on us. We are sinners. **Sin should have no surprise for us, none.** We may be contrite, but we should never be surprised or sore. **We should be humbled, and thank God for all the pain of that.** If we prayed, "I thank Thee at least that my soul is so alive to sin that it is suffering pain. And God grant me the GRACE of suffering more pain than I have yet done when I sin again against Thee," maybe He would answer that prayer. **We might then make fresh efforts at thanking God for the soreness that comes from our evident failure.** So may we thank God.

Many people now in our day are suffering the loss of earthly goods. What a most opportune glorious occasion for thanksgiving. It is really serious to see so many believers suffering that way. **But there is a deep sense in this that the world is really being found out at last.** "Love not the world, nor the things of this world." The world is passing away. It is in transients. **There is no stability there. It comes**

and goes, and is in the process of passing away completely. You can't cling to it.

We are almost heartbroken to see the prodigal son herding with the swine, but rejoicing that he knows swine food is no food for man and swine no company for gentlemen Christians. **The world offers swine food and the companions of pigs.** And this is like not only throwing your pearls before swine, but you, a believer, living amongst them, which is worse than throwing pearls to them. **They have no appreciation for pearls or you the pearl of great price.**

There is some chance of the poor prodigal thinking of his father's house and going back home again. But where do swine go? They run down the slope and are drowned in the ocean. Pigs are unclean. To go back home to your Father is spiritual progress. "You can't serve God and mammon at the same time. You will love one and hate the other, or hate one and love the other." But we can be thankful because we know deep down in our hearts that at last **mammon is revealing its essential cruelty and vulgarity,** so that mankind in his utter destitution will see that the only thing sufficiently steadfast is Nazareth, and **the only God worth worshiping is Jesus Christ of Nazareth.**

In our own lives, if there are things outside our sin, that seem to give us pain, can we turn them into thanksgiving? He, Christ, our Model, our Redeemer, our Saviour, when approaching the deep attitudes of pain, gave thanks, **that perfect thanks which He calls praise.** His last great prayer is composed almost entirely of thanksgiving. With Jesus Christ new measures have come into the world. Now only the measures of heaven are current for great souls.

Can we thank Paul in prison for his thanks? For that most perfect message of his in which he counts all his loss, gain? **The world seems lost. And yet that loss, because of Paul's love of Christ, he counts perfect gain.** He can give up the universe of worlds so be that he has Christ, "whom my soul loveth." "And he took bread, AND GAVE THANKS, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of Me." "As oft as ye do it."

THE CITY THAT CHRIST WEPT OVER

"And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace! but now they are hidden from thy eyes," Luke 19:41, 42.

We must have a certain joy in sorrow, otherwise it is overwhelming and we would not be able to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, the Man of Sorrows, who, in His hour of darkest sorrow, spoke of joy and peace.

Luke tells of the weeping of Jesus Christ. **The falling tears of the Lord Jesus Christ were drops of GRACE from Him to all of us. Few gifts are greater than those of compassion and suffering when others suffer.** We examine almost scientifically these tears of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are told that once He wept for a dead friend, and for a weeping family, over the loss of a loved one. John 11:35, "Jesus wept." In the passage in Luke, He wept over a dying city, the loss of a city, the loss of a nation. **Our Lord weeps over death, and separation and sorrow. The Lord cannot and will not directly wish any kind of evil for its own sake. He can only wish some higher good to come out of it. He can only permit the evil.**

So we have the accounts of the Lord weeping over death and suffering, suffering with those who suffer and weeping with those who weep. Lazarus was dead, so was the city, in a sense. **So we rejoice with those who rejoice and we weep with those who weep. This is the intimate compassion of GRACE.**

Now as far as the city is concerned, whether it had ever been living is really a mute question. I sometimes wonder. War and theft was there first.

David, you know, moved from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. I think he was worsened in the transit. **Wars of aggression can masquerade as wars of defense, the defense of our own interests when perhaps our inter-**

ests are indefensible. The Lord spoke to Jerusalem of peace, in the effect of love. Justice will remove the hindrances to peace, but when you have opened the shutters you have not necessarily let in the light. I think that is just still seeking to remove the obstacles, and the opening of the gates to love and GRACE which alone can bring in peace.

Jerusalem did not know the art of peace. It knew the arts of money making, almost in the Holy of Holies, but it did not know the art of peace, the one thing which would have justified its existence. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," will only be accomplished when the Prince of Peace returns and sets us His headquarters there **and not until then.** In a city, so many things must be foregone that we may be in the city. It should offer great transcendent gifts if one is to give up these spring breezes, or the patch of green moss that you see all over. Of course, those things God made and He made them for us.

Someone said, "Do you want to buy any carpet?" and I said, "No, I don't need it." They said, "Everybody needs carpet," and I said, "I have one. The Lord is the Carpet Weaver, and He has made a lovely green carpet, all for me right in front of the house. God made that green moss for me."

You can only have peace with others if we have peace in our own soul. Love sets the ultimate order in all things. Love alone can give peace. Peace has its victories first at home, the peace of love, not of the sword. Only when we are at peace within ourselves is there possibility of that love extending so that we are at peace elsewhere. Love begins at home.

Lord, You are weeping, and You weep because I do not weep. My well of tears is dry, until You have watered them with Your tears. Thou art my Teacher, teaching my soul to weep, to know the things we feel contrite for before you, Lord. Your scale of values becomes our scale of values when we find out what it is that You weep over.

Tears are mightier than the sword. When tears come, the adversary is often overcome. This argues much for that city, that it could hear, as it were, the dropping of God's tears and remain unmoved by them.

As believers we must consider the tears of the Lord. We must consider His weeping. That should be always one of the scenes that we contemplate. Even if it is with a kind of stoniness of heart that we watch those tears while we are dry-eyed, yet we may prize them and be very glad that Luke, the beloved physician, has dared to recall them.

Maybe Peter hardly dared to speak of our Lord's weeping. He probably couldn't bear to have on the same page his own sin-begotten tears and the tears of the Lord Jesus Christ. I can see him in the catacombs talking to a small group of believers like us. If he had spoken of the tears of the Lord, there might have been a terrible scene. His own tears would fall in a torrent. Maybe he tried, and tried again, but maybe he had to go on and speak of something else, maybe talking about the things pertaining to peace.

Peter could say, "O, I remember that, how little did I know it was meant as much for me as for Jerusalem. I didn't know. Christ's tears were also flowing for me. I almost thought that the Lord was unmanly, that He was showing a certain weakness, incompatible with a great leader of men. Even when He chided me, I didn't know He was chiding me. It was delicate. But now I know. He was weeping over Jerusalem, but He was weeping for me."

Now this only touches the surface of this scene, and it may open up the so-called mystery of the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter says so beautifully, "we are not redeemed with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We are bought with His blood."

Now we see also that we are bought with His tears. **You can, being a man, make His heart's blood flow. But you cannot shed His tears. This is Christ, the High Priest, the victim offering Himself for you. They**

are tears from the very heart of hearts. And we are bought at that great price. We know now what we should be in ourselves. We know the things that should be to our peace, simply because we know the things that set Jesus Christ to weeping.

How soon our tears would be dried if we know the things that are to our peace. **If there is anything in us that makes us not in peace, may His tears give us the power of a flood of tears to wash those things away.** We must see in the Lord, the Prince of Peace, the things that are to our peace. **If there is anything between us and the Lord's will, help us to take it out of our life, or take my life from me.**

In the Lord's hour of His greatest anguish, He spoke of peace, and He promised that it would abide in us. "My peace I leave with you, not as the world gives...But the peace that I give will abide in you." He has come into our souls and has given us peace. **Now we have to understand this peace and be able to weep tears that He weeps.** We can think of His suffering and His cross without us suffering death and crucifixion and so have peace.

"I will keep him in perfect peace, he who keeps his mind on Me, because he trusteth in Me." "Thou tellest my wanderings, put thou my tears into thy bottle, are they not in Thy book?" "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name." "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people? How is she become as a widow, she that was great among the nations, and princes among the provinces? How is she become tributary? She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks, among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her, all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies."

"Therefore watch and remember, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember,

that by the space of three years, I ceased not to weep every one night and day with tears.” “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” “And God shall wipe away all tears.” “And began to wash His feet with her tears.”

As you can see in Scripture there is much said about tears. The tears of the Lord Jesus Christ over a departed loved one, and those who have lost a loved one. The tears over the city of Jerusalem that rejected Him. The tears of the Lord in the Garden when He was faced with facing a death before the cross. The tears of Paul warning about false doctrine and false teachers and the impor-

tance of the Word of Truth. And the fact that tears are placed in a bottle or in a book when we cry over the things the Lord thinks are important to cry over.

And how that Mary at the feet of Christ wiped His feet with her tears, recognizing who and what He is. **And finally, that God will wipe away all tears, with all sorrow, and there will be no more pain or death. Tears are temporary reminders of the GRACE of God. No tears in heaven, but while we are here, there are some things that it is bonafide and scriptural to cry over.**

Here is what to cry about: The lost. The lost city. The loss of respect for Christ. The loss of recognition of the value of the Word of God.

THE MAN OF SORROWS

"We would see Jesus."

Let us approach now more closely than we have as yet the unique sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us "see Jesus," and we will find the answer, the "Amen," to all the unsolved mysteries of the sufferings of the soul.

The Greek mind had an idea of life being made very rich by everything that could be offered to the outward senses, and still more to the mind, and emotions. The Lord Jesus Christ answered that idea fully by offering the thing, the one thing that the Greek mind would never face, suffering and death. Suffering and death have no scheme in a mere successful life, a so-called heaven on Earth. **Yet suffering and death cannot be eliminated from life. All direct attempts to eliminate suffering and death from life seem to root them even all the more.** Statistics seem to show that all direct attempts to eliminate suffering only add new modes of suffering. This added type of suffering has seemed to have multiplied in our day.

The Lord Jesus Christ never avoided speaking about suffering and death. He spoke quite openly and plainly of death and suffering. He used some illustrations from an agricultural economy when speaking about it. He said, "Unless the seed died, it would not give life." If it died, it could come upon eternal life.

So that much more than an answer was given to the Greeks. They had demanded a kind of immortality of fame. **The Lord Jesus Christ offered them the immortality of the very life of God, eternal life, God's life in Christ.** He offered it to them before He was about to offer Himself upon the cross.

Now, Jesus Christ being Truth could be trusted to speak the Truth. There was no guile found in Him. When a person is about to die, as Christ was about to do, well **a soul on the threshold of death has little in-**

ducement to tell a lie. These words were more or less His epitaph.

So here is the Truth speaking absolute Truth. If He had been just a philosopher I think His answers might have been called heartless. But as He is the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Creator, the Son of God, **He was really offering Himself at that very moment for their life and for their love.**

We shall approach, for a moment, the problem of our Lord's suffering by thinking of suffering. **I think we should all be grateful that the Word of God tells us all about suffering, and is honest about it, so that we are not left in the dark when it comes to suffering.** If the Bible ignored the issue of suffering, it would not lessen it. It only multiplies its terrors. **The Bible deals with the problem.** We know quite well that, as things are and as we are, it seems quite impossible for any life to be perfect without some form of suffering.

So we have the conviction that, being as we are, sinful and of sinful stock, in this brief sojourn in the world of trial, as it is a world of trial, there will be suffering. **Jesus Christ knew that He was going to have to face suffering, the ultimate in suffering, and He knew that He couldn't live His life without suffering and He accepted it.**

The soul sometimes is almost afraid of joy, wondering, sometimes, if it is on the way to maturity when it feels only joy. And so the soul looks to the Author and Finisher of its perfection, and sees Him suffering. **The "here" is only a preparation for the "hereafter."** Even the gloom on the cross is not the whole of Calvary. Calvary is the first day of the week, **the resurrection into life.**

So we have the conviction that there must be suffering, the cross accepted, pain accepted, perhaps pain that comes to us through our own very own fault. Or there may be the suffering of joy denied.

Some souls, like a little flower, are not called to any very great suffering, not for example mental suffering. Many souls were crucified by the sins of so-called churches of religion, but the little flowered soul death was almost a bed of roses. Some have the glorious cross of joy denied, the wine of life refused for the love of Jesus Christ as martyrs.

The cross itself is not sanctity. It is the love with which we embrace it that makes the sanctity. A little cross embraced with great love is more perfect than a great cross accepted with only a little love. **The problem therefore is not the escaping of the cross, but the glorifying of God through it, the fact of not being cast down by it.**

It is wonderful that, in spite of the revulsion of poor human nature against suffering, **it is the cross of Jesus Christ that makes Him our brother.** It makes Him so drawing, so undeniable. "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." **We understand that He will understand. He knows. What suffering in this life to the believer does not find some kinship in His cross? Either bodily suffering or mental suffering.**

When someone dies as a believer, you are always reminded of the unique death of Christ, for the one who just died. When someone suffers we are reminded of the unique suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ for the one who is suffering. Death for death, suffering for suffering. Death for those who are dying, and suffering for those who are suffering or will suffer.

You will see in your life as a Christian that you will almost be felled by the marvelous patience some believers have under great suffering. We have to stop and wonder the secret. How did she do it? And one day we are let into the secret almost accidentally. **That is occupation with Christ in His suffering, the fellowship of His suffering.**

That is the Lord's schoolroom. That is God's great university, wherein our souls get a liberal education in the science of all sciences: **how to allow the body and / or the mind to raise their souls to the Lord.**

I imagine that no message would be so welcomed to the modern world with all its varied sufferings, than our Lord's message about suffering. When suffering comes to the souls, even self-inflicted suffering, the soul is often many times terror stricken. It may have no particular inflicted pain, but may be haunted by the desire that there must be pain, or we will not be like the soul's very own Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our very first prayer in suffering is to be relieved of this haunting desire. Such a prayer is a prayer, an acknowledgment of the Lord's supremacy. It is not a sin. There is even some initial act of love and faith in it. **But the prayer is not yet perfect, and if the soul is loving the Lord more than itself, God will answer that prayer by giving the soul a new prayer, a prayer not for relief from suffering, but for consolation in suffering.**

"God is the God of all comfort and will comfort you in all your tribulations." "Whereby you will be able to comfort them with the comfort you received from Him, so that you may comfort them in their troubles." **We are comforted by God in our tribulations not to be made comfortable, but to comfort others with our very own personal experience of comfort from Him in suffering.**

The soul then will not want to serve two masters, God and mammon, but in suffering which it cannot get rid of, it will then crave consolation. Most people are looking for healers and miracle workers, so-called, to relieve their pains, sufferings and inflictions. **What the Lord is saying is don't look for the alleviation of suffering. That is not why Christ came.** If that was His purpose, He would have failed, because there still is much suffering.

Don't pray for the removal of the suffering, but for the comfort in suffering. God the Father is called "the God of all comfort." The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are called Comforters, and the Word of God is called "The Word of Comfort." The soul in suffering looks for compassion and knows there is consolation and Someone who is compassionate. And knows.

So the soul learns more and more in suffering. Till, in the final stage, when the soul is perfect as can be this side of eternal vision, it will come at last asking neither for relief nor for consolation, **but for strength to go on without relief, strength to go without consolation, strength to remain as it were, nailed to the cross, occupied with the Person of Christ.** Then he will unfasten the nails, and then He will take us down into the arms of His everlasting GRACE.

Now that doctrine is good news for this world, great news for this world, the ennoblement of this world, and fathering up of all the crumbs of human desire, the planting and the fruiting of all the waste places of human life, the one essential Gospel to be preached to a world lying in ruins.

The more we shun suffering, the more we come under its thrall. We become a slave to the details of suffering and not its master. To seek it, or at least to endure it, and to love it not for its own sake, but for the sake of all the good things that may be wrought through it, that it is to become its master. Suffering that is such is a bad master, but makes a good slave, a good servant, for the soul that is occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Lord decided to come and set the world straight, He chose suffering and took it upon Himself willingly. **He was dedicated to it, not framed alone for suffering, but so framed that He would thereby wipe away all tears from our eyes.** And that He will always do, because it was His plan. If you will only let Him, and allow His love to have its way with you.

If in this world there are tears of rebellion, that is simply because the world will not allow the Lord Jesus Christ to wipe away all their tears. He was stable in suffering. His whole life was suffering, mental and physical, to the point of death. We think not only of the shambles, **but think of the perfect love of God, so perfect that he would die not only for His friends, so-called, but for all of us as His enemies, and all of us who hated Him, and would buy back at greatest cost, the thing that He made at such great cost, that men might possess Him and eternal life, and then really possess themselves.**

Whether we suffer or do not suffer, whether we suffer with love and accept it, or in spite of ourselves, let us at least go in compassion to the **Man of Sorrows**, who has borne suffering on the cross for us. **He thought of our sufferings while He suffered, and He is even now seeking to dry our eyes and make all our sufferings fruitful, through death, unto eternal life.**

"In all our afflictions He was afflicted." A **Man of Sorrows** acquainted with grief, so marred was His face, that He could no longer be recognized as a member of the human race. **Why? For you... HE TOOK YOUR PLACE ON THE CROSS.** There is therefore really no cross that you have to bear. **He will take all your tears away as He promised, if you will let Him.**

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "And God shall wipe away all your tears."

You will not have anything to cry about except what Christ Himself cried about, the loss of a loved one and rejection of Him.

THE MAN OF SORROWS

PART TWO

“And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophecy: and the servants struck Him with the palms of their hands.” Mark 14:65.

It is with great difficulty that any one can teach the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is why it is necessary, “that no man teach you. God the Holy Spirit is our Teacher and our Guide, and He will guide us into all Truth.” “And the Holy Spirit will not speak of Himself but expressly of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The sufferings of Christ are so unique that you can hardly mention them. As you look at them and study them, you can see they are such adverse criticisms of His life. But we must refer to them when studying the principle of **Peace in Pain**, in order for His suffering to have an effect on our minds.

Calvary is not, as some teach, Good Friday. **It is also resurrection!** So that suffering is therefore not a good thing in itself, and it would be terrible if the last view of Calvary were the view of the outstretched and suffering body of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must remember that Christ is no longer on the cross, although many portray Him as still there. **But He has arisen in a bodily form and lives to make intercession for us.**

Forty hours after the cross, the crosses are still standing, but the hill is bathed in the light of resurrection and life. Angels are there. There is all this traffic of redemption. **Out of suffering we have GRACE.** Light out of darkness. **The darkness was only allowed by God the Father so that light might come from it.** He said, “Let there be light. And light was.” After a long night of sorrow, few things bring so much joy as the dawn. He arose the Light of the World.

We can never consider suffering as the last final thing. Like the word “funeral” is

so fatalistic, and final, like last respects. **But death is not a funeral, but a memorial to the GRACE of God, and life and light and resurrection. It is home going to be with the Father.**

We are created for joy. The right kind of joy. **We have gone astray after the wrong type of joy. We can come back only by suffering. Thank God that all suffering passes away, and we shall have eternal joy.**

There is no approach to perfection except through some suffering, either God-inflicted, or even self-inflicted.

Here in our passage before us we have the physical suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that He hungered, and thirsted, and we know that He bore the burden and the heat of the day. But now in our passage He is beginning the great redemptive suffering, the suffering of redemption.

There is a sense in which that bodily suffering is greatest and least. Physical things are the most intense. **People feel at times that they do not love God because there is not the same keen pleasure in it as in material things:** food, drink, physical comfort, beauty, and the rest. There is not the same intensity of feeling.

People wonder because of this whether or not they have supernatural faith or supernatural love. But that is just what supernatural love would be. It would be of that type of character. It is not the same intense character as the physical reality would be. **It seems as if God has attached pleasure to the lowest functions because a spiritual being could hardly be persuaded to the lesser things, unless there were some pleasure attached to them, attached in order to coax a spiritual being to some physical function, such as eating, etc.**

That is why there is the greatest pain attached to any interference with such functions, in order to preserve the balance between the body and the soul. Satan attracts us with the soulish appetites, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride the pattern of life.” **The Lord attracts us with the spiritual appetites, and places the soulish pleasures as slaves and not masters.**

The chief proof we can have of a conviction is to offer up our physical life. **We cannot destroy the life of the soul. All souls live forever somewhere. And you can decide where you, the soul, the real you, will live forever.** Either in the presence of the Lord, or in the presence of Satan in the Lake of Fire, which is prepared for him, where there will be eternal suffering. **The only kind of death we can inflict upon our souls is UNTRUTH. The only death of free will is to make the WRONG DECISIONS.** We cannot offer our souls to anyone, **except that you offer your soul to the ruler of this world when you reject Christ as your Saviour.** But you still don't die, and you have offered it as unto death. We cannot deliver up the life of our soul for anyone, but we can offer up our physical life. That is the supreme conviction of test, the test of our conviction and our love.

“God commended His love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died on behalf of us.” That was the supreme test our Lord offered up, the deliberate giving up of His physical life. He gave His Word that He would do it. And what He says still stands. The actual offering is not made until the thing is done. **The supreme truth is the doing of what we say. We know the Lord will always keep His Word, even only because of the cross.**

The great proof that He loved us is that He gave up His physical life. There was no higher way in which He could demonstrate it. The deliberate laying down of His life was the supreme proof that He loved us. It was not His death on the cross that redeemed us. **It was His obedience, His love, that was in it. His will. He**

wanted, over and above that to “satisfy” God the Father. The whole incarnation was God's wonderful design for providing something, making His love almost as visible as the stars and the sun. It is important to **meditate on our Lord's sufferings that we may realize His great love for us.**

Those eternal sufferings, bearing the marks of the cross throughout all eternity, are symbols of His internal sufferings. The five external senses are all wonderful things in themselves. They are also symbolic of the powers of intelligence, in some transcendent way. But the senses are the first of all realities. What you feel. What you smell. What you hear. What you taste. And most of all what you see. Eyes, hands, tongue, ear, nose, **five senses of GRACE.**

We say, “I see,” when we mean intelligent sight. We speak of hearing the Divine message, and of touching the mind of Christ. Of, for example, tasting that the Lord is gracious, smelling, as it were, His sweet smelling savour.

So we can look upon all the sufferings of Jesus Christ as also symbolical. But first we have to understand the physical ones.

AREAS OF SUFFERING

- The scourging of our Lord's body.
- The crowning of His head with thorns.
- The carrying of the cross.
- The physical death of the cross.

All those thoughts are of very great use to us in the Christian way of life. That is not the end of them, great as they are in that sphere and terrible to the human will, they are only symbols of something much further.

We must not depreciate the physical side of our Lord's sufferings. In our own case we don't at all depreciate it. Nowadays there are all kinds of contrivances to lessen physical pain. People think in order to avoid physical pain, they can avoid the balm of Gilead, the Word of God. But as we meditate on the passion and the death of the Lord that we can give the ultimate judgment.

So many times it is very difficult for us to think about the physical pain of the Lord Jesus Christ. We more or less block it out in our lives and this carries over into His life.

Some have asked in the past, whether or not Christ suffered all sufferings? Well, **He had every “generic” kind of suffering possible.**

FIRST ON THE PART OF MEN.

His sufferings were inflicted by men, with His will and His plan and His design, both from the Gentiles and from the Jews, from men and from women, from rulers, and their servants, from friends and acquaintances. This is the **Man of Sorrow**, the Lord of glory, going unto all these things.

The Lord Jesus Christ suffered from every kind of a person. Civilians, military people, religious people, unbelievers, believers, His own disciples, soldiers, priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, women and men, families, single people...

SECONDLY HE SUFFERED EVERY KIND OF SUFFERING.

For example, from His friends' abandonments **He suffered from loneliness.** He suffered because of His reputation, for His honour. And for His glory, He faced mockery. As far as things were concerned, He was despoiled of His garments, in His soul, by sadness and weariness and compassion, in His body, by the wounds and the scourging.

THIRDLY HE SUFFERED IN HIS BODILY MEMBERS.

I can't understand when studying this issue how any one's response could be as of rejection of Him as personal Saviour. His was the stillness of perfect love, motionless in suffering, silent in suffering.

HE SUFFERED IN THIS HEAD, from the crown of thorns, which represent cursing.

HE SUFFERED IN HIS HANDS AND IN HIS FEET, by the fastening of the nails to the cross.

IN HIS SIDE, from the spear that was thrust into Him.

IN HIS FACE, from the blows, slugged into oblivion, beyond recognition, punched, and also from being spit upon, one of the greatest insults of all the world. **To spit, if you can imagine, in God's face! Now that is what rejection of Christ does.**

ON HIS BACK AND PROBABLY SHOULDERS, too, as was the Roman custom. Scourging, pulling the skin of His back.

FOURTHLY HE SUFFERED IN HIS BODILY SENSES.

IN HIS TOUCH by the scouring and the nails.

IN HIS TASTE, from the vinegar and the gall they offered Him.

IN HIS SMELL, by being fastened to the gibbet in a place reeking with the stench of corpses.

IN HIS HEARING, from being tormented with the cries of the blasphemies and the mockers and the scorners.

And here is a touch worthy of mention: IN HIS SIGHT also, by beholding the tears of those around Him and those who loved Him, crying at the tomb.

This ascetic truth of the great physician often seems the highest of all poetry. And he leaves us this scene. He tells us how the Lord suffered in his eyes, and he says that **the very least of these sufferings was of itself enough to redeem the human race from all sin, but it was fitting that He should endure all at once. One suffering would have sufficed for our redemption, but it would not suffice the love of the Redeemer.** He meant to give us copious redemption, for the whole world, everyone in mind, and included unlimited atonement. He willed that the beaker would brim over. **He gave, as it were, a thousand redemptions in one.**

We therefore can survey each and every part of our Lord's body, and salute all of Him, wondering which one suffered the most. **We are in those sufferings by our own doing, inflicting them. But He loved us so much that He bore them by His own free will, with His own desire, along with “the joy**

that was set before Him, enduring the cross and not despising the shame for the joy that was set before Him,” and that is you and I. We are His joy on that cross. He was thinking of us. He had you in mind.

As we study these principles of suffering may God the Holy Spirit give us the fruits of our redemption **by having compassion with all of these wounds. May we be together nailed with Him in occupation with Christ. May we be crowned with Him, even if for a moment a crown of thorns.**

If we have to suffer in any of the senses of our body, we can understand in part what He suffered. So that we know that He is with us in our sufferings.

Only if the suffering risen Christ is in our thoughts and we are occupied with Him, seeing that outstretched form, then we can rightly measure at once the hate, the sorrow of this world. The crucifixion of Christ is the measure of all. It is God's infinite love of what deserved infinite hate. When we inflicted all this suffering on Him, how He still loved us in the wisdom of God's plan for us, one of the most consoling principles in the plan of God.

He died for the ungodly, for those who were strengthless, who were constantly hating and despising Him. He died for those who punched Him, for those who spit on Him, for those who ridiculed Him. He died for His betrayer, and He died for you. **WILL YOU ALSO BETRAY HIM?** We will never be called upon to face this unique type of suffering, but He has provided a way that we may escape, by simply realizing it is designed for blessing and growth and the display of God's GRACE, and to manifest His character as a silent Man of Sorrows, who opened not His mouth.

But He suffered even more than that if you can consider that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit forsook Him on the cross, when He became sin for us. Not only did the human race cause Him to

suffer, but God the Father judged our sins in Him, and He poured out all our sins on Him, and forsook Him. So indeed He was alone. And He was alone for suffering too. It was totally unique, **so He more than knows that which you are going through. But you will never ever be forsaken like Christ was. He took all of that away** and now “He will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” especially in your suffering.

Think it not strange of the fiery trials that may try you as if some strange thing has happened. **Tribulation works endurance. Tribulation produces endurance, which is stability. When you are struck you dig down deeper into the Word of God, and you become rooted and grounded in the Word, so that pressure makes you stronger.**

“He is despised and rejected of men; A MAN OF SORROWS, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. SURELY HE HATH BORNE OUR GRIEFS, AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS; YET WE DID ESTEEM HIM STRICKEN, SMITTEN OF GOD, AND AFFLICTED.”

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.” Isaiah 53:3-11.

A MAN OF SORROWS FOR MEN OF SORROW. Paul said, “If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I JOY AND REJOICE WITH YOU ALL. REJOICE ALWAYS I SAY, AND AGAIN I SAY REJOICE.”

APPREHENSION SUFFERING

"And they came to a farm called Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit you here, while I pray. And He taketh Peter and James and John with Him, and He began to fear and to be heavy. And He saith unto them, My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here and watch. And when He was gone forward a little, He fell flat on the ground and He prayed, that if it might be, the hour might pass from Him," Mark 14:32-35.

We can for a few minutes think a little bit about these words which are descriptive of the mysterious agony in the garden. It is very minutely described by an eye-witness. Mark's account is the fullest, expressing the very painful attitude of Peter himself and the mysterious fear and sorrow of the Lord Jesus Christ and this unique agony in the garden. Here is the second Adam in the garden VIC-TORIOUS.

Mark's account brings out the humanity of the Lord with painful details, and it almost becomes a difficulty when you realize that Jesus Christ is also Deity.

The scene is more or less a simple one. Our Lord went out, as was His occasion, to pray. **Our prayers at best are no where near His prayers.** At this time the moon was full and high, almost as brilliant as our winter sun. The light was very brilliant, and that may be significant.

Here we have our Lord going to pray. Christ took the twelve with Him, and from this group He chose three, Peter, James and John. Andrew was left in charge of the remaining seven. One of them had gone away to sell the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it appears as if our Lord is demanding help here, the help of their prayers. There is this sort of idea of the Lord demanding some sort of companionship and fellowship in prayer.

The next thing is startling. He began to be heavy and fear. The word used in the original Greek is a strong word, the same

word as that which is used of the women at the tomb on the first day. **It means almost terror stricken, some sudden terror that robs us instantly of all of our strength.** We almost fall. **The Lord allows fear to come upon His humanity with such force He instantaneously falls down.** It is as if one took a violent light and placed it in front of His eyes and they would instantly close, a normal human reaction. If He wished He could keep Himself from falling, He could keep His eyes open, as it were. If some instrument would have pierced His heart He would have died. If He saw some heavy thing falling on Him, He would shrink.

But the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity allowed this fear to come on Him. It was some terrible thing, some apprehension. Now some of us are so much accustomed to fear we understand a little what this might mean.

The details in Luke's Gospel just throw further light on this scene. There would have to be some influence of the Lord's Divinity to prevent His dying of fright. Fright and fear are very difficult to overcome. And the proper management of them is quite an achievement.

In the garden He was tempted again by evil spirits, maybe even Satan himself. With Satan, the mind is the chief sphere of the devil's action when it comes to human beings, blinding the minds, etc. **Fear is mental.** So here we have this lonely conflict of Jesus Christ not in exactly darkness, but alone with His thoughts and imagination. **It was all so terrible that, had it not been for Divine interposition, He would have died on the spot and would have been kept from the cross.**

Very few things are so terrible when they come as they are in apprehension. **The reality is not so real as the apprehension.** Some people whose life is overwhelmed by the thought of death, for example. When death comes they are in no way apprehen-

sive. I remember some believer who never like to hear the subject of death being taught because she was so terrified. But when death finally came to her, she had not the slightest apprehension. It was like walking into the next room for her.

Here is the Lord suffering in apprehension, for seeing everything in His imagination, that general apprehension of something terrible that can paralyze us. It is the general apprehension that is often so terrible.

The full acceptance of death is perhaps our greatest opportunity, of our greatest expression of the love we have for the Lord. This is the determined acceptance of it, with fulness of knowledge, to accept it because it is God's holy and gracious will in the perfection of virtue, **the utmost of our love of God, to accept death fully for His love.** The normal and natural thing is that death accepted is a very great offering, **the opportunity of the highest and most perfect act of love.**

Usually the actual dying is accompanied by unconsciousness. The Lord Jesus Christ was fully conscious to the last, no drugs. **He had the opportunity of freely laying down His life for us. He had power to lay it down and He had power to take it up again, which He did.**

But there are some souls that die alive. They are privileged in the actual act of dying to accept death. Christians only die once but cowards die many times. But to many it is not so. **Therefore that act of acceptance must precede in time.** The more thought is accompanied by actual sorrow, the more perfect the act may be. "Perfect love casteth out fear." It is the occasion for love to put forward its utmost strength.

Here we have our Lord Jesus Christ intensely in apprehension. His was a "self-sacrifice." **He could deliver Himself from it. There was every natural instinct and argument against His slaying. It seemed so futile and almost unnatural, His betrayal at the hand of one of His chosen ones, the rest of His chosen ones asleep.**

So here is our Lord's agony all alone again. There was no glamour. Thirty pieces of silver, Judas arranging His betrayal, a group of men asleep, maybe even snoring, nothing romantic. But romance is a thing of the mind. **There was Christ the loving Mind, loving those who could only return His love by sleeping.**

That was the agony so terrible to His human nature, and that caused some seeming conflict in His will with the will of the Father. There was no natural argument for this situation. He states so in His prayer, in natural terms, to God the Father. "FATHER, IF IT BE POSSIBLE." Now that is theologically exact. There are moral impossibilities. It would be morally impossible for those standing in GRACE to fall into sin in one moment. The Lord is saying, "If it is morally possible let Me."

"He saved others, Himself He cannot save." That is the moral impossibility of His coming down from the cross. Free will has its necessities. Here He is like a Lamb of God bleating, "If it be possible, Nevertheless, what Thou wilt." Hard it is for some to hear the Lord pleading this and almost giving us arguments against His Divinity. **He did not come into the world to prove His Divinity. He came to prove His love.** Here He is almost creating a difficulty about the Godhead. This is reality. Luke tells us of the drops of blood standing on His brow.

When you realize that we were in this thing, too, and that part of our Lord's natural shrinking was that He was to suffer death for such ungrateful souls as ours, we shall realize that this was not an hour for sleeping, but for weeping. The only representatives of human nature were asleep. This is so terrible, so ordinary.

Now compared to this, Judas doesn't seem nearly as bad. He did not pretend to be on the side of the Lord in the garden and then go fast to sleep. **I presume that is what we would have done if we were there, too.** We should be prepared to stone ourselves, not the disciples. **Our attitude is not exactly like that of Judas, but something worse, indifference.**

Only by having the sense of our own indifference shall we find the entrance into the depths of the Lord's agony here in the garden. On His side there is no indifference, but flaming love which meets with such indifference. Those who go about the game of love indifferently are not very much shocked to meet with indifference. We almost go about it with hate. The GRACE of God, here, needs no exercise of GRACE in the Lord Jesus Christ at this time, to prevent His love from turning rapidly into hatred.

Thank God Jesus Christ stood the test and He gave Himself wholly to the Divine will of God the Father. I am not sure He did it as an example. These things are really an example, **but He did them because He loved us. It was something He would like to do because He loved us.**

Perhaps it was an added agony in His human nature that His loved ones witnessed it, that His agony was a kind of trial to their faith. There was perhaps some added agony in the fact that His human weakness was witnessed.

Well, as believers, we know that God the Father answered this prayer in the garden and from there Jesus Christ went to the cross and had victory over Satan's trying to stop Him from going to the cross and dying for the sins of the world, as was predicted down through the ages.

Let us ask God the Holy Spirit to teach us the GRACE for understanding

the Lord's agony in the garden, so that, if ever we have a terrible apprehension of anything, we may have consolation and deliverance by means of prayer.

There is agony all about us even when it refers to economics. It is agony to watch others suffer from privation. **God gives us GRACE to be able to handle this principle that He will never allow His believers to beg bread.** But all around us sufferings of one kind and another appear as apprehension.

Here is the agony in the garden. But it has a character of comfort and strength you would almost believe. **He did it purposely to comfort us. He did it because He loved us.** It came to Him through His love for us and no other way.

If in any hour when you feel inclined to wonder if God is gracious and if all things are possible to Him, let us in spirit kneel down, and watch by His side, and pry and try to console Him in His awful agony. Then when we pray, He will say, as He has before, "Rise up, and let us go." It seems to me ironic that Christ moved more swiftly to meet Judas, than Judas did to meet and betray Him. He went up to Judas. He said, "Let us go up to him." So forth He went quickly as a bridegroom who sees his bride approaching. "Here comes the bride." **At your side, Lord.**

THE SHRINKING OF SUFFERING

“And when He was gone forward a little, he fell flat on the ground, and He prayed that IF IT MIGHT BE, THE HOUR MIGHT PASS FROM HIM,” Mark 14:35.

There is always a certain difficulty when speaking about the Lord in different facets of His sinless life, that you do not do injustice and insult to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, simply by using some ill-chosen words.

When it comes to shrinking from pain and pressures in our lives we must remember the humanity of Jesus Christ and understand the things He faced as a Man of Sorrows and refused to use His Deity to come to the aid of His humanity. Here we have Him in Mark and other Gospels, like Luke, shrinking from the pressures He faced in the garden before the cross. He didn't shrink from the cross, but this incident is before the cross. So here in our passage we have Christ as humanity shrinking in the garden from this particular hour from which He was delivered.

As humans we all have weaknesses and times when we normally automatically want to shrink from things in life, but ours cannot be compared with the Lord's, but His serves as an example.

So when we read this section of Christ in the garden, we read it and think about every word and realize that every word has a lifetime of thought and a world of consolation. We read in Hebrews 5:7, “Who in the days of His flesh, when He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to deliver Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.” This was His prayer in the garden when He was delivered from death before the cross where Satan tried to take His life from Him to stop Him from going to the cross and dying for our sins. And He was delivered from that premature death. This is what Christ was shrinking from, but NOT THE CROSS.

There are a few phrases that are more consoling to us as human beings than, “The Word became flesh.” In this passage, shrinking flesh. This is sinless shrinking, not sinful shrinking. There is personal weakness that shrinks, and sinless shrinking of Christ. He said to Peter, “Canst thou not watch?” He didn't say, “Cannot you all watch?” There is no mention of reproach to the others. Peter takes upon himself the burden of the weakness so soon to become the sin of denial.

And Mark mentions the sinlessness of wanting to avoid the garden. Our flesh is weak, omnipotence is not an attribute of the flesh. Omnipotence is an attribute of the Deity of Christ, but not in the humanity of Jesus Christ. Sin is not possible as an outcome of that human limitation of our Lord's humanity, but still there was that human limitation recorded with almost terrifying consolation.

“He began to fear and to be heavy.” Here are two words expressing the trembling that came upon the Lord's humanity. There was an almost human clinging to consolation. Now that is a principle of consolation for us. How often we cling also to human consolation. There are times when we need it. And the Lord asked for it, and was denied it by His friends, and was not denied Him by God the Father. They didn't watch. They fell asleep. No human comfort at all. As Job would have described them, “miserable comforters are ye.” With human consolation there came Divine consolation. At times it was an angel.

He said unto them, “My soul is sorrowful, even unto death. Stay you here and watch. And when He was gone further, He fell flat on the ground,” in prayer.

Few souls never soar higher, as it were, in the spiritual life, unless there is this agony in the garden. This is preparation for the cross. He is about to drink the cup that the Father is going to give Him on the cross. He wanted this hour to pass, not the cup to pass. “Thy will be done.”

There are two wills, two appetites, as it were, in man. One belonging just to the flesh, to guide the eye in its seeing, the hand in its touch, and the other will which follows not just the impression of our senses but some thought in our minds. One is emotions dictating to the soul and the other is the mentality of the soul in charge.

It may be consolation to some to know that the sensitive appetite just follows the action of the external senses, and it is not always under our control. Some part of it is not under our control. If your eye is suddenly brought to the brightness after darkness, it is then anguish and painful, even though it is light, it is normal and natural pain. If you have been in the dark for a long time and come into the light, it hurts your eyes. The light hurts your eyes.

Now that shrinking act is not under our control. If in spite of its shrinking we would open our eyes to the sun, **if in spite of our shrinking, we would hold it to the pain, the shrinking would not be a sin.** It might be the material or occasion of our highest perfection. **Heroism is not the absence of fear, but fear conquered,** pinioned, few still rioting, but impotent.

The very darkness of the night, the approach of the unknown, from the point of view of the eye, would be a pain in the sensitive side of our Lord. **The shrinking was not sin, but, in the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the very condition of our redemption.**

On the next day the Lord was scourged, and I imagine His shoulder shrank from their terrible scourging, and that was not a sin. There was pain there. When He was crowned with thorns, His head bowed for the first time, but He was not beaten, and that was not sin.

But here we see this terrible evidence of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ shrinking, yet kept firmly to its pain by His own free will. The eye has no memories. Sight has no foresight. **The mind is the terrible weapon of memory and foresight, bringing before it everything that is before**

it, everything that was ever before it, and all that lies in the days to come. "As a man thinketh in his mind, so is he."

One of the greatest proofs of our immortality is the terrible dread we have of death, of the hour so certain and so uncertain, the certainty of inevitableness, that terrible uncertainty of the day and hour. The fundamental act of our free will is to resist death. The primal act of beings destined to live immortally is to resist death so contrary to their immortality. **It is as if the soul, which lives forever, is saying no to death.**

Here, then, at the very center of our spiritual nature is a focus of pain, not from the eye, from too much or too little light, but of the mind, the free will, which can foresee the inevitable oncoming of death. There are souls with such a vivid power of foresight they die a thousand deaths, more bitter, much more bitter than the one that will end the others. **Cowards die many times. Brave men die only once.**

Our Lord's death, moreover, was to be a bargain, an offered death, not just inevitable, a death for others, all others. And here in His perfect humanity, the perfect mentality of soul was thinking of His death, the sharpest crown of thorns must have been finding reasons for His death. No natural reason was sufficient. The natural reason of our Lord was balked. **There was only a supernatural reason, coming from faith, not from reason.** How cold we are often left by reason only coming by faith. How withered seems the hope, how drab the love springing merely from our faith.

One of the most daring and profound things a believer's mind has ever ventured to think, was that when the Lord Jesus lay prostrate on the floor of the olive grove, like the olive in the olive press, "pressed" till the very blood came from Him, **the thing that pressed Him most was an irresistible human impulse to hate the human race for bringing this press to Him in the garden apart from the cross.** But then everything was leading up to His cross and included all of it.

Humanly speaking, what could Christ's reason be to make Him accept death at the hands of those by whom He was to die? What human reason was in that? Well, this is mere human folly, likewise, until we can do some great thing in the eyes of the world, reputed as folly, like folly, no human reason. We shall never have the wisdom of the garden or the cross.

This love of the Lord Jesus Christ, then, was conquered in the end, was the victory over hate. Love which conquers hate, PEACE WHICH CONQUERED PAIN, is for a model, is it not also a consolation? It was only the supernatural will of Jesus Christ, not the natural instinct or first movement, as it were, **but faith that kept the frightened steeds of His soul that night in the garden. You can begin to see what a Redeemer we have in Christ.**

Through every pang of pain, human pain, He went that night, every mental agony any soul could have. We might reverence this scene more so than we do reverence scenes that need not be revered. **This is just a preview of consolation, even before we reach the consolation of the cross.** This is consolation in the garden. **There is no easy way of doing hard things, only easier ways, and those are the ways of greater purpose, greater love and greater GRACE.**

So let us not be too downcast and hard on ourselves, when we find something in ourselves that wants to shrink. Let us now be downcast if we sometimes wonder if we love at all, if we have hope at all, or if even we have faith. Faith's most authentic cry is praying in the garden of agony. "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

If you are ill and it hurts, it is normal to cry, like sticking a pin in your finger, and you cry and wince, **but it is not failure or sin. It is mere physical pain.** Do not let us mistake shrinking and shrinking again for a purposelessness of our will. There may be a shrinking which becomes master in our souls and we become mastered. But there is a pain which may go on until the very pain of death, a darkness which never yields till the final darkness of the grave.

Faith never promises to be as radiant as reason, yet it still is radiant faith. Sovereign faith, heroic faith, heroic hope, and there is another word, heroic love, a love that suspects its own existence.

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." But faith pleases God, and "faith is that which overcomes the world." "The just must live by faith." "Faith is evidence of things not seen." We, having not seen Christ, still love Him.

In the sorrow of the **Man of Sorrows** in the garden, wanting that hour to pass, **He was expressing His love and the desire for the cross, not the garden.** When we make heroic gestures of faith, it seems so inevitable, it is like the dark act of mere reason. When we look back on the time in which we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, it appears now to be merely reason. It seems reasonable that one Man must die for all men. So we as believers might suspect and shrink. We fear, and think that it is not love, and that is not faith that shrinks. **And yet in the wisdom of God, He might see that fear and look on it as a touch of heroism.**

Many times we teach how sweet and light is the yoke of Christ, and yet we would be untrue to the Lord if **at other times He personally, Christ, did not take you with Him to this garden, you shrinking with Him,** shrinking ever more, into the dark grove of shrinking, **there to be able to see the weakness of humanity,** the so-called pillars of the Church fallen asleep, and **to see the Lord Jesus Christ prostrate, prostrate before a blow from Satan in the garden. But not prostrate at the cross, but taking blows to His face, taking the scourging of His back and shoulders.** Before the cross He bowed His head, and said, "Into Thy hands I commit My Spirit," and "It is finished."

Peter, James and John, the so-called pillars of the Church, were sleeping while the Lord was being attacked in the garden. They were sleeping while He was suffering. **Suffering is personal and we all face it alone. Christ was steadfast in His will, and these**

poor reeds of disciples thought more of sleep than they did of resting in the Lord. The pillars all have fallen asleep, but the Rock, the Head of the Church, is setting His face as a flint to the cross.

Christ came into the world for one purpose, to redeem. And in order to redeem He had to bow His head on the cross. He had to be crowned with thorns. He had to become a curse for us. For “Cursed is anyone that hangeth on a tree.”

I don't know if Christ is more an example, or if we are closer to Him as an example in the magnificent uprightness and steadfastness of the cross than in the helplessness of the olive grove, the wine press, the garden of agony, a preview, as it were, of coming attractions. **He couldn't die in the garden. He had to go to the cross for you and I.** But before He willingly went to the cross, before He willingly laid down His life for us, before He accepted the judgement of God the Father in His own body on the tree, there was this shrinking, and the cry, “Father, Father, Father.” which He prayed three times in the garden.

Three times Paul prayed that his thorn in the flesh be taken from him. But the Father said, “My GRACE is sufficient for thee.” And

Paul was satisfied keeping the thorn and having the sufficiency of God's GRACE. **In thorns we learn GRACE. Thorns represent cursing turned to blessing by GRACE.** Christ prayed three times for the Father to take the thorn of the garden from Him and the Father delivered Him by GRACE so that He could accept the crown of thorns and become a curse for us. What GRACE is that?

The garden is almost the bleating of the Lamb, heading for the cross. “All we sheep have gone astray. We have turned each one to our own ways and the Lord hath laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.” He is “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” **And He hears us bleating lambs crying out in our garden of agony and knows that GRACE is sufficient for us all.** Some of the strength that came to the Lord in His humanity gives us in our weakness, in our humanity, that the flesh is weak but the spirit is willing. And if we shrink from pain or pressure, that we can be more than conquerors because He was a **Man of Sorrow** and acquainted with griefs and He has borne the iniquities of us all.

And in our weakness we are made strong and His GRACE is sufficient even for us.

THE SUFFERING OF FORSAKEDNESS

The forsaken “Man of Sorrows...”

“At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ELOI, ELOI, LAMMA SABACTHANI? Which is being interpreted, MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

We will try to see what was in the mind of Christ on the cross when these words were spoken. It is almost too much for many of us to stand. Some souls are given such anguish, personal anguish, which is not given to any other to bear. **God fits the burden to the back. He can't put more on you than you can handle.** He fits the burden to the back. There are some things that the mind cannot endure. Here is some so-called awful dereliction which preceded the giving up the spirit and the lowering of the head of Christ.

Our passage is a quote from Psalm 22:1, and the Lord is using here an Old Testament song, of the Jewish people. He was like the Babylonian child that was to be dashed against the rock for the salvation of Babylon and Judea and the world. He goes back to those God-directed sons which have become the song book of the world.

When the Lord Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry, and the devil tempted Him out in the desert, Jesus Christ quoted Deuteronomy. **Now, as if the Bible had been ever in His memory and mind, He falls back on it again.** Like with Satan in the wilderness, He says, “It is written, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Now is the fulfillment of that Old Testament passage. **He begins and ends His ministry depending upon the Word of God. How often in the agony of death, the mind that is rapidly being unmoored from all consciousness clings to some remembered fragment of the Word of God.**

Here, in that awful dereliction, the human mind of the Lord, in its human workings, just

fell back on a Psalm, the twenty-second one. “My God, My God,” look at Me, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” “But I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men and despised of the people. All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips, they wagged the head, He hoped in the Lord: let Him save Him, seeing He delighted in Him. But thou art He that hast drawn Me out of the womb. My hope from the breasts of My mother, from My mother's womb Thou art My God. Depart not from Me. For tribulation is very near. FOR THERE IS NONE TO HELP ME.”

One of the ways in which to meditate on the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ is to read this Psalm. The psalmist almost deserves the title of evangelist. This has almost the realm of an eye-witness, foretelling sufferings that were to be after centuries.

“Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” As if everything on which the mind can rest had been taken away, or had at least failed. There is an ultimate relationship with God into which no creature can enter. Friendship takes a great part in every life, **but there is a moment when our friend has to stand still, and we move on into the gloom alone. There are crossways of life, and death, when the closest friends must part, when the soul is alone. Alone, with the Lord.** If we reach some crossway and He is gone from our side before we missed Him, think of the anguish, like a child who suddenly discovers it has lost its mother in a great crowd, or a great solitude. **Think of the instant anguish of the child. Its playthings are all put aside. Nothing is of any consequence. It has lost the one that gave it existence, self-confidence, it is lost. Alone and lost.**

I wonder if the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity took upon Himself something of the pain of loss, pain that seems to say, “all my work is lost, to no purpose.” Even from His

high outlook what could He see? He could hardly count the presence of Mary, and the two Mary's, and one apostle as much of a victory after all the condescension of the incarnation? It seemed like defeat, and we cannot fathom the depth of the thought that would be in His mind as He brooded over what would come to His knowledge through eye and ear.

"My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He meant it. That Psalm was written for that cry, to be the hymn of the incarnate Son. He was given the words to cry, from the Word of God. In other words, when you go to the cross, the Father said, This is what You say, "My God," God the Father, "My God," God the Holy Spirit, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?""

Think of the terrible anguish in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you and I can feel mental suffering, if only we feel that God is with us. But if we thought God was not with us, heedless to say, I suppose our limbs would fail us and we would ask the mountains to fall upon us. Far better than understanding this expression, it is always better to suffer with the Lord. It is better to be on the cross than looking at it. **It is much easier sometimes to suffer than to watch someone suffering and you can't help them. It makes you feel hopeless and helpless.**

When we see suffering of any kind we feel sort of a reverence, as if we see the fellowship of Christ's suffering. **Some people have the privilege of suffering and do not recognize the privilege. When you see mental and physical suffering together, it makes you feel a reverence for that person.** It almost makes you bow your head. You know that somehow God is near in that very room. Whenever there is any cross, there is the crucifixion. **He may be hidden, but He is there.**

The Father forsook Him and the Holy Spirit forsook Him, but still God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were proud of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is some quality of God towards our suffering that is not joy. Is it pain? Was the Father heedless of the cry of His Son? The Father was

hidden, but He was there, omnipresent. Was God the Father unlike the prodigal's father who suffered in the sufferings of his son?

If there is any mystery, and if all of life is mysterious, what is more mysterious than its sufferings? Suffering utters the cry of entire loneliness. "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" My Father, I cry. I cry, and My cry does not seem to come unto Thee.

What we need here is a GRACE understanding. And perhaps the GRACE for the standing, the GRACE to understand the drinking from the cup, that He drank from, from brim to dregs. What a fellowship it would be if we could really suffer for Christ. **But we can't. It must be for ourselves, because we are sinful.**

But we might suffer with Him, and if only through suffering with Him we could understand that He suffered, **is there therefore any better classroom or any better school room of life?** To know the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His suffering.

Some of us have been very far afield in other ways of knowledge, but what value is it if we do not know Him, Christ, and the power of His sufferings? And if we ourselves have not suffered, what do we know? We are worms also, and no men, and we alone deserve to suffer. I alone shrink from suffering.

"We sang with You, with joy, the Hosanna's, and wished to make Thee King, and then in Your hour of suffering, we are far from Thee. We looked upon Your cross as scandal and Your pain as waste. **We must learn the power of Your suffering, and to be able to bring that power into our life, every moment of our lives,** so that we may pass through suffering and Earth into everlasting life."

"My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" **Christ was forsaken by everyone, including the Father and the Holy Spirit,** because "He became sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." **He had to bare our sins alone in His own body on the**

cross, therefore sin is no longer the issue but the Son is, the sin Bearer. And much more than that when He was forsaken, He took on all of our forsakedness, and we will never be ever forsaken. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," because I was forsaken for you. **He took our place on the cross, and our forsakedness.** He suffered, we suffer. **But we will have Him with us always, and the Father and the Holy Spirit.** And when God the Holy Spirit controls our lives when we suffer, then we produce the character of Jesus Christ in suffering. And we share in and know the power of suffering. "After that the Holy Spirit shall come upon you and you shall receive power."

When Christ was about to leave this Earth to go back to be with God the Father from whence He came, He gave us all a promise, "And I will pray the Father AND HE SHALL GIVE YOU ANOTHER COMFORTER, THAT HE MAY ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER." Another GRACE gift from God.

"Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him, BUT YE KNOW HIM, FOR HE DWELLETH WITH YOU, AND SHALL BE IN YOU." The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit in salvation.

"I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU COMFORTLESS. I WILL COME TO YOU." I will never leave you orphaned.

"YET A LITTLE WHILE, AND THE WORLD SEEMETH NO MORE, BUT YE SEE ME, BECAUSE I LIVE, YE SHALL LIVE ALSO."

Proof of His coming again for us is at the Rapture of the Church. Proof of us never ever being orphans or forsaken ever, simply because of "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

SIMPLY BECAUSE OF YOU. YOU ARE THE JOY THAT IS SET BEFORE HIM.

STANDING AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS OF SUFFERING

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleopahs, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother, WOMAN BEHOLD THY SON. After that, He saith to the disciple, BEHOLD THY MOTHER," John 19:25-27.

It is almost a crucifixion to speak about the crucifixion. We have in our study counted His bones, as it were, and laid our hands like Thomas, on His wounds, and we find in them new incentives to love Him. Love can be trusted to make its own resolutions. Love will soon build its nest, as it were, of resolutions. I leave that to you personally and privately in your love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And if in any way He can come closer, nearer to you, and you nearer to Him, you have spent this hour being enriched in His matchless GRACE.

We may close, **PEACE IN PAIN**, by standing at this last scene, in company with His mother, and two other Marys. Each one of them sinners, each one of them coming short of the glory of God, which is a comfort to all of us. We see Jesus Christ, the dutiful Son of His father, and always the most dutiful, the loving Son of His mother. Family relationships, which are a part of God's Divine Institutions, along with free will, marriage, and a national entity.

Here is Jesus Christ dying, and His death and resurrection is the redemption of the whole world. **The whole world is on His mind, and, as it were, breaking His heart.** This is the redemption of the world. And yet, in this scene we have before us, we see that **God can deal with the whole world in such a way that He does not overlook anyone in it. Christ died for the sins of the whole world, unlimited atonement.**

That is not so with the world system. **The greater the empire, the more careless of**

individuals it is. In a great war millions can be slain and the world goes on as usual. It is entirely otherwise with the Lord. **Here, while He is redeeming the whole world, all ages past and all ages to come, individuals were in His thoughts, Mary and His disciple.**

Salvation is a personal thing. It is an individual issue. It is private and personal. God deals with the individual soul. The world system deals with the masses. He had you personally in mind when He went to the cross. He died for you.

Because she was His mother, we don't know if she added to or took from His sorrow. She probably added to His sorrows because she didn't know He was about His Father's business. She never understood Him. She probably didn't know if it would do Him more harm to stay there and watch and whether or not to leave so that He couldn't see her. But she stayed. She just stood, as if hardly knowing what to do.

He, like a dutiful and loving Son that He was, almost forgot His own suffering in hers. How tender and gracious is Christ's thinking in His sufferings, remembering the one He probably loved most in creation. In the hour of suffering, even souls that are almost perfect concentrate on themselves. **But our Lord in His unique suffering, turned outwards toward others. He was always thinking of others up to and including the cross.** In His sufferings He was remembering others, as some perfect soul trying to lessen others' grief when they themselves are bowed down with it.

Here is a death bed scene, as it were. They are coming to Jesus Christ who is suffering ultimately. He is thinking about them and not about His suffering. He is thinking of His mother, and of John and of all of us. **And He is leaving us the most precious thing He had. He is leaving us His Word.**

"Who is My mother and My brother and My sister, but he that doeth the Word of God." "The Word of God," like Peter said, "is more reliable than anything in this world."

He knew He was going to be with the Father. **He knew that there would be no longer any suffering, any pain, any tears, and any more death.** He knew His walk by faith was over, but He knew that we still walk by faith. **And so His epitaph is the Word to walk by faith with.** If He sorrowed when He went to heaven, which He could not do, He would have sorrowed over His mother and John and us, like as when we lose some loved one who has gone home. He was going home, and they were still here.

Now He has given us, His creatures, the sun. And that is His making and our boon. It is our sun because He has given us something far more precious, His own mind, His own words, the Truth. The Word which He magnified above His own Name.

He calls her "Mother," GUNE, and "John," "behold thy son." And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this Jesus knowing that all things were done, accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled saith, "I thirst." **The thirst of pain.** There comes a great thirst which oceans cannot quench.

The incarnate Son of God gave up something as precious as His own life when He gave us His Word. The agony was so great, that possibly beads of sweat did not stand on His brow, but He just said, "I thirst." **Humanity thirsts, Deity never thirsts. Nothing could quench that thirst.** That is the thirst of salvation. The vinegar they gave Him only increased His thirst.

And the He said, "It is finished," perfect. It is now completed perfectly. **Finished in the past with a result that it goes on forever.** What a great thing it is when any great human endeavor is completed. A painting, a poem, a song. It can only be said of some little things, long-drawn in their preparation.

Now this is God's perfect completed work. Perfect completed redemption. Per-

fect love. Perfect GRACE. Perfect self-sacrifice.

His perfection on the cross could give perfection and completeness to everything else, if only it could be accepted by mankind. We are told when we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour we are perfect, complete in Him.

How wonderful it is when we see a being perfect in one sphere or action or another, a perfect limb, or eye, or ear, or mind. **But this is the perfection of the whole being.** Now for the moment we only see it as perfect suffering. He has suffered. That is perfect.

There is some suffering inflicted from outside, by human hands, sufficient to make you and I bow our heads in shame, **but there is more suffering still from the inside. It is a refinement of His wisdom that this thing is not self-slaughter, but self-sacrifice.**

All is now perfect in His life. The little baby stabled in such poverty has now grown into this perfection. The Lamb subject at Nazareth has now grown to perfection. The head bowed in subjection to His Father is now bowed on the cross. The little bare feet that ran over the rocks of Nazareth are fair and perfect in death. The hands of the joiner are stretched out to mend the world in ruins. All is perfect. **The first call from the cross is just to adore this perfection.**

We adore Thee, O Christ, and bless Thee,

Because by Thy holy cross, Thou hast redeemed the world.

Perfect is such a Divine monopoly, all we can do towards it is to adore it.

The first things we beings must do, being imperfect, we must adore it.

"Truly this is the Son of God."

Then we pray that we might be given thirst also for perfection. A thirst that will be lifelong.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be

satisfied," Matthew 5:6. **This is thirst for the Word to grow by.**

As long as our life lasts on this Earth, our quest for maturity, perfection, must be continued. We must not dread to thirst. We must rather dread the lack of thirst. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I give shall never thirst. but the water that I give shall be in him a well of water. springing up into everlasting life."

In this round of life in which we find ourselves, we find that it is not compatible with perfection, then the round of our lives is not compatible with us. **So in order to reach maturity, or perfection, or completion, we must suffer. There is a certain kind of bodily suffering in realizing our indifference, and a kind of death in our want of realization, our want of the Word.**

We hardly know sometimes whether or not we love the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us at least accept the pain and the suffering of that and use it for the perfection of the soul. **If we keep the thought of the Lord's sufferings before our mind, we might bring consolation to many other believers, instead of increasing the sorrow of the world.** We should almost spread consolation wherever we go, if we bare in our body, as Paul, the marks of Christ. Imagine the consolation that streams from the wounds of the Crucified. We then would not be given anything of ourselves, but all of His consolation.

Don't you think the world needs consoling? What better offering can we give this world more than the consolation of Christ, the wounds of Christ, the wounded mind of Christ?

God does prune. That is such a consolation to us, because if we just did our own pruning, I wouldn't be surprised if there would be more suicides. Self-mortification is such a delicate thing. It can hardly be trusted in human hands, let alone our own. **We have to seek guidance from our Head, the Lord. The pruning of God is far more effective than any self-pruning.**

When you see someone dying, you can say, "There is God's pruning." **God loves to**

see the vine fruiting. Maybe the soul in illness is so distressed it cannot possibly involve itself in self-mortification. It is no longer possible, there is no strength. No mortification can be compared with the mortification that God sends. But when it is accepted, how that soul will soar. We can almost see the wheat growing up after the shower. There was a great drought in the life, then there came some rain, and how the heads grew. **Sometimes it is God's drought in the soul, His showers always come at the right time, the very drought has prepared the soul for the expected storm.**

In our life as believers there is always the element of the Lord's pruning, His own doing, His own knife, not for the sake of making havoc of the soul, but all for the sake of fruiting. He wants our souls to grow, and He said, "that you may bring forth much fruit," not "more," but MUCH fruit. MUCH. MUCH. He goes beyond "more" to MUCH MORE. If it is more, it may still be very little, but if we only let Him have His way, with His own pruning knife, it is not more, but "much fruit," that our soul will bring forth. **And He will strengthen the sap of our soul to prevent it breaking from too much fruit.**

"I am the vine and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit. He taketh away. and every branch that beareth fruit. He purgeth it. that it may bring forth more fruit. I am the Vine. ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me and I in him. the same bringeth forth MUCH FRUIT. for without Me you can do nothing." "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear MUCH FRUIT. so shall ye be My disciples."

PEACE IN PAIN... for production...
PEACE, PAIN, PRODUCTION.

I suppose it is right for the world to be in tears. It is in tatters anyway. **Worse than having tears, or too many tears, are those that have no tears at all.** Sometimes when we offer the unbelievers that suffer consolation, they refuse it. **Yet, God in all His doings are gracious doings. They are most of the time astonished by His generosity.**

His is most bounteous. The niggardliness is on our side, not on His.

When you look back over your past life span, a long stretch to look over and eternity to look forward to, you see days when you were inclined to think that God was hard, and not understanding, and almost cruel. But in the mere passing of years, there is vision, and in all that, you see not just the hand of God, but the love and the GRACE of God.

If there is any weakening it is because of our past wearinesses, not for anything that God has done. Nothing that He has given us brings tears, but all that we have withheld. How awful it is when the soul is so angry with God, like a poor, feverish child, that struggles in the arms of the mother who wishes to comfort it. **The poor human heart is suspicious of God that it almost refused to believe the Good News of His love.**

If we accept Jesus Christ as God, with all His consequences, and love Him, then we will love everything that He loves. Prayer will become the endeavor to make God's will ours, not to make our will His. There is a covenant between us. **He has signed everything in His blood on the cross.**

A life accepting all that God sends would never be anything less than a song, even though it had its moments of weeping. Those of us who have been amongst the harrowed souls, souls harrowed by suffering, have found all the world's songs, however sweet, almost insipid compared with the songs of those who have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity.

If we could put the Lord first in our soul and make Him our everything, most of our sorrow would be turned to joy.

Even death would be robbed of its sting, and would become the gateway to home where we will have an everlasting song, the song of God's love.

No night is dark when Christ is near.

No storm can engulf us when you hear.

No way is lonely, not even the way of death,

Because You are the Way, the Truth, and not the death, but the Life.

Some souls are shaped for pain. I have seen some. They seem extra perfect. When pain comes, it gives them pain, they feel it. **Their very self-control does not lessen the pain. It lessens the shrinking of the pain. Persons who are self-controlled can suffer most. Self-control holds their breast against the thorns. It does not allow them to be distracted from any throb of pain.**

A smile has often been called the sunshine of the face, but a smile in grief and intense pain is unforgettable. **It is given unto us to believe in Christ, and to suffer for Him.** We accept Him. Can we accept the suffering and have **PEACE IN PAIN?**

In this world we have trouble, but the Lord has overcome the world. Our faith in suffering is that which overcomes the world.

Buddy Dano, Pastor

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