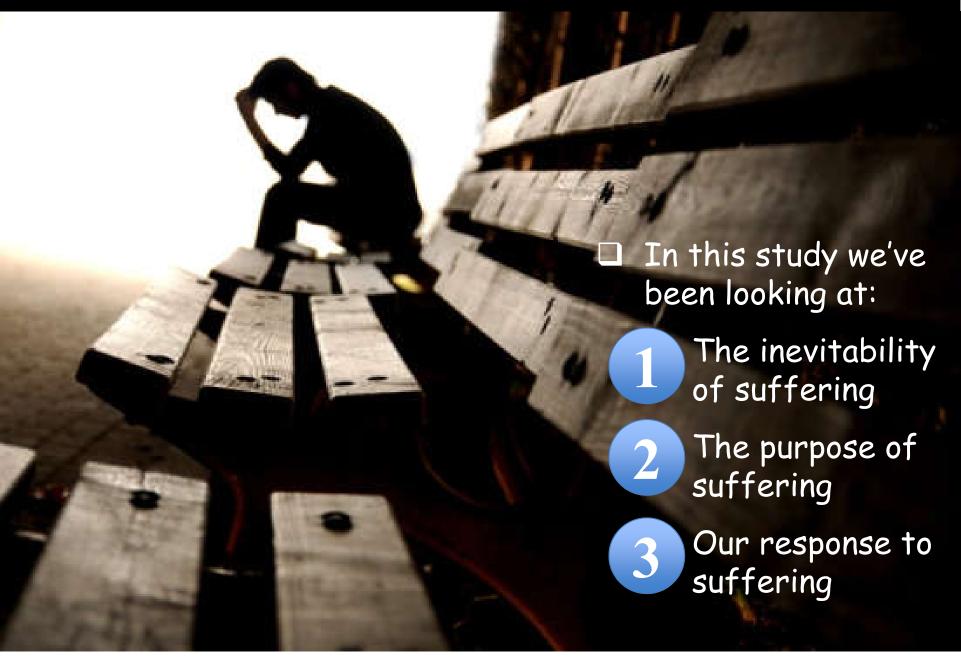
SUFFERING



RECAP

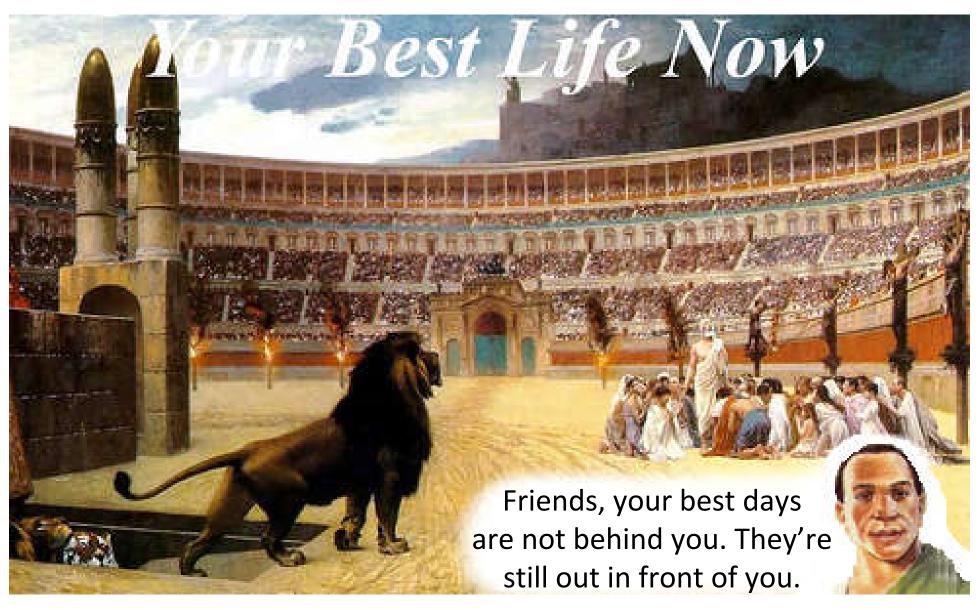
Christianity sees suffering as inevitable, but as serving a divine purpose.

- 1) Firstly suffering is used by God as a form of discipline.
- 2) Sometimes suffering enables us to be used as a vessel for God's glory.
- 3) God speaks to us through suffering.
- 4) Suffering may be a test of our integrity.
- 5) Trials refine our faith.
- 6) God uses suffering to develop our character.

PURPOSE OF SUFFERING

- ☐ We then examined some more purposes of suffering.
 - 1) Suffering crucifies the flesh and focuses us on the truly important things.
 - 2) Suffering teaches us to rely on God, not on self.
 - 3) In our weakness, we discover that God is strong.
 - 4) Deepens our relationship with Jesus.
 - 5) It is often a means of achieving God's greater purposes.
 - 6) We learn obedience when suffering.

Imagine the modern prosperity message going to the 2nd to 3rd century Church?



... and to the martyrs who died to give us the Bible in our own language?



Choose to start your day by declaring what God says about you. Declare, "I am blessed. I am prosperous. I am healthy and strong."

... or to our modern-day martyrs?

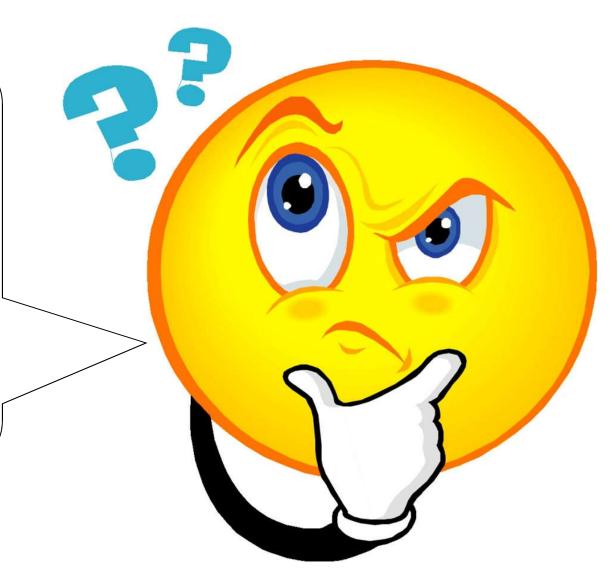


Friend, when you start speaking like that, all of heaven takes notice... Blessings are set in motion. Before you know it, you are living the good life He promised and moving forward into the destiny of blessing He has in store for you!

SUFFERING

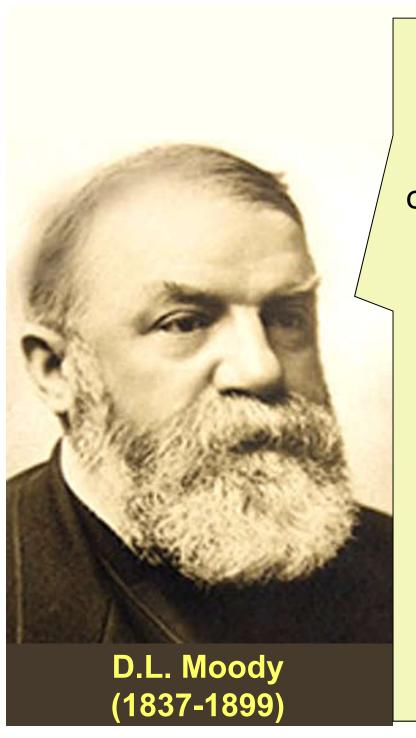
Then ask yourself:

If it wasn't true for them, why would it be true for me?





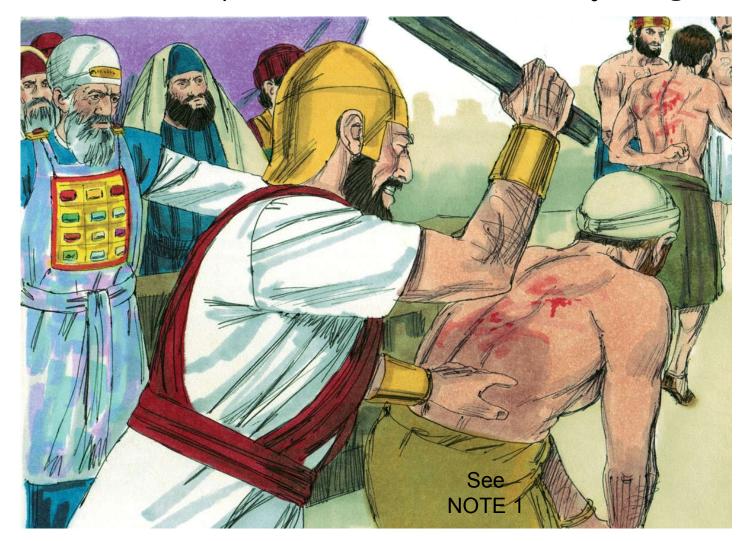
- ☐ What is our response to suffering?
- 1. Joy
- Paul writes that "we also rejoice in our sufferings" (Rom 5:3-4) and "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church." (Col 1:24) He tells the Thessalonians, "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit." (1 Thess 1:6)
- ☐ Tertullian (2nd century) said regarding the persecutors of the Christians, "The pleasure of those who injure you lies in your pain. Therefore they will suffer if you take away their pleasure by not feeling pain."



I think there is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is caused by things which happen around me, and circumstances will mar it, but joy flows right on through trouble; joy flows on through the dark; joy flows in the night as well as in the day; joy flows all through persecution and opposition; it flows right along, for it is an unceasing fountain bubbling up in the heart; a secret spring which the world can't see and don't know anything about; but the Lord gives His people perpetual joy when they walk in obedience to Him.

☐ When the apostles were flogged and ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus, they "left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing

because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." (Acts 5: 40-41)



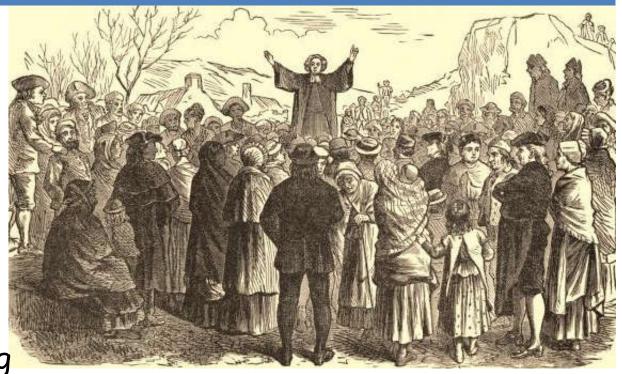
☐ Not all who attended George Whitefield's outdoor meetings were fans, as evidenced by his testimony about preaching at Moorfields outside London:

I was honoured with having stones, dirt, rotten eggs and pieces of dead cats thrown at me. ¹



¹ http://www.believersweb.org

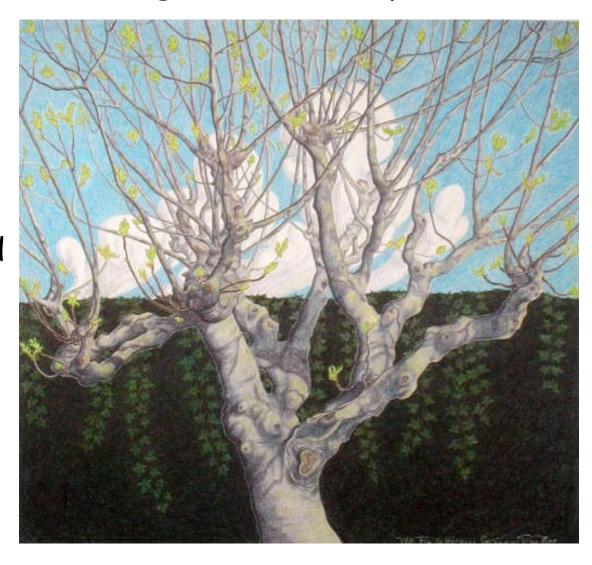
One Sunday
afternoon in 1756,
while preaching
on a green near
Dublin, stones and
dirt were hurled
at Whitefield.
Afterwards a mob
gathered, intending



to take his life. Those attending to him fled, and he was left to walk nearly a half a mile alone, while rioters showered him with stones until he was covered with blood. He staggered to the door of a minister living close by. He later said that in Ireland he had been elevated to the rank of an Apostle by having had the honour of being stoned.

☐ Hab 3:17-19 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and

the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.



- Jesus said "Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven." (Luke 6:22-23)
- ☐ Is there not something captivating in the sight of a man or a woman burdened with many tribulations and yet carrying a heart as sound as a bell? Is there not something contagiously valorous in the vision of one who is greatly tempted, but is more than conqueror? Is it not heartening to see some pilgrim who is broken in body, but who retains the splendour of an unbroken patience? What a witness all this offers to the enduement of His grace! Dr. John Henry J. H. Jowett (Biography)

□ Suffering is inevitable - misery is a choice.

James 1:2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds...

Heb 10:34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

➤ 1 Pet 4:13-16 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed... if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

RESPONSE: PRAISE

2. Praise

☐ Matt Redman and his wife, Beth both had difficult childhoods, but came to realize that worshiping God is a choice to be made especially in the face of difficulty. They were



in the US during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and in the

aftermath of that tragedy they wrote "Blessed Be Your Name" in 2001 as a song of praise in the midst of suffering. They wanted to encourage the church to respond appropriately to God in the dark times of life. ¹

¹ http://cuyahogavalleychurch.blogspot.com

RESPONSE: PRAISE

Blessed be your name in the land that is plentiful Where your streams of abundance flow, Blessed be your name And blessed be your name when I'm found in the desert place Though I walk through the wilderness, Blessed be your name

Every blessing you pour out I'll turn back to praise
And when the darkness closes in, Lord still I will say
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be your glorious name

Blessed be your name when the sun's shining down on me When the world's all as it should be, Blessed be your name And blessed be your name on the road marked with suffering Though there's pain in the offering, Blessed be your name

You give and take away, You give and take away My heart will choose to say, Lord, blessed be your name

RESPONSE: COURAGE

3. Courage

☐ When Kayla Mueller from Prescott, Arizona, went to Jordan as a humanitarian worker, she didn't expect that her faith would be tried to the limit by an ordeal of capture by ISIS. Her fellow hostages say she never surrendered hope and selflessly put the welfare of fellow captives above her own. She sheltered two other Yazidi girls used as sex slaves from additional harm and when a chance for escape came she stayed, telling them that her being American would endanger them. Shortly afterwards, 26-year old Kayla was killed. She had written in a letter, "I have surrendered myself to our creator b/c literally there was no else....+ by God + by your prayers I have felt tenderly cradled in freefall." 1

¹http://www.sharefaith.com, http://www.dailymail.co.uk, http://www.dailymail.co.uk

RESPONSE: COURAGE

☐ For most of her ordeal, Kayla was kept in isolation, beaten, verbally abused, physically tortured or raped on an almost daily basis. But she stood up to defend her Christian faith. Former hostage Daniel Rye Ottosen, a Danish freelance photographer, related how Kayla had turned the tables on her captors. When they paraded her in front of the other prisoners who were told that she had converted to Islam, Kayla interjected, "No, I didn't". 1



RESPONSE: TRUST

- 4. Trust
- Do you see difficulties in every opportunity or opportunities in every difficulty?
 - Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
- □ "God did not create suffering, evil and death. Even though suffering is never good, God can and does use it to accomplish good." Lee Strobel
- □ "I believe in the sun even if it isn't shining. I believe in love even when I am alone. I believe in God even when He is silent." written on a wall in a concentration camp

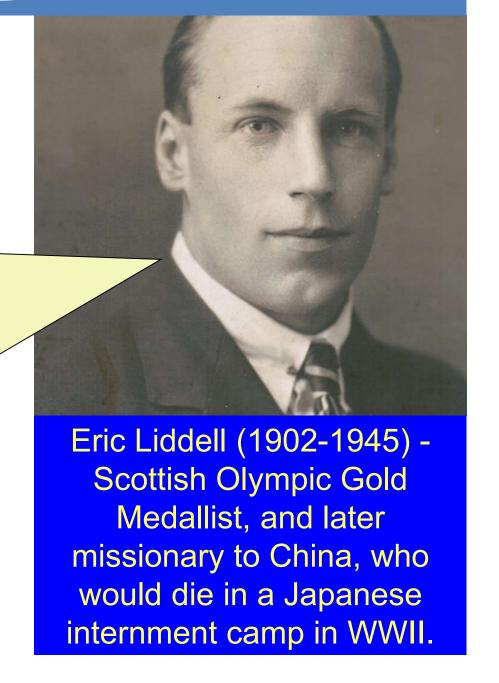
RESPONSE: TRUST

- Why was Paul recaptured after being set free? Surely the Church had need of him? I often wonder so little is said of what must have been so terribly disappointing and perplexing. But all our problems are open to Him and all will fit into His plan. In the end we shall see that what seems so hindering does not hinder but helps. "Candle in the Dark" by Amy Carmichael
- We say, then, to anyone who is under trial, give Him time to steep the soul in His eternal truth. Go into the open air, look up into the depths of the sky, or out upon the wideness of the sea, or on the strength of the hills that is His also; or, if bound in the body, go forth in the spirit; spirit is not bound. Give Him time and, as surely as dawn follows night, there will break upon the heart a sense of certainty that cannot be shaken.

RESPONSE: TRUST

☐ Sometimes the door of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition.

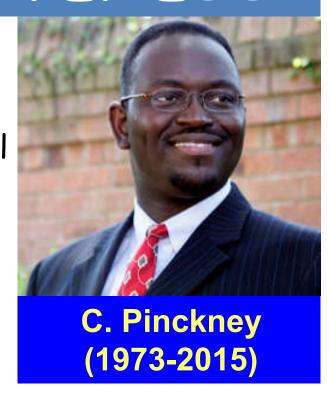
Circumstances may appear to wreck our lives and God's plans, but God is not helpless among the ruins. Our broken lives are not lost or useless. God's love is still working. He comes in and takes the calamity and uses it victoriously, working out His wonderful plan of love.



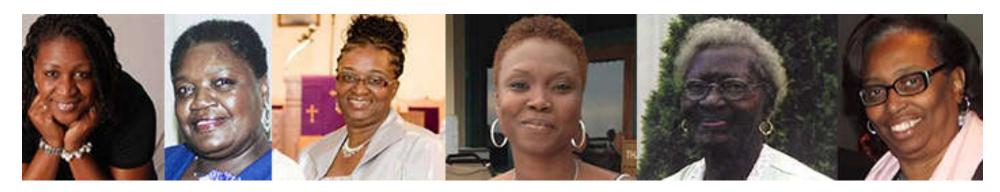
RESPONSE: FORGIVENESS

5. Forgiveness

On 17 June 2015 the Bible study group in Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina was happy to invite in Dylann Roof into their group. Their white supremacist guest would later return to kill 9 congregants, including these 6 women and the senior pastor, Clementa C.

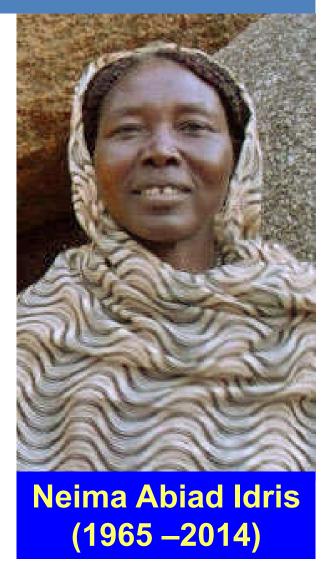


Pinckney. While others might hate the killer, the reaction of the church members was to extend forgiveness.



RESPONSE: FORGIVENESS

☐ Known as the Peace Singer in her Sudanese village of Kadir, in the Nuba Mountains, Neima wrote songs, leading a choir of ladies singing songs in her native Koliib, that expressed peace and forgiveness, faith and perseverance. She didn't run away even though genocidal terror was targeting her and her family in the warzone that she called home. Even though it would be easier to flee to a garrison city, she sought reconciliation with the Islamic warring factions by demonstrating a Christian witness of her word and witness. She died from a bomb that hit her home. 1



¹ http://www.sharefaith.com/blog/2016/01/20-christian-woman-died-martyrs/

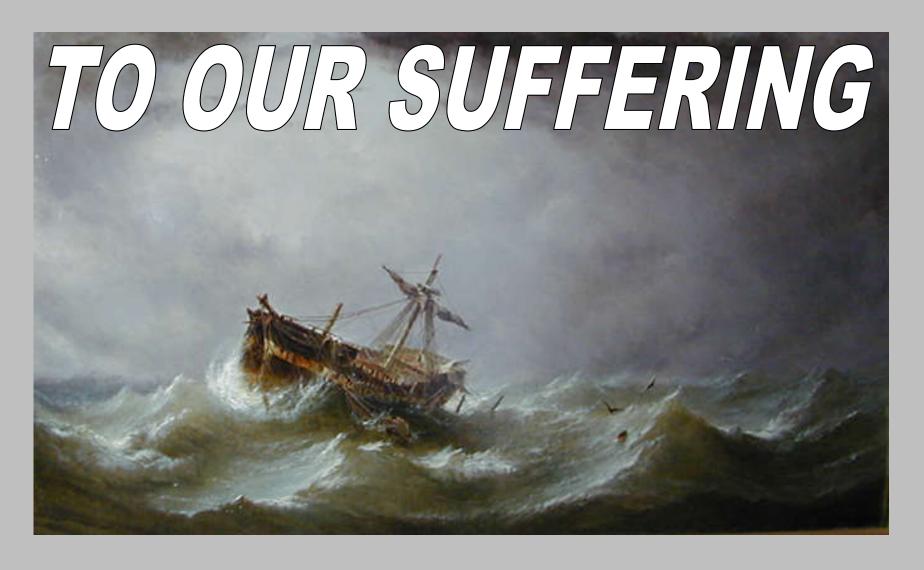
RESPONSE: VICTORY

- 6. Victory
- □ Here are 2 verses often quoted out of context by the "health and wealth" proponents to show that we should all be prosperous and company CEOs:
- a) Phil 4:11-13 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
 - > The doing 'all things' or 'everything' that Paul refers to is being "content whatever the circumstances" including hunger, need and want.

RESPONSE: VICTORY

- b) Rom 8:35-37 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
 - > i.e. we are more than conquerors even though we face trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and death.

GODS RESPONSE

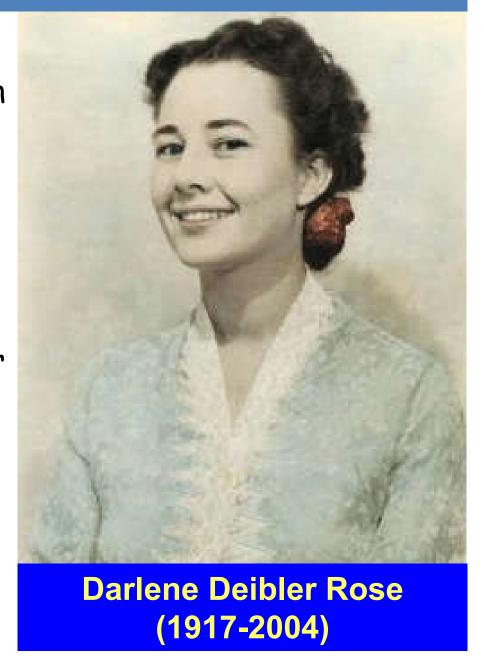


PEACE

- ☐ What is God's response to our suffering?
- 1. Jesus promised peace in the midst of trouble:
 - > "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)
 - Sometimes I am amazed to see how little it takes to drive all peace and comfort from some people. Some slandering tongue will readily blast it. But if we have the peace of God, the world can not take that from us." D.L. Moody

- 2. God has promised to comfort us in our suffering.
 - 2 Cor 1:3-6 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

□ Darlene Deibler, a missionary on the island of Celebes when WWII broke out, was put in a Japanese labour camp. Being American, she was taken by the Kempeitai (secret police) and accused of being a spy and sentenced to beheading. Right after her sentencing when she was at a very low point. While looking out her window into the prison courtyard she noticed a fellow inmate managing to take a bunch of bananas through the fence.



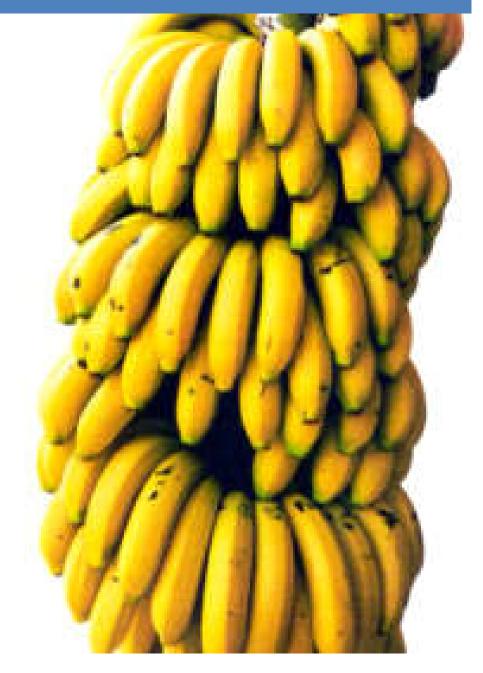
- □ Darlene was suddenly consumed and wrote:
 - Exhausted from my efforts, I shook all over. Worse still, I began to crave bananas. Everything in me wanted one. I could see them; I could smell them; I could taste them. I got down on my knees and said, "Lord, I'm not asking You for a whole bunch like that woman has. I just want one banana." I looked up and pleaded, "Lord, just ONE banana."
- For months she had only eaten a cup of rice a day which was filled with worms. But although she had witnessed miracles before and been healed, she began to reason that God could not possibly get a banana to her in prison.

- > "There was more chance of the moon falling out of the sky than of one of them bringing me a banana....I bowed my head again and prayed, "Lord, there's no one here who could get a banana to me. There's no way for You to do it. Please don't think I'm not thankful for the rice porridge. It's just that—well, those bananas looked so delicious!"
- ☐ The next morning, she was visited by Mr. Yamaji, the Kampili camp director where she had been before.
 - "When Mr. Yamaji and the Kempetai officers had gone and the guard had closed the door, it hit me—I didn't bow to those men! "Oh Lord," I cried, "why didn't You help me remember? They'll come back and beat me. Lord, please, not back to the hearing room again. Not now, Lord. I can't; I just can't."

> "I heard the guard coming back and knew he was coming for me. Struggling to my feet, I stood ready to go. He opened the door, walked in, and with a sweeping gesture laid at my feet bananas! "They're yours," he said, "and they're all from Mr. Yamaji." I sat down in stunned silence and counted

them. There were 92

bananas."



In all my spiritual experience, I've never known such shame before the Lord. I pushed the bananas into a corner and wept before Him. "Lord, forgive me; I'm so ashamed. I couldn't trust You enough to get even one banana for me. Just look at them—there are almost a hundred.

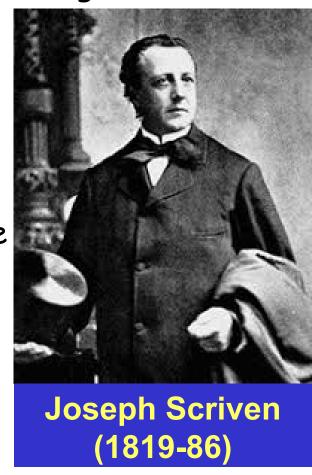
In the quiet of the shadowed cell, He answered back within my heart: "That's what I delight to do, the exceeding abundant above anything you ask or think."

I knew in those moments that nothing is impossible to my God."

☐ Born in Ireland, 25-year old Joseph Scriven migrated to Canada after his fiancée drowned the night before their wedding. He then got engaged to Eliza Roche but tragedy struck again when shortly before the marriage she became

ill and died. His association with the Plymouth Brethren also estranged him from his family. His last years were plagued by ill health, meagre finances and depression.

□ But his own misfortune seemed to make him more sensitive to the suffering of others. He comforted the poor and distressed, gave or lent to anyone who asked and sawed wood for the stoves of the physically handicapped.



COMFORT

Upon learning of his mother's serious illness and unable to be with her in far-off Dublin, he wrote her a letter enclosing his own poem which spoke of God's comfort in our time of suffering (later set to music by Ira Sankey).

"What a Friend we have in Jesus - All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care? Precious Saviour, still our refuge; Take it to the Lord in prayer. Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer! In his arms he'll take and shield thee; Thou wilt find a solace there.

- 3. God will give strength to endure
 - ➤ 1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.
- When we hear of Christians facing intense persecution and martyrdom in various parts of the world we sometimes wonder how they can endure it. We may wonder whether or not we would stand strong in our faith if subjected to such horrific treatment. Corrie ten Boom was once ministering in a small African country where a new government had come to power. Just that week the new regime had begun to systematically put Christians to death.

☐ As the people gathered at the little church where she was to speak that Sunday, fear and tension was written on every face. Corrie first read 1 Peter 4:12-14 (Phillips Translation):

"And now, dear friends of mine, I beg you not to be unduly alarmed at the fiery ordeals which come to test your faith, as though this were some abnormal experience. You should be glad, because it means you are called to share Christ's sufferings. One day, when He shows Himself in full splendour to men, you will be filled with the most tremendous joy. \rightarrow



← If you are reproached for being Christ's followers, that is a great privilege, for you can be sure that God's

Spirit of glory is resting upon you."
Closing her Bible, Corrie proceeded
to relate a conversation that took
place between she and her father
when she was a little girl. "Daddy,"
she had said one day, "I am afraid
that I will never be strong enough
to be a martyr for Jesus Christ."

"Tell me," her father wisely responded, "when you take a train trip from Haarlem to Amsterdam, when do I give you the money for the ticket? Three weeks before?"

← "No, Daddy, you give me the money for the ticket just before we get on the train."

"That is right," he replied, "and so

it is with God's strength. Our wise Father in heaven knows when you are going to need things too. Today you do not need the strength to be a

martyr. But as soon as you are called upon for the honour of facing death for Jesus, He will supply the strength you need—just in time."



← "I took great comfort in my father's advice," Corrie told her audience. "Later I had to suffer for Jesus in a [Nazi] concentration camp. He indeed gave me all the courage and power I needed." "Tell us more, Tante Corrie," one grizzled old member of the congregation spoke up. All were listening intently, seeking to store up truth that would

strengthen them for the day of trial. So she shared an incident that had taken place at Ravensbruck. \rightarrow



Women's barracks in a German Concentration
Camp

← A group of fellow prisoners had approached her, asking her to tell them some Bible stories. The camp guards called the Bible das Lugenbuch—the book of lies. Death by cruel punishment had been promised for any prisoner who was found possessing a Bible or talking about the Lord. Despite her awareness of those potential consequences, Corrie retrieved her Bible and started teaching from the Scripture.

Suddenly she was aware of a figure behind her. One of the prisoners silently mouthed the words, "Hide your Bible. It's Lony." Corrie knew Lony well. She was among the cruellest of all the women guards. Corrie, however, felt she had to obey God who had so clearly guided her to bring a Bible message to the prisoners that morning. Lony remained motionless behind her as she finished her teaching. >

← Corrie then said, "Let's now sing a hymn of praise." She could see the worried, anxious looks on the faces of the prisoners. Before it had been only her speaking but now they, too, were being asked to join her in singing. But Corrie believed God wanted them to be bold, even in the face of the enemy. So they sang.

When the hymn came to an end, Lony instructed, "Another song like that one." She had enjoyed the singing and wanted to hear more. Heartened, the prisoners sang song after song. Afterwards Corrie even went to Lony and spoke to her about her need for Christ as her Saviour. >

← "Let me tell you what I learned from that experience," she now told her African audience. "I knew that every word I said could mean death. Yet never before had I felt such peace and joy in my heart as while I was giving the Bible message in the presence of mine enemy. God gave me the grace and power I needed—the money for the train ticket arrived just the moment I was to step on the train."

When the meeting came to a close the nationals stood to leave. The fear and anxiety was gone from their faces. Once again joy shown on their countenances and their hearts seemed filled with peace. \rightarrow

← Softly in the back of the room someone began singing an old gospel song:

There's a land that is fairer than day, And by faith we can see it afar. For the Father waits over the way, To prepare us a dwelling place there. In the sweet by and by, we shall meet on that beautiful shore

Corrie was later told that more than half the Christians who attended that service subsequently met a martyr's death. 1

¹Receiving God's Strength When Persecuted - Corrie Ten Boom - by Vance Christie

4. We are spiritually blessed

- Matt 5:11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
- > 1 Pet 3:14 ... if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.
- > 1 Pet 4:14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.
- ➤ James 5:10-11 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered.

RESTORATION

- 5. God has promised restoration
 - Paul tells Timothy, "You, however, know all about my ... persecutions, sufferings what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them." (2 Tim 3:10-11).
 - ➤ 1 Pet 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

RESTORATION

☐ In October 1871 the Great Chicago Fire destroyed Moody's church, his home, and the dwellings of most of his members. His family had to flee for their lives, and, as Mr. Moody said, he saved nothing but his reputation and his Bible.

□ But the church was rebuilt within 3 months at a near -by location as the Chicago Avenue Church. ¹

¹ Source: http://www.wholesome words.org/biography

RESTORATION

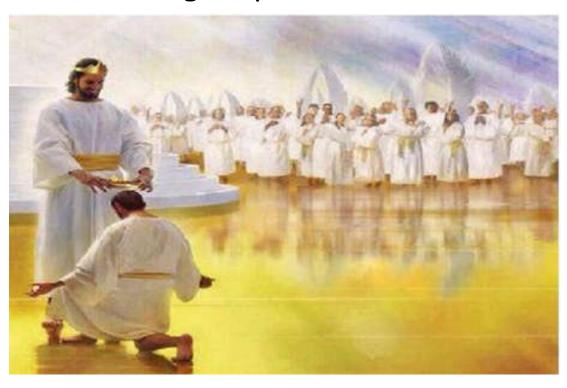
☐ Once, on a journey to an inland city, Hudson Taylor was robbed of his traveling bed, spare clothes, surgical instruments, and a Bible given to him by his mother. He decided not to prosecute the thief because of the harsh Chinese penal system, but wrote the culprit a letter instead, urging him to repent. He related this in a letter sent home to England, that somehow fell into the hands of George Mueller. He was so impressed by the spirit of the writer that he became a supporter of the mission. Taylor's sacrifice of the right to prosecute the man who stole his bed resulted in a supporter who would provide over \$10,000 per year for the mission and would be a friend and advisor in times of trial. Looking back, giving up the right to justice did not seem like a sacrifice. 1

¹ http://ww.bulletininserts.org/htaylor.html

6. There will be a day of punishment for those responsible for causing suffering and persecution.



- 7. If we are faithful in suffering, we will receive a reward
 - Rev 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.



Matt 5:11-12 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven...

> Heb 10:32-38 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

- 8. We will share in God's glory
 - > Rom 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
- ☐ Any suffering we experience in this life will pale in comparison to what God has in store for His followers. ~ Lee Strobel.
 - Rom 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.
 - > 2 Cor 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

YOUR CHOICE

- ☐ We can choose to either:
 - a) FALL AWAY "The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away" (Matt 13:20-21)
 - b) CONTINUE TO DO GOOD "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." (1 Pet 4:19)

"We decide whether suffering in this life will harden us or soften us." ~ Lee Strobel ☐ In our lives - will suffering be a stepping stone or a stumbling block to our faith? WE CHOOSE! The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay

CONCLUSION

Look! The power of God and the life of his Son are manifested in your weakness. Look! The life of Jesus is flowing through your suffering into the lives of other people. Look! God sustains you in your afflictions and will not let you be destroyed. Look! Your afflictions will not have the last word; you will rise from the dead with Jesus and with the church of God and live in joy for ever and ever. Look! Your afflictions are momentary. They are only for now, not for the age to come. Look! Your afflictions are light. Compared to the pleasures of what is coming they are as nothing. Look! These afflictions are producing for you an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison... 1

¹ John Piper (Reformed and Baptist theologian, preacher and author)



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