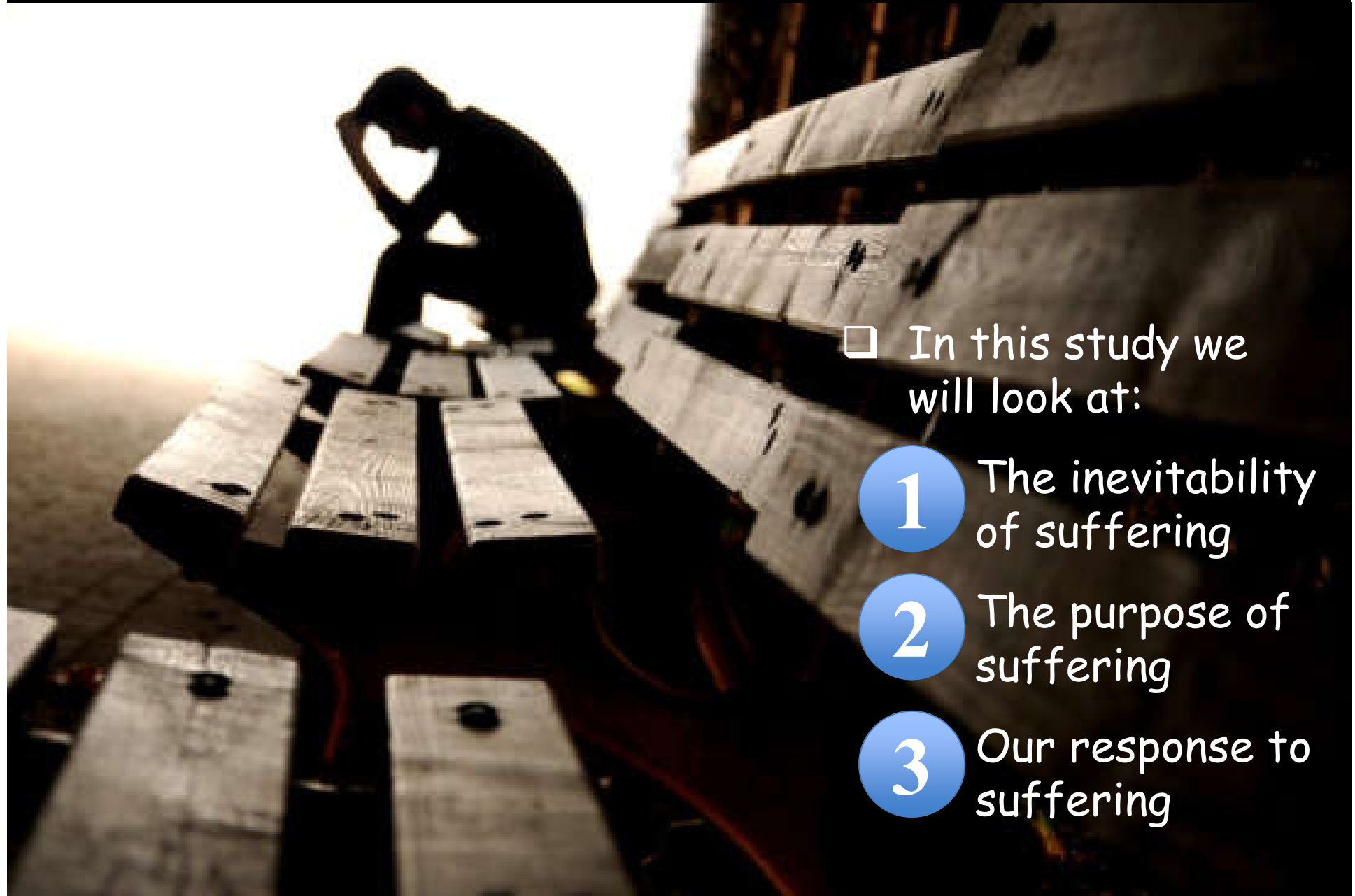


# SUFFERING



□ In this study we will look at:

- 1 The inevitability of suffering
- 2 The purpose of suffering
- 3 Our response to suffering

2b

# ***THE PURPOSE OF 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 will now examine 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) In suffering we learn to function as a body.
  - 6) It is often a means of achieving God's greater purposes.
  - 7) We learn obedience when suffering.

# INCREASES FOCUS

- ❑ We saw last time that often people suffer needlessly through their own stupidity or disregard for the law. But sometimes we may suffer even though we are doing the right things, listening to good advice and serving the Lord. We don't always understand why this happens.

1) Suffering crucifies the flesh and focuses us on the truly important things.



➤ 1 Pet 4:1-2 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. **As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.**



# INCREASES FOCUS

- ❑ Mary Craig had 4 sons, 2 of whom were born with severe abnormalities, one with disfiguring and incapacitating Hohlér's syndrome, and one with Down's syndrome. In her book entitled 'Blessings', Mary Craig says: "the value of suffering does not lie in the pain of it...

but in what the sufferer makes of it... It is in sorrow that we discover the things which really **matter**..."<sup>1</sup>



Follow  
One  
Course  
Until  
Successful

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christianity.co.nz/suffer8.htm>

# RELY ON GOD

2) Suffering teaches us to rely on God, not on self.

- Paul writes, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the **hardships we suffered** in the province of Asia. We were **under great pressure**, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life... But **this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God**, who raises the dead."  
(2 Cor 1:8-9)
- "The thing is to rely on God. The time will come when you will regard all this misery as a small price to pay for having been brought to that dependence. Meanwhile, the trouble is that relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing has yet been done."  
~ C.S. Lewis

# RELY ON GOD

- When a fellow missionary was stricken with smallpox, Hudson Taylor had barely recovered from another sickness himself but gladly volunteered to nurse the sick man. The disease proved fatal to the man and Taylor contracted smallpox, but had a mild attack since he had been vaccinated. He was forced, however, to destroy his clothes, and because he had used his funds to help another missionary, he had no money to buy more. Then a long-lost box of clothes, left behind 15 months earlier, arrived unexpectedly, bringing him just what he needed. He made this note in his journal in November 1857: **"I would not, if I could, be otherwise than as I am—entirely dependent upon the Lord, and used as a channel to help others."**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.theeffectivechristian.org>



# RELY ON GOD

- ❑ Rifqa Bary was born in 1992 in Sri Lanka and later moved to the US with her family. She secretly converted to Christianity at the age of 12. When her Muslim parents discovered her secret 4 years later, she ran away from her Ohio home in fear of an honour killing. Her story made national headlines in 2009. She recounts the chain of events that thrust her into the spotlight in her New York Times best-selling book, "Hiding in the Light".



**Rifqa Bary**

# RELY ON GOD

❑ Rifqa was asked in an interview:

- “You’ve experienced much suffering in your young life: losing vision in your right eye, being molested as a young child and the shame it would bring your family, and then all the turmoil after your decision to convert to Christianity, including a rare form of uterine cancer. How has that pain shaped you and prepared you for what God has called you to do?” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.boundless.org/blog/5-questions-with-rifqa-bary-a-former-muslim-who-risked-all-to-follow-jesus/>

# RELY ON GOD

❑ She responded:

- "Suffering has been one of the key factors that has shaped the core of who I am. It has pushed me to the place of prayer and has **allowed me to see my own brokenness in such a way that I have no one else to lean on but Christ.** A beautiful aftereffect has been watching how God is using the sorrow of my suffering and healing other people with it. Along with seeing that, **suffering has led me to the place where nothing else in this world can satisfy me but Christ alone.** It has taught me that my joy is not dependent on my circumstances; the harshest of fires cannot overwhelm Christ's sufficiency."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

# STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

3) In our weakness, we discover that God is strong.

➤ Isa 40:29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak...

□ Paul says regarding his "thorn in the flesh":

➤ 2 Cor 12:8-10 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness.**" Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, **I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

# STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

- ❑ David Brainerd, the great missionary to the American Indians, suffered from tuberculosis, but he refused to put his health needs above the salvation needs of the Indians. He fell in love with Jerusha Edwards, the daughter of Jonathan Edwards, but his ill health prevented them from marrying. At the age of 29, while in Edwards home, David Brainerd died of tuberculosis. Brainerd's work shows that **God can use any vessel, no matter how fragile and frail.**



**David Brainerd (1718-1747)**



# STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

- ❑ William Carey is known as “the father of modern missions”. While serving as a missionary in India, William Carey's son Peter died of dysentery, causing his wife Dorothy to suffer a nervous breakdown from which she never recovered. Carey's second wife, Charlotte, died in 1821, followed by his eldest son Felix. In 1812, a fire in his print shop caused £10,000 in damages and lost work.



**William Carey**  
**(1761–1834)**

# STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

- ❑ Yet Carey translated the Bible into India's major languages. He used his influence with the Governor-General to help put a stop to the practices of infant sacrifice and 'suttee' (burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands). In addition he provided schools for women and an asylum for lepers.
- ❑ "God, who foresaw your tribulation, has specially armed you to go through it, not without pain but without stain."  
~ C.S. Lewis

# DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

- 4) Trusting in God's goodness and faithfulness, despite suffering, deepens our relationship with Jesus.
- Phil 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead...
  - "Let trouble come if it will drive us nearer to God." ~ D.L. Moody
  - "We can stand affliction better than we can prosperity, for in prosperity we forget God." ~ D.L. Moody

# DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

- ❑ Hudson Taylor was the missionary who opened up inland China to the Gospel. He said:
  - “We did not come to China because missionary work here was either safe or easy, but because He has called us. We did not enter upon our present positions under a guarantee of human protection, but relying on the promise of His presence. The accidents of ease or difficulty, of apparent safety or danger, of man’s approval or disapproval, in no wise affect our duty. **Should circumstances arise involving us in what may seem special danger, we shall have grace, I trust, to manifest the depth and reality of our confidence in Him, and by faithfulness to our charge to prove that we are followers of the Good Shepherd who did not flee from death itself...**”

# DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

- ❑ One day Hudson Taylor's little 8-year-old daughter Gracie saw a man making an idol. "Oh, Papa," she exclaimed, "he doesn't know about Jesus or he would never do that! Won't you tell him?" He did so, the little girl following with eager interest. Later on she prayed most earnestly for the idol maker and for all the idol-worshiping Chinese.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bulletininserts.org/htaylor.html>



**Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)**



# DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

- ❑ Just a week later Gracie was dying. His loss was overwhelming and the tempter whispered, "Your God has forsaken you." But the father wrote a few weeks later: "Our dear little Gracie! How we miss her sweet voice... and the sparkle of those bright eyes. But He who said, 'I will never leave thee' (Heb 13:5), is with us... **nothing can ever substitute for the Presence of Christ.**" <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Ibid

**Gracie Taylor (1859-67)**

# DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

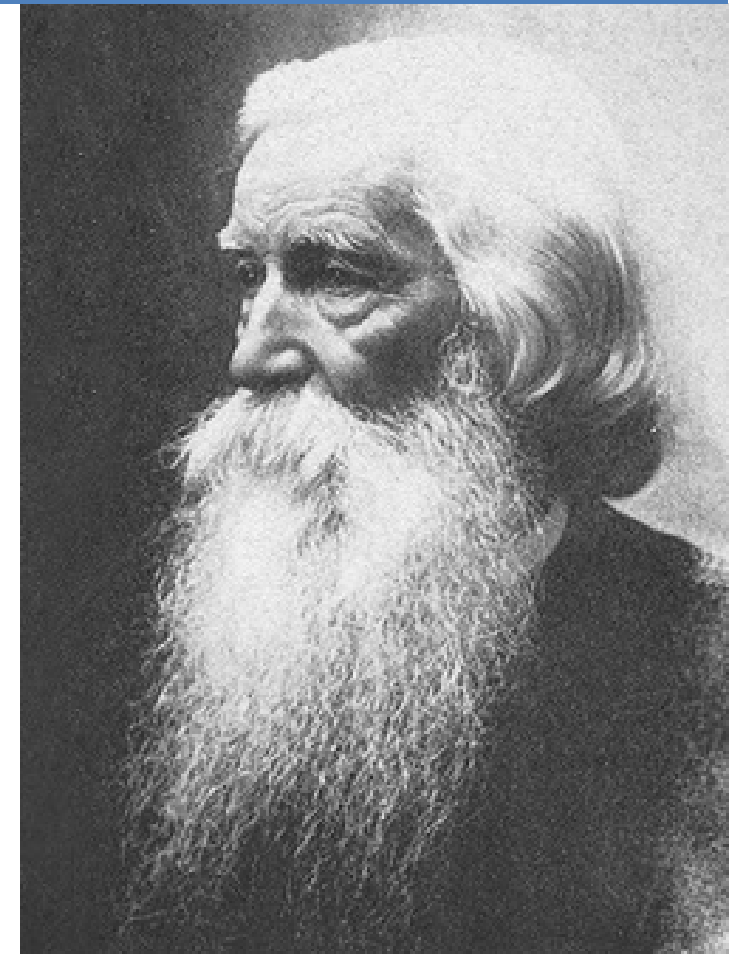
- ❑ With his wife, Mary, John Paton sailed from Scotland in 1857 and landed on the island of Tanna in the New Hebrides, an island chain northeast of Australia. With them was another young missionary, Joseph Copeland.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ The people were as fierce as he had been told. Cannibal celebrations took place in sight of the Patons' home and human blood fouled the drinking water. The natives frightened Joseph Copeland so much that he lost his wits and died; they continually threatened John.<sup>1</sup> Early the next year, Mary bore a son. Both mother and child came down with fevers and died. With a breaking heart, John dug their grave and laid them in it. Later he said, **"But for Jesus, and the fellowship He granted me there, I would have gone mad and died beside that lonely grave!"**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Christian History Institute

# DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

- John remained on Tanna. He went from village to village telling of the love of Christ and translating Scripture into the Tannese language. But finally, when all his supplies were stolen and starvation stared him in the face, he made his way across the island to the settlement of a second missionary. Exhausted he fell asleep.<sup>1</sup> After leaving Tanna, John remarried and worked on a smaller island. He had the joy of seeing the people of Aneityum come to Christ in a way the people of Tanna never had.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid



**John Paton  
(1824-1907)**

# THE BODY SUFFERING

5) In suffering we learn to function as a body

- ❑ "When our brothers and sisters are suffering and persecuted for their faith, we are to walk with them and pray with them," says Nik Ripken. "And at the same time, they celebrate the fact that we live in a place where we are free to share our faith. When they discover we don't share our faith, that is so painful to them." When Christian brothers and sisters are suffering and dying for the faith, American believers must make the most of their freedom. "We have people saying "I follow Jesus" just to get a stamp on their passport that gets them into heaven, when they have no intention of following Jesus," Ripken says. "They just want Jesus to take them to heaven when they die."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://qideas.org/articles/the-insanity-of-god-calls-christians-to-witness-obedience/>

# THE BODY SUFFERING

- ❑ American Christians must take more seriously the biblical metaphor of the church as Christ's body and understand their identity as part of the persecuted church, Ripken says. "A believer in Bulgaria told me, 'If I represent a small finger of the body of Christ, and I am being cut off from persecution - and the rest of the body doesn't feel that pain - then either you are saying to me that I don't belong to the body of Christ, or you are saying of yourself that you don't belong to the body of Christ.'"
- ❑ American Christians must understand there is no such thing globally as a persecuted church and a free church, Ripken explains. "There's just one church - the church that belongs to Jesus - and it is always, and at the same time, both persecuted and free."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid



# DISCIPLESHIP

- ❑ Ripken suggests that churches in the West do not face significant persecution as they become less and less a threat to a spiritually lost world. However, in pre-Pentecost settings, religious persecution comes not from taking a stand on social and cultural issues but from making Jesus known to those who have little or no opportunity to hear about Him otherwise, he says.
- ❑ In these very different settings, discipleship approaches also differ, Ripken notes. Churches living in persecution use a "New Testament house church style" of discipleship out of the necessity of believers bonding in small groups to endure persecution together. They learn together and teach each other, modelling locally what being a believer in Christ means.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

# DISCIPLESHIP

- ❑ As non-believers see followers of Jesus meeting human needs and alleviating suffering, the love of Christ becomes tangible, drawing those outside the group to learn more, Ripken explains. He contrasts this approach with some Western-based discipleship programs that are essentially "information transfer."
- ❑ "Discipleship in settings of persecution is based on relationship," Ripken writes. "New believers are asked how they are treating their wife and children ... about their use of money and their time on the Internet. In the Western world, a believer can go to a denominational college and get multiple seminary degrees and never be asked these kinds of questions! **Discipleship is about building character, not simply transferring information.**" <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

# DISCIPLESHIP

- ❑ Learning discipleship methods from believers experiencing persecution may be a radical concept for evangelical believers comfortable with a highly programmatic style of church, Ripken acknowledges. But **discipleship needs to be personal and bring about significant life changes in believers**, he says.



**Nik Ripken**



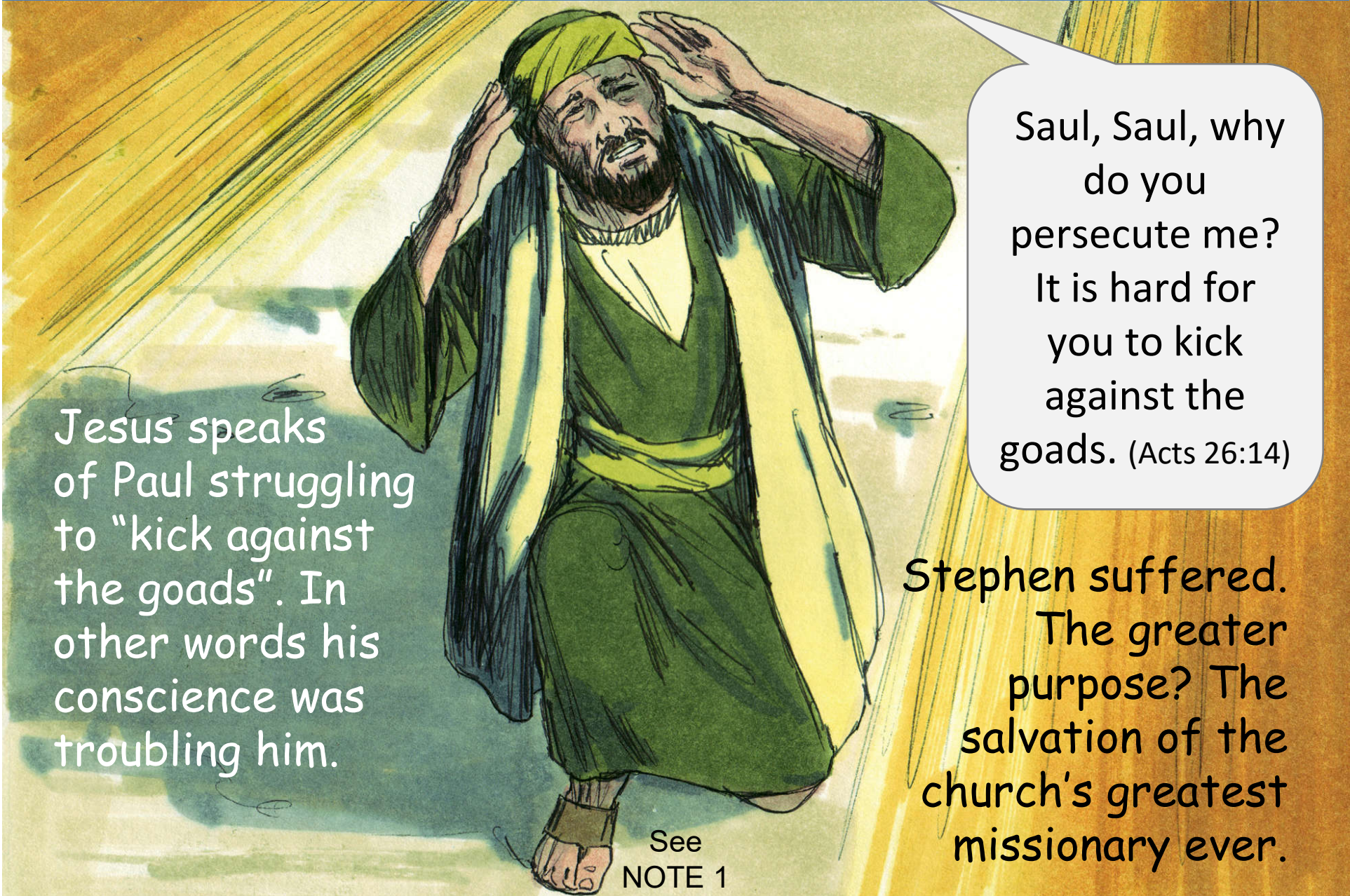
# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- 6) Sometime God allows suffering because his greater purposes are achieved through it. E.g. Stephen suffered a painful martyrdom. Saul of Tarsus witnessed his death and it was probably one of the contributing factors that led to his salvation.





# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE



Jesus speaks of Paul struggling to "kick against the goads". In other words his conscience was troubling him.

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. (Acts 26:14)

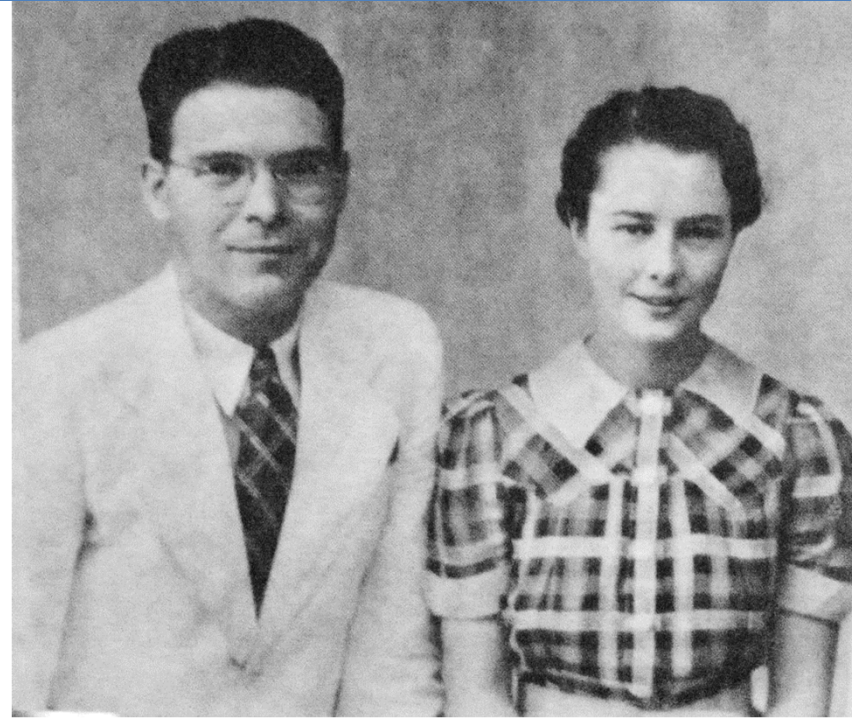
Stephen suffered. The greater purpose? The salvation of the church's greatest missionary ever.

See  
NOTE 1



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Darlene Deibler was a young missionary wife in New Guinea. She accompanied her husband Russell into the jungle to establish a new mission station near a previously unevangelized tribe. 3 years later, WWII reached them when the Japanese took control of the area in January 1942.
- ❑ Darlene and Russell were interned in separate prisoner-of-war camps. No communication was allowed between the camps and Darlene never saw her husband again, only learning of his death 3 months after his fatal illness.



**Russell and Darlene  
Deibler, 1938**

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Abuse and atrocities were inflicted on the imprisoned women and children, and many of them died as a result. Despite being so young, Darlene's Christian testimony was unwavering in the face of continual hardship.
- ❑ Often she had to struggle to obey Jesus' directive to love our enemies. The Japanese commander of her camp, Mr. Yamaji, was notoriously cruel and would beat the women savagely for any perceived infraction. He was also responsible for beating a male prisoner to death.
- ❑ One day she was summoned to Yamaji's office where she boldly witnessed to him of Christ's work in her life. She ended with, "He died for you, Mr. Yamaji, and he puts love in our hearts - even for those who are our enemies. That's why I don't hate you, Mr. Yamaji. Maybe God brought me to this place and this time to tell you he loves you."

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ In her book "Evidence Not Seen", Darlene wrote, "With tears running down his cheeks, he rose hastily and went into his bedroom, closing the door. I could hear him blowing his nose and knew he was still crying."
- ❑ Later Darlene was accused of being an American spy and was moved to a death prison where she was the only female inmate. Severe malnutrition, serious illness, and discouragement engulfed her as she was tortured, deprived and humiliated. Only in her twenties, Darlene's hair whitened, and she became so ill that at one point she was unable to stand.
- ❑ Then Yamaji visited the camp to tell the secret police that Darlene was not a spy and demonstrated compassion by sending her bananas.

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ After the end of the war Yamaji was sentenced to death for the murder of the man he'd beaten to death. But because of his kindness toward Darlene the sentence was commuted to a life sentence. Later his life sentence was also commuted and Darlene heard a report that indicated that he had been converted. While working in a bicycle repair shop, Mr. Yamaji asked a visiting chaplain that if he ever came into contact with anyone from the prisoner-of-war camp to tell them that he was sorry. Later Darlene heard that Yamaji had spoken on the radio, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with the Japanese people.
- ❑ Darlene and Russell Deibler suffered. The greater purpose? As a result of her husband's death, Darlene had the opportunity to witness of God's love and forgiveness to Yamaji. He in turn would pass that message on to others.

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ It is often said that God allowed Acts 8:1 because the disciples were not fully obeying Acts 1:8.
  - Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea and Samaria**, and to the **ends of the earth**."
- ❑ The Holy Spirit had come and while the disciples had witnessed in Jerusalem, they had not yet advanced to the "Judea and Samaria" part of Jesus' instruction.



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

➤ Acts 8:1,4 ... On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout **Judea and Samaria**... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

□ When the persecution broke out in Jerusalem, it was like scattering the coals of a fire even further.



See  
NOTE 1



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Tertullian (2<sup>nd</sup> century) declared, "We are not a new philosophy but a divine revelation. That's why you can't just exterminate us; the more you kill the more we are. **The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church...** And you frustrate your purpose. Because those who see us die, wonder why we do, for we die like the men you revere, not like slaves or criminals. And when they find out, they join us." <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Tertullian's 'Apologeticum'



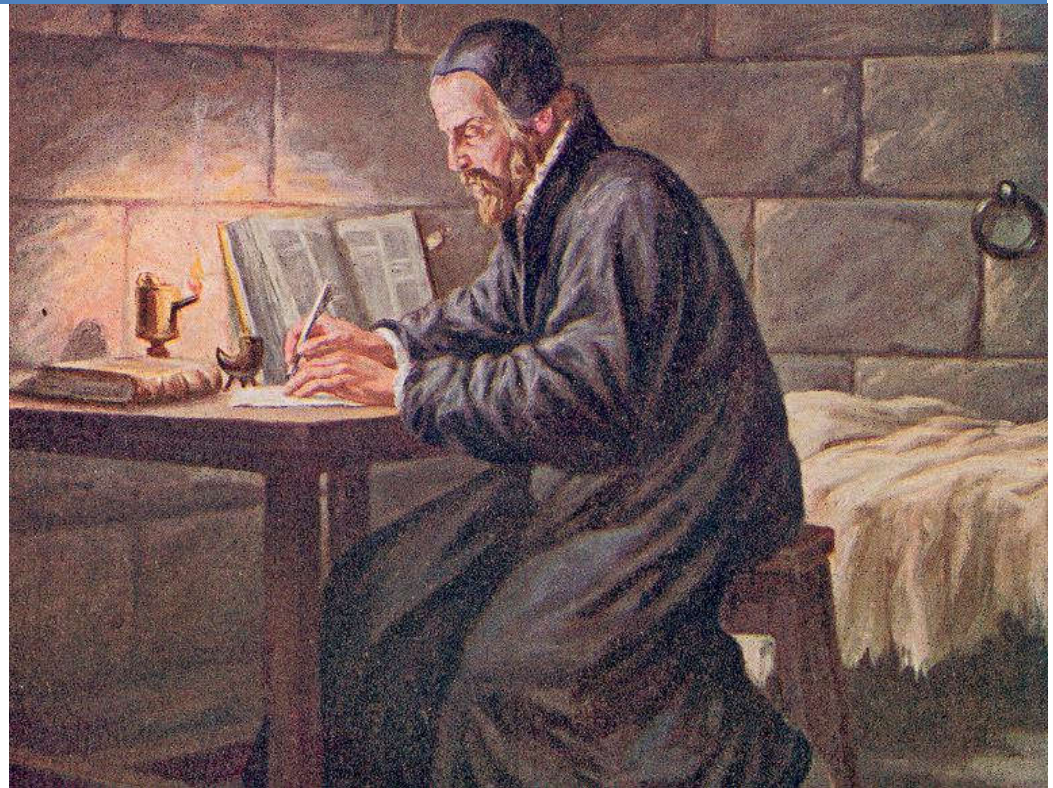
# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ "When the ambassador of Christ speaks the truth in love, and meets death with joy, a strange, miracle occurs: the eyes of unbelievers are opened, they are enabled to see the truth of God. Many, many groups of people on this planet have testified that the darkness which had been over them was dissipated only when a missionary was killed there...The death of the martyrs opens the eyes of unbelievers, and when they see the light, Satan's power over them is gone.....When the martyrs meet their death without fear, Satan's last instrument is rendered powerless, and he is crushed and defeated."  
~ Josef Tson (President of the Romanian Missionary Society)



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ "My overcoat is worn out; my shirts also are worn out. And I ask to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening; it is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark." ~ William Tyndale - in prison before being martyred.
- ❑ Tyndale was imprisoned after being betrayed by a friend Henry Phillips. After his imprisonment he was strangled and burnt at the stake.
- ❑ The greater purpose? So that you and I could read the Bible in English.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.believersweb.org>

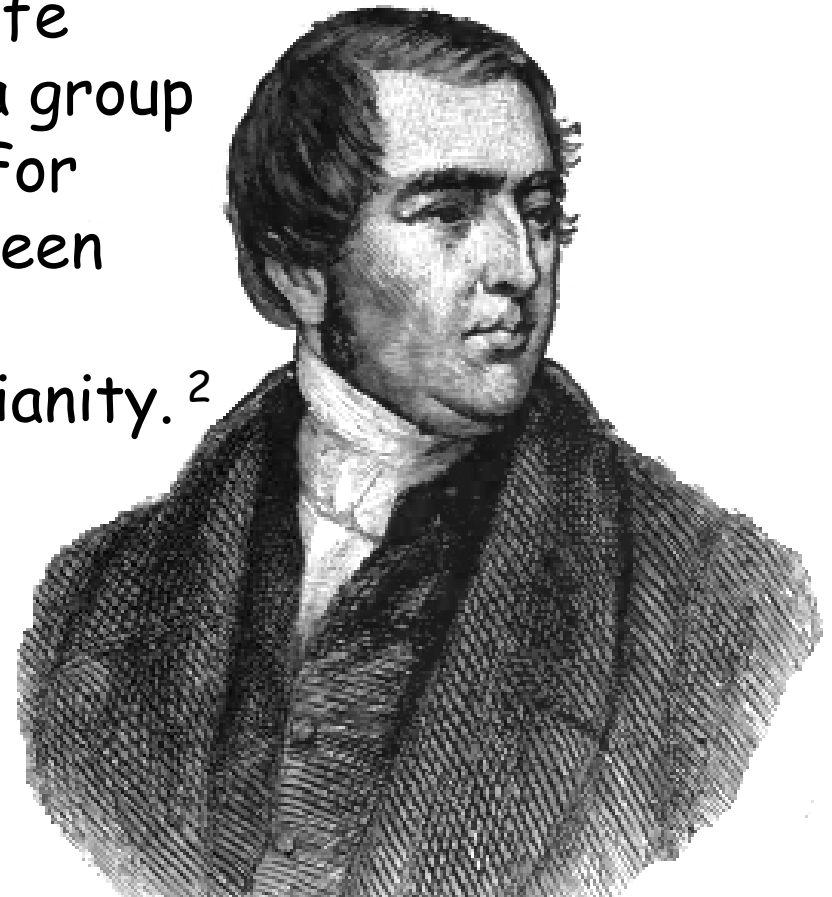




Tyndale's last words were "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." Just 3 years later his prayer was answered when Henry VIII published the "Great Bible" based on Tyndale's work.

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ In 1817, John Williams and his wife voyaged to the Society Islands, a group of islands that included Tahiti.<sup>1</sup> For the next 20 years he sailed between Polynesian islands, successfully converting many people to Christianity.<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ However in 1839, while visiting a part of the New Hebrides, he and fellow missionary James Harris were killed and eaten by cannibals on the island of Erromango during an attempt to bring them the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>



**John Williams  
(1796–1839)**

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Williams\\_\(missionary\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Williams_(missionary))

<sup>2</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/hampshire/8398126.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/hampshire/8398126.stm)

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

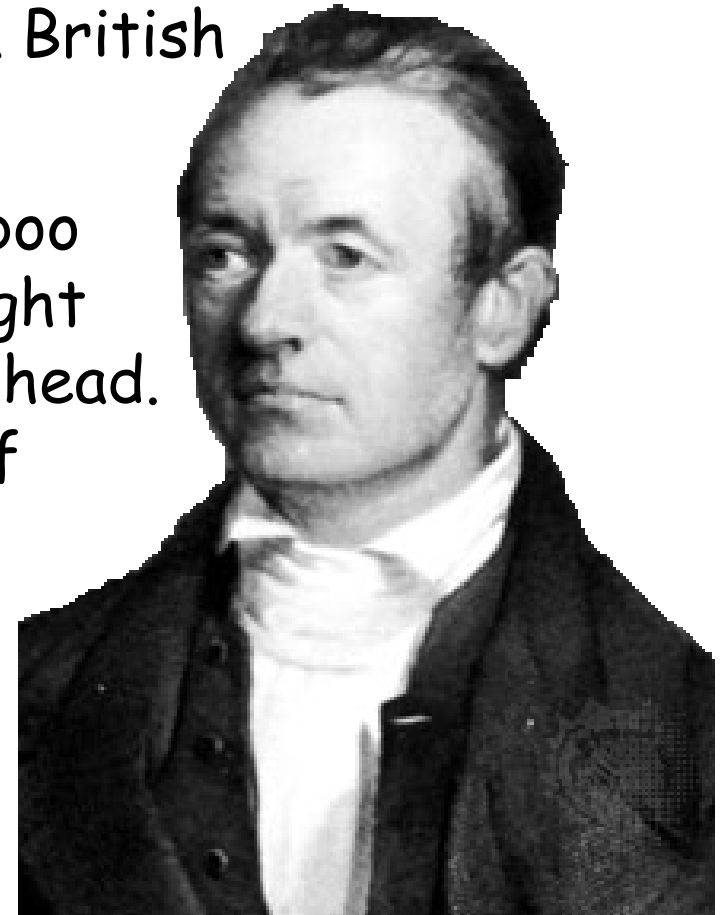
- ❑ Was his labour in vain? The news of this tragedy filled the London Missionary Society, which had sent him, with sorrow but immediately 25 new workers volunteered to take his place.<sup>1</sup> 50 years after Williams' martyrdom, the son of his murderer was laying the cornerstone of the martyr's memorial, while another son was preaching the gospel for which he died!
- ❑ In 2009 the descendants of those responsible for his murder invited his descendants to Erromango, part of the island nation of Vanuatu, for a reconciliation event. The President of Vanuatu, Iolo Johnson Abbil, told the BBC it was a very important event for the country as a whole, where Christianity is now strong.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/missions>

<sup>2</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/hampshire/8398126.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/hampshire/8398126.stm)

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Adoniram Judson was a 19<sup>th</sup> century American missionary to Burma. At age 37 he was **imprisoned for 17 months** based on false allegations of being a British spy. Little food was given to him.
- ❑ His feet were bound to a large bamboo pole, his hands to another, and at night his feet were lifted higher than his head. His heroic wife brought little bits of food to him, although she and her baby were near death at times themselves. <sup>1</sup> The greater purpose? While in prison Judson was secretly continuing to translate the New Testament into Burmese.



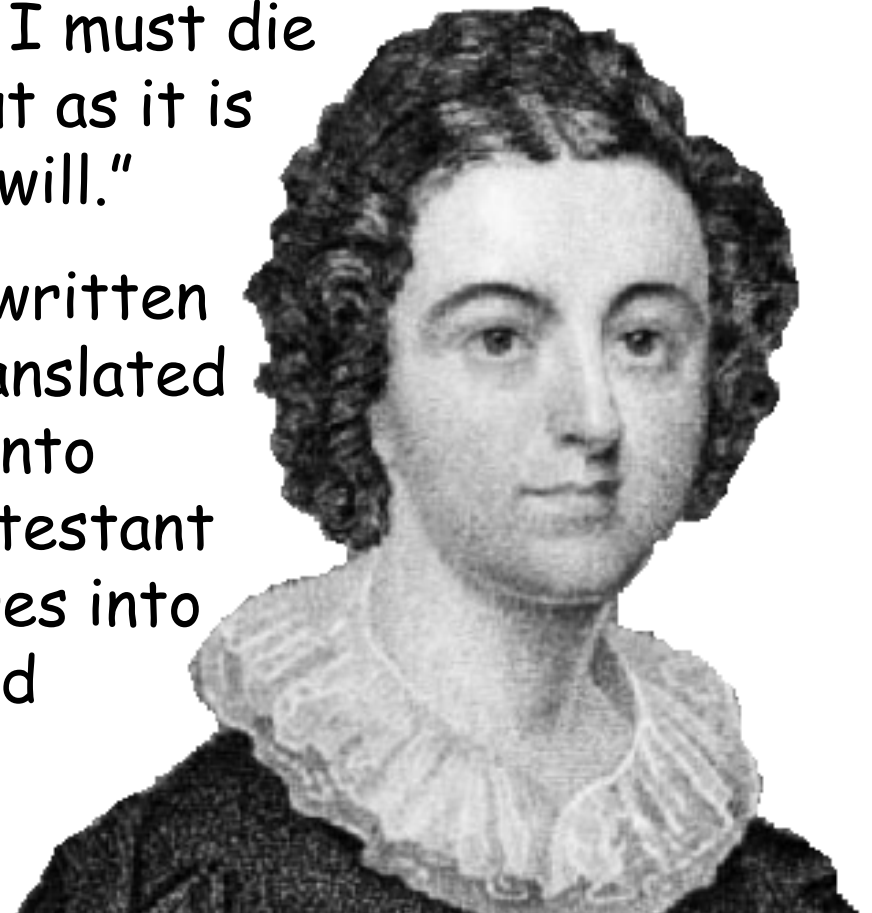
**Adoniram Judson**  
**(1788-1850)**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.swordofthelord.com>



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ After Adoniram's release from prison, while he was away, 36-year old Ann fell victim to smallpox. Before she died she said, "The teacher (husband) is long in coming; and the new missionaries are long in coming; I must die alone and leave my little one. But as it is the will of God, I submit to his will."
- ❑ The greater purpose? Ann had written a catechism in Burmese, and translated the books of Daniel and Jonah into Burmese. She was the first Protestant to translate any of the scriptures into Thai when in 1819 she translated the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann\\_Hasseltine\\_Judson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Hasseltine_Judson)

**Ann Judson (1789-1826)**



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ When Adoniram returned, his heart was broken. About 3 months later he buried their third child to die - next to Ann. His second and third wives and several children also died because of the physical strain of life in the tropics.
- ❑ "If I had not felt certain that **every additional trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy**, I could not have survived my accumulated suffering." ~ Adoniram Judson
- ❑ When Judson began his mission in Burma, he set a goal of translating the Bible and founding a church of 100 members before his death. By the time of his death in 1850, he left a translated Bible, 7,000 baptized believers, 63 Christian congregations and 163 missionaries in Burma. Over 160 years later, his Burmese Bible translation is still in use.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoniram\\_Judson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adoniram_Judson) & <https://www.christianity.com>

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Speaking at the dedication of the Judson Memorial Church in New York City, a son, Edward, spoke referring to his father: "Suffering and success go together. **If you are succeeding without suffering, it is because others before you have suffered;** if you are suffering without succeeding, it is that others after you may succeed." Judson probably illustrated this truth as much as any man who ever lived.
- ❑ "There is no stronger argument for the claims of Christ than when his followers abandon everything and willingly lay down their lives," says J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C. "It's how the early church grew, and it's how the church is growing around the world today." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bpnews.net/42160/insanity-of-obedience-explored-by-ripken>

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Jacob DeShazer was one of the famous Doolittle raiders, whose bombing of Tokyo was one of the turning points of the US war against Japan in World War 2. Baling out over Japanese-Occupied China, Jacob was captured and interned by the Japanese.
- ❑ During his captivity he watched the Japanese starve one of his friends to death.



**Jacob DeShazer (1912-2008)**

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ DeShazer himself was forced into solitary confinement for 36 months. The weight on his 5' 6" frame dropped from 160 to 128 pounds. And at times his body was covered with boils. Being regularly maltreated, DeShazer's hatred for the Japanese increased. On one occasion during an inquisition, he was forced to kneel and was severely beaten. Other American POWs were hung handcuffed for about 8 hours from a peg on the wall, yet while others were water-boarded (stretched out on boards with towels to their faces and water being poured over them).
- ❑ DeShazer's hatred for the Japanese increased and he wondered what caused such hatred between members of the human race. Then after being instructed by the emperor to treat the prisoners better, the Japanese gave the prisoners a Bible.

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ In a dimly lit prison cell DeShazer read through the Bible several times, and came to realize that his Japanese torturers were cruel because they did not know God. He read about Jesus praying for those who crucified him by saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." DeShazer realized that he too had to forgive his torturers. He started greeting them in Japanese and conversing with them about their personal lives. When he was beaten by his guards, he responded with love and prayed for their forgiveness.
- ❑ After the defeat of Japan, in 1948 DeShazer returned to the country as a missionary. The intrigued Japanese would ask why he would want to come back when he had been beaten and badly treated. And with that he would tell them about God's forgiveness.



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ In the first year in Japan 30,000 people converted to Christianity. DeShazer forgave his former prison guards who had mistreated him and many of them were converted. But the most amazing act of forgiveness and reconciliation was yet to come.
- ❑ Mitsuo Fuchida was the Japanese pilot who led the surprise-attack on Pearl Harbour resulting in the deaths of 2,403 Americans. While he had been a national wartime hero in Japan, Fuchida was now struggling in postwar Japan.



**Mitsuo Fuchida**  
**(1902-1976)**

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ After the war, Fuchida was called on to testify at the trials of some of the Japanese military for Japanese war crimes. This infuriated him as he believed this was little more than "victors' justice". In the spring of 1947, convinced that the Americans had treated the Japanese the same way and determined to bring that evidence to the next trial, Fuchida went to Uraga Harbour near Yokosuka to meet a group of returning Japanese prisoners of war.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ He was surprised to find his former flight engineer, Kazuo Kanegasaki, who all had believed had died in the Battle of Midway.<sup>1</sup> Much to Fuchida's surprise Kanegasaki told him that they were not tortured or abused.

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitsuo\\_Fuchida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitsuo_Fuchida)

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ He went on to tell him of a 18-year old girl, Peggy Covell, who had served the Japanese prisoners with deep love and respect, even though her Baptist missionary parents had been beheaded by Japanese soldiers in the Philippines. For Fuchida, this was inexplicable, as the murderer of one's parents should be a sworn enemy for life. In the Samurai's Bushido code, revenge was not only permitted, it was the duty of an offended party to avenge an injustice in order to restore honour.
- ❑ Fuchida became obsessed trying to understand why anyone would treat enemies with forgiveness and love.

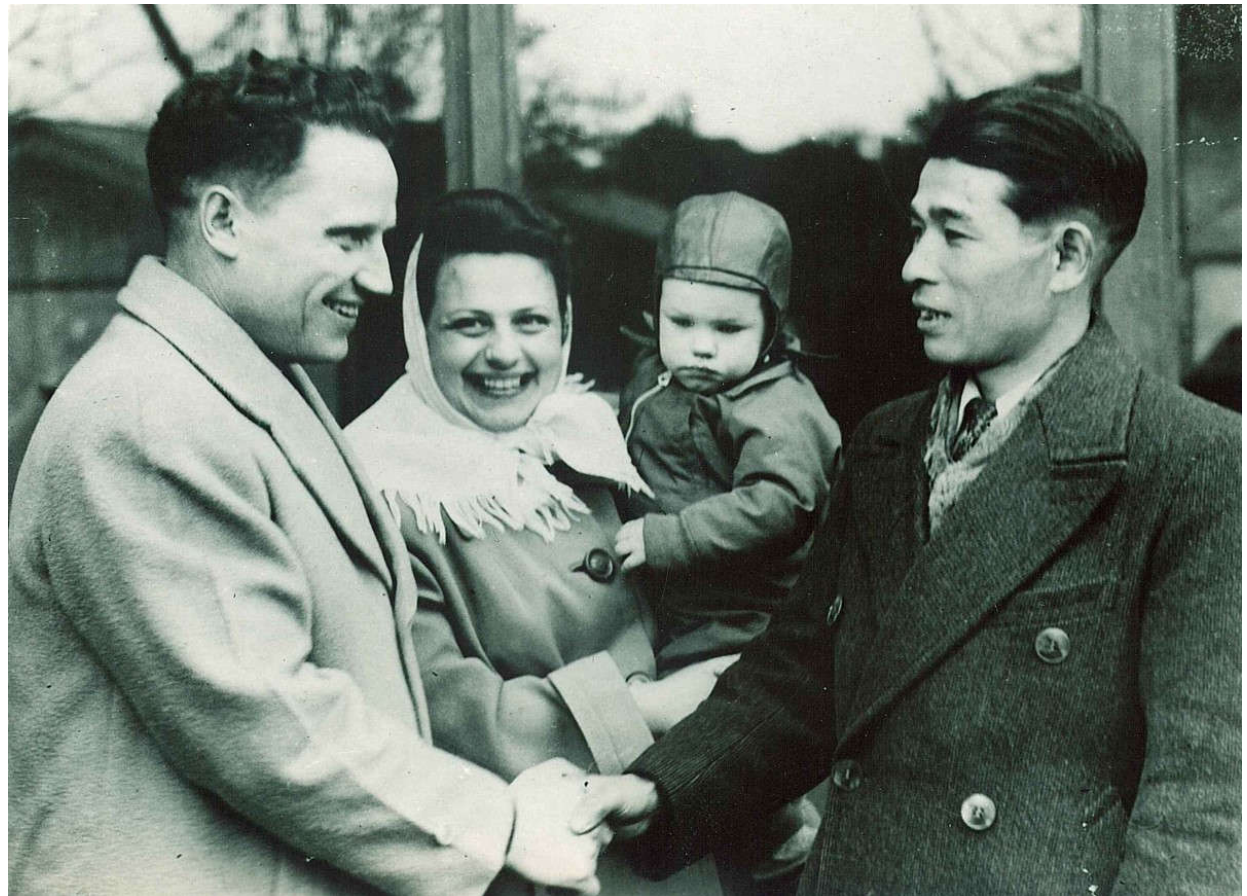


**Peggy Covell**



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ In 1950 Jacob DeShazer authored a flyer explaining his progression from hatred of Japanese to his conversion and then missionary work in Japan. While fasting for 40 days his pamphlet made its way into the hands of Mitsuo Fuchida.
- ❑ After reading DeShazer's story, he read through the Bible and converted to Christianity. In 1950 DeShazer and Fuchida met and with that a lifelong friendship was born.



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Amazingly one of the participants of the Doolittle raid had befriended the leader of the attack on Pearl Harbour. Fuchida went on to become a missionary to Asia. When he died in 1976 Jacob DeShazer conducted the funeral service.
- ❑ So DeShazer and the Covell family suffered. The greater purpose? The conversion of thousands of Japanese, including Fuchida.



**DeShazer at missionary meeting in Japan - 1949**



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ Bob Fu is a Chinese American pastor. He is the founder and president since 2002 of China Aid, which provides legal aid to Christians in China. Born in China, he converted to Christianity after an American teacher gave him a biography of a Chinese Christian convert.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ As "God's Double Agent" chillingly describes, Chinese Christians must live out their faith in a hostile environment. Beijing does not ban Christianity outright. Instead, it seeks to control it. →



**Bob Fu**

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob\\_Fu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Fu)

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ It does so by various means, including channelling worshippers into official, government-sponsored churches; banning the printing of Bibles; limiting church-based social services; and monitoring the activities of religious leaders. Christians go to jail for distributing religious materials, founding unlicensed house churches, opposing abortion, criticizing the government, and other perceived transgressions. Count Bob Fu guilty of all such "crimes." As Mr. Fu recounts in "God's Double Agent", he and his wife Heidi fled China for the US in 1997 after being tipped off that the police were planning to arrest them. They had already spent time in prison for their illegal religious activities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/october-web-only/bob-fu-is-alive-and-thriving.html?start=3>

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ The Fuses anticipated that their underground evangelism would eventually catch the eye of the police and that they would end up in prison. They were right. They were arrested after police discovered the existence of an illegal Bible school they had established in a Beijing suburb. Mr. Fu's description of his months in prison is very moving. He was assigned the task of cleaning the toilet with another man in the cell they shared with 30 prisoners. They had only paper with which to do the job. "The toilet, for me, was a way to share the Gospel," he writes. "One by one I made some close confidants in the cell. Some poured out their hearts to me, confessing mistresses, misdeeds, and any number of crimes, and I—in turn—told them about the saving grace of Jesus." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ The late Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong's last wife was one of the radical Chinese Communist leaders known as the Gang of Four, whose brutal policies created enormous suffering during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution.
- ❑ In Jiang's words, "Christianity in China has been confined to the history section of the museum. It is dead and buried."



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

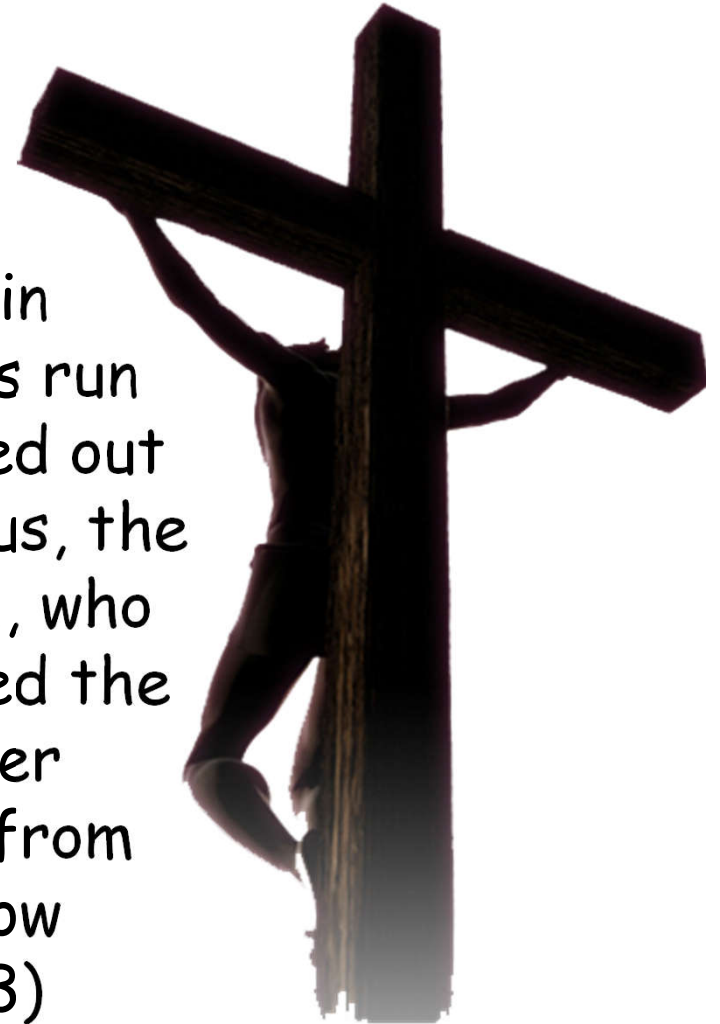
- ❑ Jiang, who committed suicide in 1991, did not live to see how wrong her pronouncement turned out to be. A remarkable fact of life in China in recent years is the explosive growth of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ The number of Christians in China is estimated at between 100 million and 130 million. Which brings us to another astonishing fact: There are more Christians in China today than there are members of the Communist Party, whose rolls number about 82 million.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ Isn't it interesting that the fastest growing churches in the world today are in China and Africa, yet these are the most persecuted and poorest churches?

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/october-web-only/bob-fu-is-alive-and-thriving.html?start=3>



# GOD'S GREATER PURPOSE

- ❑ The cross remains the greatest example of how God's greater purpose was achieved through suffering.
- Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame... Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Heb 12:1-3)



# LEARN OBEDIENCE

7) We learn obedience through suffering.

□ Amazingly the writer of Hebrews says of Jesus:

➤ Heb 5:8 (ESV) Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.



**As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city,  
he wept over it ~ Luke 19:41**

# PERFECTED THROUGH SUFFERING

- Heb 2:10 (ESV) For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.



Jesus wept. ~ John 11:35



# LEARN OBEDIENCE

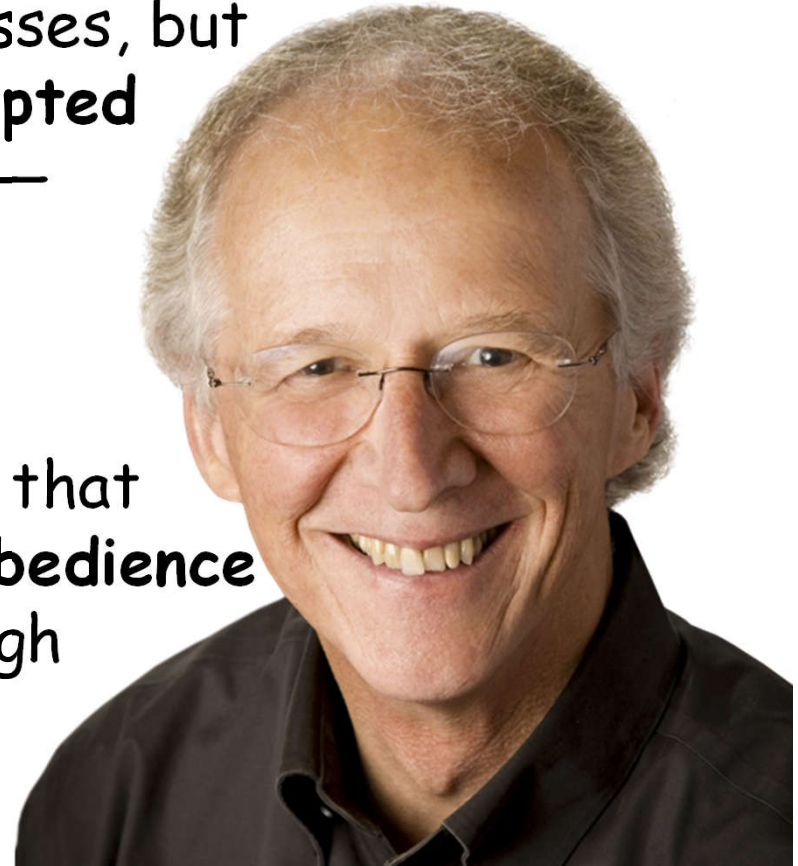
- ❑ As a man we know that Jesus developed both physically and spiritually.
  - Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.
- ❑ Although the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus was made "perfect through suffering", at the same time he also acknowledges that Jesus was sinless.
  - Heb 7:26 Such a high priest truly meets our need--one who is holy, **blameless, pure, set apart from sinners**, exalted above the heavens.
- ❑ So this spiritual growth or movement to perfection by Jesus must be understood as something other than 'sinning less.' What is the goal of spiritual growth that the sinless Christ was moving toward?"



# LEARN OBEDIENCE

- ❑ The key lies in another verse speaking of Jesus' sinlessness.
  - Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been **tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.**
- ❑ John Piper aptly comments:
  - “He learned obedience” means that Jesus moved from **untested obedience** into **suffering**, and then through suffering into **tested and proven obedience**.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org>



**John Piper**

# LEARN OBEDIENCE

❑ Piper adds:

- If you think about it, if you are good enough, you can learn a new task without failing. And the new task that Jesus had to learn every hour, especially at the end of his life was: Can I endure this suffering that I have never experienced before, this new obedience that I have never performed before in the history of the universe? Can I learn and do this perfectly without failing, without falling into unbelief and murmuring? And the answer of Hebrews is yes. He could and he did. He learned obedience in what he suffered, and he never, never, never failed once in the process of perfect learning, proven, tested obedience.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-did-jesus-learn-obedience-and-become-perfect>

# CONCLUSION

- Likewise our suffering enables us to progress from untested obedience into tested and proven obedience (to trust even when we don't understand). Trials prove whether our faith is genuine or not.



➤ 1 Pet 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.**

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