



Sermon series: Rethinking Suffering

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Big Idea: Having known God's comfort in our suffering, we are able to offer His comfort to others.

Delivered: June 28, 2020

Comforters Made from Suffering

1. **God Comforts His Suffering Children.** 2 Corinthians 1:3

2. **God Comforts His Suffering Children through other Sufferers.** 2 Corinthians 1:4

Application

- What's this look like?

- _____
- _____
- _____

To think about...

- Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11. Share one or two things that surprised you in these verses.
 - With your family/group share an unforgettable time when someone brought you the mercy of God when you were suffering.
 - Are you at either extreme: do you instinctively notice suffering people and want to help, or feel uncomfortable around them and run the other way? Why?
 - Identify the kinds of help you often offer people. Would you say it tends to be the mercy of God, or mainly human kindness?
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Resources to help you RETHINK SUFFERING...

Note: *Drink too deeply at the crowded well of human “free willism” that some Christians say lets God off the hook for the world’s suffering, and you’ll realize too late that the water is toxic. The well is so crowded because it seems so right. After all, if human free will is the exclusive cause of troubles like spousal abuse, war, car crashes and a host of other ills, then God’s relieved of two common charges that critics level: either God isn’t very powerful—or isn’t very loving. (It should be noted that the free will argument does little to explain miseries like cancer, birth defects, and tornadoes.)*

Not only is the Bible uninterested in giving God this sort of breathing room, it in fact insists that as King of His universe, he ordains all that takes place (Ephesians 1:11) while being in no way responsible for sin (James 1:13). And, He is no King if He is at the mercy of our “free will”. And if not King, He is unable to help us when we’re in need. If He is not ultimately behind suffering, then the pain we suffer, the rejection, the persecution, the devastation of this life, are as meaningless as a game of charades. Now perhaps you understand why—in the resources below, you will find a heavy dose of the sovereignty of God.

Books

- ***Why a Suffering World makes Sense*** by Chris Tiegreen. If brick by brick you seek to build a biblical understanding of why there is suffering and how it is of value both to God and ourselves, besides the Bible this is the book on which to build. [Although out of print it’s still available online at used book sites or ebay.]

- *Spectacular Sins* by John Piper. Piper wants to “...strengthen your faith in the goodness and mercy and wisdom and power of God, not just in the midst of calamity, but in the very sins that are woven into the calamity.”
- *Is God Really in Control? Trusting God in a World of Hurt* by Jerry Bridges. Bridges is determined “...to glorify God by acknowledging His sovereignty and His goodness, and to encourage God’s people by demonstrating from Scripture that God is in control of their lives, that He does indeed love them, and that He works out all of the circumstances of their lives for their ultimate good.”
- *God’s Grace in Your Suffering* by David Powlison. Powlison published this little book in 2018, year before he died. This extraordinary and gentle counselor takes you by the hand—not to talk about suffering in general—but yours. Sometimes more of a diary than a book, with your help, the Bible’s help, and the Holy Spirit’s help, he helps.
- *Suffering & the Sovereignty of God* edited by Justin Taylor & John Piper. Articles by various contributors including a quadriplegic, and a man whose missionary dad was murdered by those he was trying to reach, bring God’s power, plan, truth and hope to the conversation about suffering—whether it’s of the mundane kind or the most horrific.
- *Suffering: Gospel Hope when Life Doesn’t Make Sense* by Paul Tripp. Together with biblical insights and his years of counseling others, Tripp weaves together his own personal story of suffering. *Exploring a wide range of common experiences, this raw yet hope-filled book will empower readers to cling to God’s promises when trials come and then move forward with the hope of the gospel.*

Articles & podcasts

- *Mothering from the Brink of Despair* by Jennifer Case Cortez
<https://www.reviveourhearts.com/true-woman/blog/mothering-brink-despair/>
- *Suffering is Comforting, not Disturbing* by Kristen Wetherell
<https://www.reviveourhearts.com/true-woman/blog/gods-sovereignty-over-suffering-comforting-not-dis/>
- *How to Help Friends Escape the Prosperity Gospel* (11-minute interview with John Piper)
<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-to-help-friends-escape-the-prosperity-gospel>
- *Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of my Diving Accident* (Joni Eareckson Tada)
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/reflections-on-50th-anniversary-of-my-diving-accident/>
- *Why Matt Chandler chose to Suffer Publicly* [brain tumor]
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/matt-chandler-chose-suffer-publicly/>

Scriptures

- **“God, end this suffering!”**
 - Philippians 4:6
 - James 4:2

- **“Jesus (and your apostles), teach me about suffering.”**
 - Matthew 16:21-26; 26:39
 - Hebrews 12;3-4
 - 1 Peter 2:21-25; 4:1-2
 - 2 Corinthians 6:4-10; 11:16-33
 - Philippians 4:11-13
- **“God, am I being punished for something?”**
 - Possibly; that does happen: Hebrews 12:5-11.
 - But unless God’s made that connection for you, probably not. Suffering afflicts the best & worst.
 - Luke 13:1-5
 - Acts 14:22
- **“God, is suffering inevitable? And can it help me?”**
 - Acts 9:15-16
 - Romans 5:3-5; 8:17
 - Philippians 1:29
 - 2 Tim. 2:3
 - Hebrews 5:8
 - 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12
 - James 1:2-4
- **“God, what’s the point of this?”**
 - Romans 8:28
- **“God, will my faith survive this?”**
 - Romans 8:31-39
- **Let the euphoria of future/eternal glory eclipse the pain and weariness of this world’s suffering.**
 - 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
 - Romans 8:18