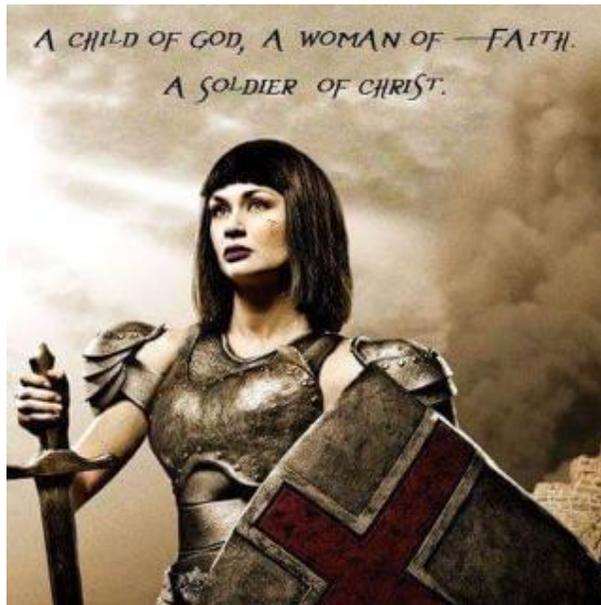


Austin Bible Church Ladies Retreat
“Grasping onto Glory in Times of Suffering”
June 3–4, 2016

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.” Rom 8:18



Introduction

An old Roman coin was found on which was a picture of an ox—one of the servants of man. The ox was facing two things, a plough and an altar. The inscription on the coin read, *“Ready for either.”*

When Jesus Christ left the glories of Heaven to become a man, He came with two purposes in mind: to live a life of servitude and to die a death of sacrifice. In Mar 10:45, Jesus says, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Charles Spurgeon adapted the saying on this coin into one of the tenants of his life when he said, *“Let me be as the bullock that stands between the plough and the altar, to work or to be sacrificed; and let my motto be ‘ready for either.’”* God may call on us to die for His sake, and we should be willing. But more likely, He will call on us to *“plough”* for His sake, and for this we must also be willing.

In Joh 12:23, Jesus said:

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

Our Lord made this statement just after entering Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. He was coming very close to His hour of trial. Soon, He would be betrayed, arrested, scourged, beaten, shamed, and spit upon. A crown of thorns would be forced on His brow as those He created mocked Him. He would carry a weighty beam to Golgotha where heavy nails would pierce His arms and feet while the sins of all mankind pierced His heart. Jesus would suffer the pain of crucifixion and the inexplicable pain of being spiritually separated from His heavenly Father.

And yet, in Jesus' statement in verse 23, He only mentions the hour of glorification. It was as if He looked beyond the great valley of suffering before Him, and saw only the mountaintop of eternal glory.

Compare with Luk 24:26. On the road to Emmaus, the disciples were trying to make sense of all that had happened to the Christ, when Jesus came and walked with them to bring clarity to their doubts and fears. He said to them:

“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

We often struggle to make sense out of the suffering in this world—whether it be the suffering of a child, a loved one, a stranger, or our own suffering. The Word of God makes it clear that on our own journey—from the cross to the crown—it is necessary for us also to suffer in order to grasp hold of greater glory.

Multiple times in Scripture, the Spirit of God couples suffering with glory. Take note of these verses (emphasis added):

- **2Co 4:17–18**
*“For **momentary, light affliction** is producing for us an **eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*
- **2Ti 2:10**
*“For this reason I **endure all things** for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it **eternal glory.**”*
- **1Pe 1:6–7**
*“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been [**greatly**] **distressed by various trials** [the words “various trials” mean “diverse or varied things that test our faith”], so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to **result in praise and glory** and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*
- **1Pe 4:12–13**
*“Beloved, do not be surprised at the **fiery ordeal** among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that*

*you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of **His glory** you may rejoice with exultation.*

- **1Pe 4:15–16**

*“Make sure that none of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone **suffers** as a Christian, he is not ashamed, but is to **glorify** God in this name.”*

- **1Pe 5:10**

*“After you have **suffered** for a little while, the God of all grace, who **called you to His eternal glory** in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”*

- **Rom 8:16–18**

*“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory** that is to be revealed to us.”*

Scripture makes a very obvious connection between suffering and glory. But these last verses (Rom 8:16–18) make it clear that we cannot assume that suffering will lead to glory for each and every one of us. In order to share His glory, we must be conformed to His likeness in times of suffering.

So, how do we suffer “*with Him*” and “*like Him*”? Peter gives us the answer to this question in his discourse on suffering found in 1 Peter.

1Pe 2:18–25

These verses are primarily directed to unjust suffering—the kind that Jesus so righteously suffered. But the principles that please God, in times of unjust suffering, are just as relevant to any kind of suffering or trial we may face.

1Pe 2:21

“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.”

- As believers, we are called to suffering. This is part of God’s plan for our life. Here, “*called*” is the Greek word *kaleo*, meaning “something we are summoned to be a part of.” Therefore, we should not be surprised when we encounter suffering of any kind (1Pe 4:12–13).
- I learned a quote from my son, though I don’t remember who said it. The quote says, “You cannot know what you are to do until you know what story or stories you are a part of.” It is a story of eternal glory, but glory that only comes through sacrifice.

- Christ not only suffered for us, but He suffered in order to leave us an example of how to suffer by faith. His suffering left “the footsteps in the sand” so to speak, that we might follow in those same steps. The word for “*example*” is actually *hupogrammos* indicating an “underwriting,” like drawing letters lightly on a page for a kindergartener to trace.

Suffering in the Steps of Jesus

I. A Conscience Toward God, 1Pe 2:19

To suffer in faith is the right thing to do in the eyes of God. Verse 21 says, “*since Christ also suffered for you ...*”

- In this passage on unjust suffering, Peter calls us to reflect on the weight of suffering Christ endured on our behalf. In light of His suffering on our behalf, we have no ground for backing away from unjust suffering that comes our way.
- Do any of us have any right to complain about anything, in light of our own sin? “*Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins*” (Lam 3:39).
- Consider also 1Co 6:19–20, “*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.*”
- Job’s wife did not understand suffering with a conscience toward God. In the midst of severe suffering and trial, she said to Job, “*Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!*” On the other hand, Job **did** understand suffering with a conscience toward God. He answered his wife with these words, “*‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin ...*” (Job 2:9–11).
- During China's Boxer Rebellion of 1900, insurgents captured a mission station, blocked all the gates but one, and in front of that one gate placed a cross flat on the ground. Then the word was passed to those inside that any who trampled the cross underfoot would be permitted their freedom and life, but that any refusing to do so would be shot. Terribly frightened, the first seven students trampled the cross under their feet and were allowed to go free. But the eighth student, a young girl, refused to commit the sacrilegious act. Kneeling beside the cross in prayer for strength, she arose and moved carefully around the cross, and went out to face the firing squad. Strengthened by her example, every one of the remaining ninety-two students followed her to the firing squad.

This girl, and those who followed her, understood a conscience toward God!

II. Bear up under Sorrows. 1Pe 2:19

This phrase speaks of carrying a great weight upon your shoulders, but bearing up under that weight. It is a willingness to carry the load, or burden of the suffering.

- A. Remember that in the Garden of Gethsemane, the soul of Jesus Christ was deeply grieved. He prayed, “*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will*” (Mat 26:39).
- B. We can rightly pray, as Jesus did, for suffering to be removed, but must simultaneously give soul-surrender to the suffering if it remains.
- C. In acceptance, there is peace.
- D. In Scripture, suffering is called a “fellowship” (1Pe 4:13, “*share*” being the Greek word *koinonia* meaning “fellowship”). There is a joint participation between Christ and the believer during times of suffering. In that fellowship, our Savior is the strong Gentleman—there to “carry the heavy load.”
- E. In 2Co 12:9, Jesus said to the Apostle Paul, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.*”
 1. “*Sufficient*” is *arkeo*, “to be possessed of unfailing strength.”
 2. “*Power*” is *dunamis*, “inherent power residing within a person’s soul.” This refers to moral power and excellence of soul. The moral power and excellence of the believer’s soul is perfected by Christ in times of weakness.
 3. “*Perfected*” is *teleo*, “to bring to maturity or completeness.”
 4. “*Weakness*” is *astheneia*, “febleness of body or soul.” In the physical sense, this refers to infirmity; in the soul sense, it refers to a weakness to understand a thing, to restrain corrupt desires, to bear trials and troubles.
 5. Jesus was saying to Paul, “My grace gives you unfailing strength, that moral power and excellence may dwell in your soul, bringing you to maturity and completeness in times of infirmity, doubt, temptation, and trial.” What a promise!
 6. Context of this promise:
 - a. In 2Co 11, Paul speaks of the suffering he went through as a servant of the Gospel (1Co 11:23–33).
 - b. In 2Co 12:1–4, Paul speaks of being “*caught up to the third heaven*” where he understood things he was not permitted to repeat.
 - c. In Acts 9, Ananias was instructed by the Lord to go to Paul in Damascus to “*lay hands on [Paul] ... that he might regain his sight.*” When Ananias questioned the Lord about this command, the Lord answered by saying, “*Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake*” (emphasis added).

- d. Perhaps what Paul understood when he was caught up into the third heaven was not only the extent of his sufferings, but the greatness of the glory of suffering by faith!

7. 2Co 4:16–18

- a. Context of verses: In chapter 3, Paul is given a ministry of glory—the Gospel.
- b. Context of verses: In chapter 4, in the giving of the Gospel, Paul incurred suffering.
- c. This suffering did not cause him to lose heart.
- d. In verses 16–18, Paul gives us three sets of opposites. He describes suffering as seen, momentary, and light. He describes glory as unseen, eternal, and weighty!
- e. Compare with Rom 8:18, “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*” Why? Because the sufferings are momentary and light, while the glory is eternal and weighty!

Consider Paul’s conclusion from all of this. “*Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast [to glory in a thing] about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell [tabernacle, where the glory of the Lord resided!] in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses [persecutions], with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2Co 12:9b–10).

Note: Paul’s words—“*gladly ... boast ... content[ment]*”—are stated in the midst of a suffering situation.

III. **Patient Endurance. 1Pe 2:20**

This is very similar to “bearing up under sorrows.” The distinction is that the “bearing up” refers to the weight of the suffering, whereas the patient endurance refers to the duration of the suffering.

- A. The Greek word for “*endure*” is *hupomone*, meaning “to abide, or to remain under.”
- B. In Heb 10:32–39, the author speaks to Hebrew believers who suffered much, and yet rejoiced much in their suffering. But he warns them that if they do not endure to the end of that suffering, they will fall short of the promised glory.
- C. “*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart*” (Heb 12:1–3).

- D. The author of Hebrews gives us three things to do in order to patiently endure in times of trial and suffering:
1. In Heb 12:1, look to the “*cloud of witnesses*,” some of which are listed for us in the previous chapter (sandwiched between two passages on endurance). The same God who helped them through the long road of suffering is available to help us patiently endure.
 2. Also in verse 1, “*lay aside*” sin and “*encumbrance*.” In times of suffering, sin sidelines our faith and encumbrances distract us. Both need to be terminated.
 3. In Heb 12:2–3, fix “*our eyes [and our faith] on Jesus Christ*.” “*Consider*” is an accounting term meaning to add up the facts. As we saw in Joh 12:23, Jesus fixed His eyes not on the agony of the cross, but the joy of the glory. We should do the same.

IV. Commit no Sin, 1Pe 2:22

We know that the Lord Jesus Christ lived a sinless life. In verse 22, Peter outlines the proof of His sinless suffering when He was reviled, He did not revile back, nor did He utter threats against His persecutors. This word “revile” is a very strong word used for the mouth and, in the context of what Jesus went through, it is the “gash of the mouth” or using the mouth as a weapon. In the midst of all the mockery, the hurling of verbal and physical abuse, Jesus Christ did not sin, in thought, in word, or in deed.

- A. This is a very high standard that we are called to imitate. In unjust suffering, perhaps the greatest temptation is striking back to those who have imposed such suffering on us. This gives us a rare opportunity to imitate the gracious attitude of Jesus Christ.
- B. See Rom 12:17–21. This passage encourages us to show an attitude of grace toward those who do us wrong, to attempt to attain to peace, and to leave room for the wrath of God if the other party refuses to repent.
- C. The devil’s man receives good and gives back evil. The world’s man receives evil and gives back evil, or receives good and gives back good. But God’s man receives evil and gives back good.
- D. Remember the example of Job: “*In all this Job did not sin with his lips*” (Job 2:9–10).
- E. When suffering hits, there will always be that “onset moment”—in other words, the first realization of a test, trial, pain, or loss that has entered your life. It is crucial that the first moment be one of faith. The journey is easier when you start out on the right path, rather than having to retrace your steps and find the right path. Train yourself with small trials in order to be prepared for the larger ones that are yet to come.

V. Trust God—the Judge of All, 1Pe 2:23

There is really a two-fold aspect here.

A. First, we trust God to deal with the one causing unjust suffering in our life. That person is the primary source or cause of our suffering. When we encounter unjust suffering as a Christian, we are far better off to let God “sort it out” rather than to interfere with His justice. Consider these verses on the justice of God:

1. **Gen 16:14**

God judged Egypt for the suffering they inflicted on Israel.

2. **Gen 18:25**

When God was preparing to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham said, “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?*”

3. **1Sa 2:10**

“Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered. Against them He will thunder in the heavens. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth ... and will exalt the horn of His anointed.”

4. **Psa 7:8–9**

“The LORD judges the peoples; vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me.”

5. **Psa 9:8**

“And He will judge the world in righteousness.”

6. **Psa 58:11**

“And men will say, ‘Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth.’”

7. **Heb 10:30**

“For we know Him who said, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.’ And again, ‘THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.’”

B. The other aspect of trusting God is in our relationship to Him.

1. Remember in our 1 Peter 2 passage, Jesus is given as our example of how to suffer in faith. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus faced His own arrest, abuse, and crucifixion, He displayed this trust by praying, “*My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done*” (Mat 26:42b). His words expressed a total surrender to the will of the heavenly Father.
2. Although there may be a person or a situation that is causing the unjust suffering in our life, we must also trust that if God is allowing this suffering, it is for a

purpose. Do we trust that He, as our heavenly Father, works all things (even suffering) together for good in our life? See Rom 8:26–39.

3. Paul speaks of being burdened beyond his own strength, for the purpose of learning to trust not in himself, but in God who raises the dead (2Co 1:8–9).

VI. Show Forgiveness, 1Pe 2:24

- A. This verse speaks of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. His suffering led Him to the shame and pain of crucifixion for the sins of the world. It is through His death on the cross, where *“He Himself bore our sins in His body”* that we can enjoy the spiritual freedom of forgiveness. Even as Jesus hung with the nails piercing His hands and feet He prayed to the Father, *“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luk 23:34).

As we suffer in the footsteps of Jesus, we are called on to display the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to those who unjustly cause our suffering. Paul urges us in Eph 4:31–32:

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

1. When we are suffering unjustly, there is a real temptation to fall into bitterness, wrath, and anger.
 2. These verses encourages us to follow, instead, the high path of tender-hearted forgiveness. To do so, is to walk through our suffering in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.
 3. The word *“just as”* is *kathos* in the Greek, meaning “to the same proportion, to the same degree.”
- B. Consider these characteristics of the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and forgive others in just the same way:

1. **Psa 103:2–3** (emphasis added)

*“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; Who pardons **all** your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases.”*

Col 2:13b (emphasis added)

*“... having forgiven **us all** our transgressions.”*

The forgiveness of Jesus Christ covers all sins! Therefore, we should be willing to forgive others who bring suffering on us—we should be willing to forgive all sins, the ones we consider both big and small.

2. **Mat 18:21–22**

“Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’ ”

- a. The forgiveness of Jesus Christ knows no limit. If He commanded Peter to forgive his brother up to 490 times in a day, think how much greater His forgiveness is for us! This should not give us license to continue in sin; rather out of appreciation for His grace, it should motivate us to strive for purity from sin.
- b. There should be no limit to the number of times we are willing to forgive our brothers and sisters in Christ. I have never had anyone sin against me 490 times in one day, but I think I have come close to remembering someone’s sin against me that many times in a day. When an unforgiving spirit repeatedly rises up within us, we must overcome it through confession and application—once again—of the forgiveness of Christ.

3. Notice also the use of the number 490. The only other time we see this number in Scripture is in relation to the 70 weeks in Daniel. Perhaps Jesus was bringing Peter’s mind into remembrance of the long suffering love of God for His people.

4. **Heb 8:12**

“FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”

5. **Psa 103:12**

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

- a. When Jesus forgives us, our sins are no longer an issue in our relationship with Him. Our sin is forgotten and moved from us as far as the east is from the west. (The east and west never meet, by the way!)
- b. When we forgive others, it frees us to move on from the sin that has been committed against us. In ongoing relationships, such as a marriage, the sin does not need to continue to be brought up between us and the other party. That’s freedom! We need to deal with people where they are in the present, not in the failure of their past. Remember, forgiveness cancels the past.

6. **Eph 1:7–8**

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight.”

- a. We do not deserve the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, nor is there anything we can do to earn it. Forgiveness is given to us as a gift when we believe in Him. I love the word used in this verse, “lavish.” It is the Greek word *perriseuo* and speaks of a “downpour, superabundance in both quality and quantity, something that is superfluous and extravagant.” This is the nature of God’s grace towards us in Christ!
 - b. We do not show forgiveness to others because they deserve it, we show it as a gift in reflection of the character of Jesus Christ. Nor, should we ask them to work to earn our forgiveness. Forgiveness is unconditional. If Jesus lavishes His grace on us, it seems only right that we could show more than a trace of grace to others!
7. **1Pe 2:24** (emphasis added)
*“and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for **by His wounds** you were healed.”*
- a. Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins: death on the cross. His love drove Him to suffer greatly in order to buy our freedom.
 - b. When we are willing to forgive others, it doesn’t mean we are overlooking the sin or saying the sin doesn’t matter; we are saying that we are willing to bear the suffering of it. We are willing to carry the burden of another’s sin because Jesus carries the burden of our sin (1Pe 5:7; Mat 11:28).
8. **Joh 8:11b** (emphasis added)
*“And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on **sin no more.**’”*
- a. When a woman was caught in the very act of adultery and thrown in the dirt at Jesus’ feet, He spoke these words to her. He assured her she was free from condemnation yet encouraged her not to continue in the same pattern of sin. He forgives us in order to give us an opportunity for confession and correction, to learn from our failures, and to move on to victory.
 - b. In the same way, we should encourage others to learn from sin and failure and to turn to Christ for correction. There is opportunity to minister to the person who has hurt us and show them the way to pick up and move on in God’s grace.
9. **Luk 7:47**
*“For this reason I say to you [He is speaking to the arrogant Pharisee], **her sins which are many have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.**”*
- a. The sinful woman, knowing how much she needed the forgiveness of Christ, loved Him far beyond the reach of the Pharisee’s “love,” for he did not realize His great need for Christ. Forgiveness builds love in a relationship.

- b. When we are willing and able to forgive others, it builds a bond of love between us that is sometimes stronger than before the breach of trust. The love of Christ is powerful (2Co 5:14–17)!

10. **2Co 5:14–19** (emphasis added)

*“For the **love of Christ controls us**, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh ... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**, namely, that God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”*

- a. At times, it seems very difficult to forgive another person who has greatly sinned against you. Actually, humanly speaking, it is nearly impossible. But when we depend on the love of Christ to be the power of our forgiveness, we are calling on a love far beyond ours—a love great enough to forgive the whole world!
- b. When we consider others as souls that Christ was willing to die for, what grounds do we have not to forgive? If they are believers, they are “new creatures in Christ”; if they are unbelievers, we have the opportunity to show them the love of Christ in a way they may never have seen before!

11. We may very well suffer persecution in the future from terrorists and radical Islamists. Our heart desire should be to see them come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord. As they share their hate with us, we need to be willing to share our love with them.

- a. We each are given a ministry—it is the ministry of reconciliation, meaning a bringing together of two separated parties. In relationships where there has been a breaking of fellowship through sin on the part of one party or both, the goal to strive for is reconciliation. That is always God’s desire. But sometimes only one party seeks after reconciliation. I would encourage you to be the party willing to reconcile, and pray for others to come to that same desire. To God be the glory!
- b. For example, Corrie Ten Boom was greatly hurt in the persecution of Christians in WWII. She suffered long in a concentration camp that took the life of her sister. After the war was over, she struggled with forgiveness and asked a pastor how to deal with the bitterness in her heart. This is the counsel he gave her:

“Forgiveness is like letting go of a bell rope. If you have ever seen a country church with a bell in the steeple, you will remember that to get the bell ringing you have to tug awhile. Once it has begun to ring, you merely maintain the momentum. As long as you keep pulling, the bell keeps ringing. Forgiveness is letting go of the rope. It is just that simple. But when you do so, the bell keeps ringing. Momentum is still at work. However, if you keep your hands off the rope, in time the bell stops ringing.”

VII. Healing and Ministry, 1Pe 2:24

Included in this verse on the redemption of man are the three little words, “*you were healed.*” This is the Greek word *iaomai*, meaning “to heal, to cure, to make whole.” It is used in Scripture, not only for the healing of salvation, but for the healing of body and soul from the wounds of suffering. Jesus is the Great Physician of our body, our soul, and our spirit.

A. Isa 61:1–3

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners ... to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”

B. 2Co 1:2–7

In this passage, Paul makes it very clear that we are comforted by God in our afflictions for the very purpose of learning to comfort others. As is the size of our affliction, so will be the size of our comfort. As is the size of our comfort, so will be the size of our ministry to others in affliction. This is one of the great fruits of our suffering, and this brings glory to God.

C. Your greatest ministry will come from your deepest pain! Faithful suffering gives us a voice in ministry.

VIII. Refinement and Growth, 1Pe 2:25

This section on suffering in the likeness of Jesus concludes with the words, “*For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*”

A. “*Straying*”—to lead away from the right way, to deceive, to lead away from the truth

B. The affliction that these “scattered” believers were going through had brought them back to a place of truth and right standing before God.

- C. Suffering refines our faith as seen in 1Pe 1:6–9.
Peter speaks of the refining power of affliction and likens it to the refining of gold. In these verses, you can almost hear the excitement in Peter’s voice over the hope, or assurance, of eternal glory. Imagine the joy that Peter found (after denying Christ) in being restored by Jesus Christ and now having the **hope** of eternal glory.
- D. Suffering brings spiritual growth as seen in Jam 1:2–4.
- E. Rom 5:1–5 also speaks of that which we gain through suffering.
- F. Even Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb 5:8).

No Scar?

Hast thou no scar?
 No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
 I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,
 I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star,
 Hast thou no scar?
 Hast thou no wound?
 Yet I was wounded by the archers, spend,
 Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent
 By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned:
 Hast thou no wound?
 No wound, no scar?
 Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
 And, pierced are the feet that follow Me;
 But thine are whole: can he have followed far
 Who has no wounds nor scar?

~ **Amy Carmichael**