

# Trusting God in Adversity



# Introduction

Today we come to the end of our study on *Trusting God in Adversity*. We have seen that suffering is a universal concern; that it touches the rich and the poor, the young and the old; that its intensity and longevity seem random; that it arrives suddenly and without warning; and that while some find gratifying relief, others remain in perpetual misery and sorrow. From the annals of world history, our own experiences in life, and daily reports of pain, loss, and death from near and far, it is beyond dispute that suffering is a major part of the fabric of creation and the world's population. And while we acknowledge its presence in our world, we would most certainly be relieved if it no longer existed or had the power to ever hurt us again.



# Introduction

For those embracing a worldview which denies the existence of the triune God, the prospects of finding ultimate answers or comfort in naturalism, rationalism, existentialism, scientism, psychology, or the endless array of self-help formulas seems futile. In contrast, Carl F.H. Henry offers a very different perspective: “The Christian revelation contends that the meaning of the cosmos and man and history is transcendentally given in the form of intelligible divine disclosure.” The inspired Scriptures have been given to us in order that we might know God and the things He has chosen to reveal to us. R.C. Sproul states it plainly: “One of the most important advantages the Bible gives us is that it provides information that is not available anywhere else.”

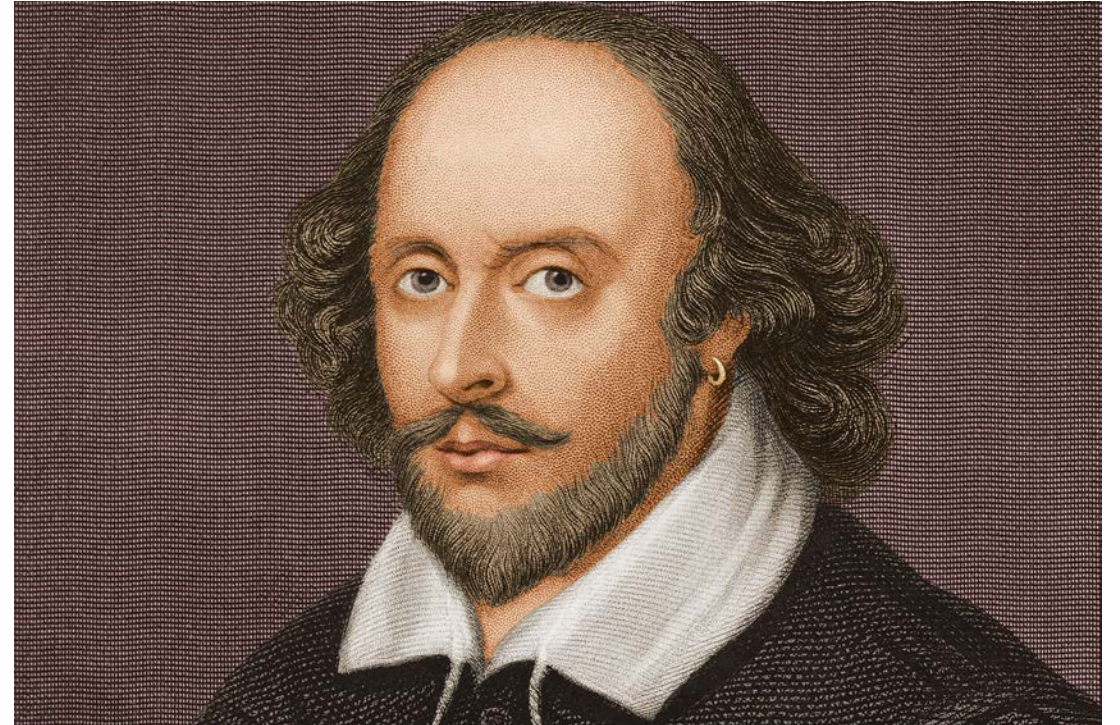


# Introduction

One of the surprising revelations we find regarding suffering is that God uses it in our lives for our good. In the whole of Scripture, God declares that the losses and pains that we suffer are not in vain. And even though there remains a mystery surrounding suffering, as philosopher Peter Kreeft has noted, the benefits that accrue to those who suffer come from God's hands and are filled with His grace and mercy. We will begin our study today by citing one of the benefits which Dr. Kreeft brings to our attention: "Our part is to receive that work (the finished work of Christ) and let it work itself out in and through our lives, including our tears....Suffering is Christ's invitation to us to follow him." What other lessons await for those who weep?

“Sweet are the uses of adversity.”

- William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*







# Lesson 1: We Learn to Stop Sinning

- “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for **whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin**, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God” (1 Pet. 4:1-2).
- When we suffer, as John Calvin suggested, “we are effectually supplied with invincible weapons to subdue the flesh, if we recognize as we ought the power of Christ’s death.”
- The perfect tense is used by Peter in the verb translated “has ceased,” indicating “that the action occurred in the past and has lasting effect for the present and the future” (Kistemaker).

# The Mortification of Sin

“True enough, suffering leads many a Christian to deeper repentance and thus, in the providence of God, has its wholesome uses.”

- R.C.H. Lenski

“If suffering does come, they (Christians) are to regard it as a welcome means for the mortification of sinful flesh.”

- Bo Reicke



# “Freed From Sin”

- Paul develops this same theme in Romans 6: “Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, **that our body of sin might be done away with**, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for **he who has died is freed from sin**” (Rom. 6:6-7).
- “I have been **crucified with Christ**” (Gal. 2:20).
- “How shall we who **died to sin** still live in it? (Rom. 6:2).
- “We have been buried with Him though **baptism into death**” (Rom. 6:4).
- “...and having been **freed from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18).



# Dallas Willard

“We can no longer run on sin because our engines have been switched over to another, superior type of fuel. We cannot run on that fuel *and* on the other at the same time. We cannot live from Christ *and* from sin.”



1935-2013

Late Philosophy Professor  
University of Southern California in Los Angeles

# The Essence of Suffering

“To die to self and what self wants is the essence of suffering. If I want  $x$  and I get  $y$  instead, I suffer, both because I do not get  $x$ , which I want, and also because I get  $y$ , which I do not want. But if I want only God’s will, I do not suffer, because I always get God’s will. We suffer to the extent that we are out of line with reality, ultimate reality, God’s will.”



**Peter Kreeft**

1937 –

Professor of Philosophy, Boston College

# Lesson 2: We Share In The Sufferings of Christ

- “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also **to suffer for His sake**” (Phil. 1:29).
- “Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of **the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering**” (II Thess. 1:4-5).
- “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death” (Phil. 3:10).

# We Share In The Sufferings of Christ

- “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” (I Pt. 4:13).
- “For just as **the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance**, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ” (II Cor. 1:5).
- “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) **in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions**” (Col. 1:24).

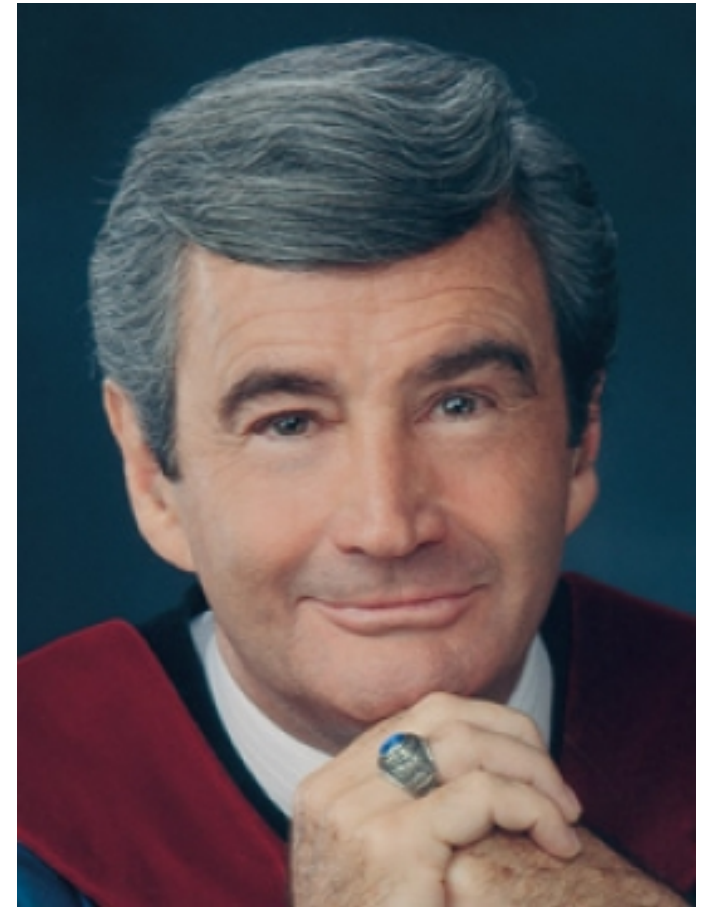


# Lesson 3: We Are Transformed by Christ

- “And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (I Pt. 5:10).
- God will restore us. He takes fallen sinners and perfects us, making us more and more like Christ. As Simon Kistemaker notes: “God will see that all is well again.”
- God uses suffering to make us strong in our faith, to strengthen us in our weakness, and to lay a strong foundation in our lives. “These verbs,” as Kistemaker suggests, “are synonymous and serve to emphasize the significance of God’s work in us.”

# What God Is Doing Through Adversity

“Often when troubles come upon us we think God is destroying us. Actually, he is tuning us, like a harp. When you tune a harp, you must press it against your shoulder. Sometimes God presses us against his shoulder so that he might tune us, so that we might make more beautiful music for him.”



**D. James Kennedy**

1930-2007



# Lesson 4: We Are Able To Comfort Others

- “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer” (II Cor. 1:3-6).
- “Only those who themselves have passed through the shadow, who have known suffering and trouble, are really able to comfort others” (D. James Kennedy).

# A Community of Brokenness



“Loss does not have to isolate us or make us feel lonely. Though it is a solitary experience we must face alone, loss is also a common experience that can lead us to community. It can create a community of brokenness. We must enter the darkness of loss alone, but once there we will find others with whom we can share life together.”

# Lesson 5: We Magnify God To The World

“Nothing is lacking when it comes to what Christ did on the cross. It is finished, just as he said. But something *is* lacking when it comes to showcasing the salvation story to others. Jesus isn’t around in the flesh, but you and I are. When we suffer and handle it with grace, we’re like walking billboards advertising the positive way God works in the life of someone who suffers.”



Joni Eareckson Tada

# Summary of Lessons Learned

A serene sunset scene over a beach. The sky is filled with warm, golden-orange light, transitioning from a pale yellow near the horizon to a soft, hazy blue at the top. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, glowing band of light. The ocean's surface is textured with gentle waves, reflecting the warm colors of the sky. In the foreground, a sandy beach curves along the water's edge. On the left side, a dark, silhouetted cliff face extends into the sea, adding a sense of depth and contrast to the scene.

We learn to stop sinning

We share in the sufferings of Christ

We are transformed by Christ

We are able to comfort others

We magnify God to the world

# Some Practical Counsel

- **Continue to praise and worship God in your affliction.** “I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me” (Ps. 119:75).
- **Remain in God’s Word:** Hear, read, study, memorize, and meditate. “My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!” (Ps. 119:25). “My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!” (Ps. 119:28). “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes” (Ps. 119:71). “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction” (Ps. 119:92). “I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word!” (Ps. 119:107).

# Some Practical Counsel

- **Live in obedience to Christ** by the power of the Holy Spirit. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word” (Ps. 119:67).
- **Read solid books on suffering** that are faithful to God’s Word.
- **Call out to faithful believers** who can come alongside you in various ways in your suffering.
- **Seek the Lord in prayer.**



# Spurgeon on Prayer

“You will win with God in prayer if you can look at your trials in this light: ‘Lord, I have this thorn in the flesh; I beseech you, deliver me from it; but meanwhile I bless you for it; for though I do not understand the why or the wherefore of it, I am persuaded there is love within it; therefore, while I ask you to remove it, so far as it seems evil to me, yet wherein it may to your better knowledge work my good, I bless you for it, and I am content to endure it so long as you see fit.’”

- Charles H. Spurgeon

# Suffering in Ravensbruck Concentration Camp

“There is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still.”

- Betsy ten Boom, Corrie's Sister



**Corrie ten Boom**

1892-1983

Nazi Concentration Camp Survivor

Author, *The Hiding Place*



“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” (Rom. 8:18).