

Our Suffering and the Glory of God

2 Corinthians 4:13-18

Today, we continue our look at the glory of God by considering a difficult topic: suffering. Suffering is a universal human experience that we see every day. It is everywhere in our world. And sooner or later it will come near to each of us. And when it does, it can seem so wrong and unfair at times. How should we think about such suffering? And specifically, what does our suffering have to do with the glory of God? Let's consider a passage that helps us understand our suffering and the glory of God.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

1. How does Paul describe his own suffering (vv. 8-12)?

2. What reminder does Paul give of the ultimate display and proof of God's goodness towards us in our suffering (v. 14)?

3. Though Paul suffered deeply in many ways, he says that he did not lose heart. What kept him from losing heart (vv. 16-18)?

Sam said:

Any attempt to endure, embrace, understand, or live with and through suffering must begin with our hearts and our deepest convictions standing firmly on the foundation of the Gospel. Without the assurance that we will be raised to life just as our Savior was raised and is now alive, suffering is just that: suffering.

4. Why do you think it is so important to stand firmly on the foundation of the Gospel in our suffering?

5. Sam posed the question, "What does my suffering have to do with the glory of God?" What connection does Paul make between suffering and God's glory?

Sam said:

God has graciously given suffering a greater purpose than sheer punishment or consequence. He's found a way to use our afflictions to help us grow into people who will love the Kingdom of God, and forget the Kingdom of the earth. To walk away from it joyfully, happily, and gladly carry the weight of eternity. I don't know about you, but I know I need this sort of help. I need to be conditioned to walk further away from this world and further into the Kingdom of God. Suffering, whether I like it or not, does this. And if I'm honest with myself...even though it hurts, I'm grateful for God finding a way to infuse purpose into my pain.

6. In what ways has God used afflictions in your life to help you "walk further away from this world and further into the Kingdom of God?"

7. For those who know Jesus, it is possible that suffering can make us more dependent on God. How does God use suffering to accomplish this? And how does this reveal the glory of God?

Sam said:

Very few people wake up with a switch flipped that makes suffering endurable because they've latched on to a heavenly, eternal perspective. You've got to spend time with God. Share your pain with other believers. Grow and change and transform with the power of the Holy Spirit. It took me MONTHS to work through my anxiety, but by the grace of God . . . I can now understand how that suffering led me closer to him. But give yourself the blessing of time. God's not going anywhere, and he's not leaving you behind. Walk with, shuffle along with him, sit on the ground and cry into his shoulder if you need to. But take the time. It's worth it to take the time to learn to trust God with your suffering.

8. Is there something that you might need to do to better learn to trust God with your suffering?

9. What is your main takeaway from this passage?