

OpenTheo

Glory and Suffering



Making Sense Out Of Suffering - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explores the concept of glory and how it relates to suffering. He argues that the pursuit of glory is not inherently bad, but it must be viewed in the context of a divine plan. Quoting Hebrews 2, Gregg notes that God brought sons to glory through the sufferings of Jesus, who was a perfect image of God's glory without sin. Gregg further explains how suffering can lead to humility, trust, and a decreased focus on self.

Transcript

I'm going to be talking in this session about a word that is a very familiar word to everybody, though my guess is that not one in a hundred Christians could give a definition of it. And yet it is the whole explanation for existence and for suffering. We're trying to make sense out of suffering.

In order to make sense of something, you have to be able to put it in its proper perspective with everything else. And if we don't understand what God's overall purpose is, why did he make the earth? Why did he make an earth where people would go wrong? Why did he make an earth where it would hurt to set them right, even hurt God and Christ to make things right? Why did God do all this? Why couldn't he do it differently? Well, first of all, I'm not going to say God couldn't have done things differently. God is a big God.

He might have any other options. But the course he took is a perfectly good course. I'm not sure there are other options better.

I don't think there are better options. They're also able to take in those instead. But what God has done is a perfectly brilliant thing, once you understand what he had in mind.

Now, in order to understand suffering and its place in the larger picture of things, I want us to look at a number of scriptures that use the word glory. This is the word that I said everybody knows, the word glory. But if I were to ask you to give a definition of the word glory, now think about it for a moment.

What would you call it? Well, one of the things that makes it difficult is there's different

nuances of the word in scripture. Sometimes glory means majesty or honor, something like that, of course. We use it that way in modern English, too.

But other times it has other nuances of meaning. Sometimes it seems to mean like radiance. Like when Jesus was glorified on the Mount of Tribes in Figuration, his face shined like the sun.

Paul talks about the glory of the sun is different than the glory of the moon, and even the stars differ from each other in glory. Obviously, the word glory there is something like a synonym for light or radiance. When Moses said to God, show me your glory, God said, no one can see my face but I'll let you see my back parts if I go by.

And when he did, Moses' face took on a radiance, a glow, just like Jesus' face did on the Mount of Tribes in Figuration. You know, glory has its strange nuances, but there's a very special meaning of the word glory, common in scripture, that I believe is related to understanding our whole topic that we're dealing with in these lectures. If you look at Luke chapter 24, I'm going to turn you to a number of scriptures, perhaps in somewhat rapid succession.

I don't know if it's faster now that people have their Bibles on their phones. I'm never going to change in my paper Bible for a phone Bible for a number of reasons. I mean, maybe you can find things faster on a phone, but when you do it in a paper Bible, you actually are getting a sense of where things really are, like this comes before that, and this comes after that, and you know, when you just look up a scripture, it finds the verse for you or the passage, but you've got no, you're not gaining intuitively any sense of where that stands in the body of scripture generally, and I'm not saying it's all bad, I'm just saying it's, to my mind, I wouldn't trade a physical Bible for an electronic one.

I love to turn the pages myself, actually. That's why I'm a Bible teacher, because I've always loved to turn the pages of the Bible. In Luke chapter 24, when Jesus had risen from the dead, he appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus who did not recognize him immediately, and I'm not going to read the whole story because I just need to bring out a point, and you probably know the story, but when Jesus kind of rebuked them for their lack of faith, in Luke 24, verse 25 and 26, he said to them, O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken, ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and enter into his glory? Now, ought it not be so? He says that the Messiah would suffer prior to entering into his glory.

Now, why would they think that would be appropriate? He said, he speaks about it as if, well, isn't it obvious? Shouldn't it be this way? Ought it not be that way? As if there's some kind of connection between the sufferings and the glory that Jesus is taking for granted in the conversation, and these guys haven't put it together yet, and maybe we haven't either. What is meant by glory? Well, we're going to explore that, but what we'll see is that Jesus seems to say that suffering is the necessary precursor to glory, and

obviously glory is something that's a major theme of scripture that we need to get a better handle on than we probably have at the moment. If you turn to Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 10, it says, For it was fitting for him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Now, Jesus said it was appropriate. Ought it not be so that the Messiah would suffer these things and introduce glory? Now, we're told God wants to bring many sons into glory, and we're told it was appropriate in bringing many sons to glory to make the first son who is brought to glory perfect through sufferings. Somehow there's an appropriateness about the sufferings being the precursor or the precondition for the glory.

Now, of course, this gives us the information that Jesus is not alone suffering to come into glory, but God has in mind to bring many sons into glory, and that strongly suggests many sons are going to have to get there the same way Jesus did. I seriously doubt that it was harder for God to accomplish in Jesus what he wanted to, then it will be in us. I mean, if Jesus had to suffer to reach this particular goal, this state called glory, then no doubt the other sons, the many sons that God is bringing into glory, will have to go through the same process.

And that's not only a theory I have, it's obviously stated many times in Scripture, including 1 Peter chapter 5. 1 Peter, by the way, is an epistle that's about suffering. A lot of the texts on the subject that give us insight come from 1 Peter, but I'm just looking at this one right now, 1 Peter 5, verse 10. But may the God of all grace, who called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

Now notice, the God of all grace has called us to what? To his eternal glory. In Hebrews 2, it said, God, in bringing many sons to glory, made the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Now he's saying, the God of grace who's called us to his eternal glory, after you have suffered a while, will perfect you, and strengthen, and settle you.

Now he's making the suffering of the Christian as the sufferings of Christ himself, are set in the context of this is how you get to where God is calling you to be, which is something called glory. Now I suspect that many Christians, when they read a verse like that, they just assume glory means like heaven. I've got a home in glory land that outshines the sun way beyond the blue.

Well, that's not really a synonym for heaven. Glory is not, actually, as far as I can tell, the Bible never uses the word glory to speak of a place like heaven. If the Bible says I've been called to glory, it's not talking about a place I've been called to go to.

It's referring to a state, a result of some kind that God is aiming at. Now, will I be in heaven and experience glory? No doubt. I'm not making any attempts to diminish the idea that there's a heaven and that we're going to heaven, but what I'm saying is there's something else which is much more interesting to understand that is meant when we are told that we are called to glory.

You'll see if you look at 1 Thessalonians 2.12, Paul said that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. Okay, so we've been called into glory. God is bringing many sons to glory.

The path to glory is the path of suffering. If you'll look also at 2 Thessalonians 2.14, Paul said, to which he called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. There's something called the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are to obtain.

We are called to this result, and the result is that we will obtain something called the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul talks about it as if he doesn't need to tell them what that means. It's supposed to be, I guess, more or less obvious.

What is the glory? What does it mean? You know, it says in John chapter 1 and verse 14, after John has described Jesus as the word who is with God and was God, in verse 14 he says, and the word was made flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld his glory. And then he says this, the glory as of, most translations say, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. But actually, in the Greek, the word the is not there.

There's no definite article, and in Greek nouns, when there's no definite article, it usually means it should be an indefinite, a. In other words, many translators would say, we beheld his glory, it was the glory as of an only begotten Son of a Father. Now we know Jesus and the Father have this special relationship, but is John talking about the Trinity or is he talking about something else? What we saw in Jesus was the glory that's like the glory of a Son and a Father. Now what is that connection? I believe it's referring to the likeness.

An only begotten Son of a Father probably looks more like his father than anyone else on the planet does. He might not. Some children don't look much like their parents, but certainly it's commonplace that the traits of the parents are passed down to children, and so that's why so many people say you're the spitting image of your old man, or you chip off the old block.

I can certainly tell whose son you are, you know, because you look like your dad. And it says in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3 that Jesus is the bright shining of God's glory and the expressed image of his person. Jesus is the bright shining of the glory of God and the image of his person.

This idea of mixing the idea of likeness or image and glory in passages is not unusual. In

fact, when Moses said, Lord show me your glory, God said no one can see my face and live. I didn't say anything about your face.

I want to see your glory. My glory is my face, my image. No one can see what I really look like and live like that.

The glory of God is what he is like. To share in the glory of God is to share in his likeness, which is why it says, for example, in I think it's Colossians 3, 4, it says, when Christ who is our life shall appear, then we shall appear with him in glory. But what's that mean? First John says it this way.

First John 2 and 3. Beloved, now we are the children of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him because we will see him as he is. Now we read a moment ago in Hebrews that it became him in bringing many sons to glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. It mentions that God's purpose, even in allowing Jesus to suffer and die, was that God's intention was to bring many children into glory.

But let me show you how the same concept is worded by Paul in Romans chapter 8. In Romans chapter 8 and verse 29, Paul said, for whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed into the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Now both statements say that God wanted not just one son, but many. Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren.

And God, it says in Hebrews, bringing many sons to glory. God's trying to have a big family. But in Hebrews it says what he's bringing them to is glory.

In Romans 8, 29 says he's bringing them into the image of his son. To obtain the glory of Jesus Christ is to be changed into his likeness and to share his likeness, to be like him. How do I know that? Paul's explicit about it in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18.

2 Corinthians 3.18. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now Paul says the Holy Spirit's working a work in us that's changing us into the image of Christ from glory to glory. As we look at his glory, as we're beholding the glory of the Lord, we're being changed into that same image.

Jesus is the image and glory of God. Paul actually says in 1 Corinthians 11, he says the woman was made in the image and likeness of man, the glory and likeness of man, he calls it. Likeness, image, glory, these are concepts which in certain kinds of contexts are interchangeable.

We're beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord and we're being changed into that same image from glory to glory. The glory of God to which we've been called is the likeness of Christ. Christ became, he was made perfect through what he suffered, the

Bible says.

Now I realize that's a troublesome statement because it's hard for us to imagine that Jesus was ever anything other than perfect before he suffered. If he's made perfect through the things he suffered, does that mean he was imperfect before? Well, it depends on what you mean by perfect. If perfect means sinless, well, Jesus was always sinless.

Perhaps when we think I want to be perfect, I mean I want to be sinless. That's the one kind of perfection. But perfection in the Greek means complete.

Perfect means complete or mature. And Jesus, when he came to earth, though he was God, he came as a baby. He came as one who came through a birth canal.

He didn't know anything. He was a little baby. He had to learn.

He had to learn language. He had to learn to walk. He had to learn to read and write just like anybody else.

It says about Jesus in his childhood, he increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor of God and man. Jesus came as a human being, God in the flesh, under human handicap so that he had to learn and develop and grow too. He had things to learn.

There were things he didn't know. When the disciples said, you know, when will your coming be? He said, I don't know. My father knows that.

He hasn't told me that. The angels don't know. No man knows.

I don't even know. Only the father knows that. Jesus, we sometimes think, well, since Jesus was God, he knew everything and he was perfect.

And so he was God. He was what God looks like when he becomes a little baby, part of the human race and grows and becomes a man and mature. And that maturing process, making him into the perfect high priest, the perfect redeemer, the perfect king and Lord, that took him going through the same paces other people have to go through.

He was made perfect through the things he suffered. That doesn't mean he was morally imperfect before that. That's not what's being discussed.

Saying that he had to learn lessons just like everybody else. In one place, it says he learned obedience through the things he suffered. That doesn't mean he was disobedient before.

It means that he learned the lessons of what it means to be an obedient son by coming to earth and having to go through the paces that God put him through. Now, I don't understand all that. That's mysterious to me, but certainly the writer of Hebrews takes it

for granted that Jesus was brought to the stage that God wanted him to be through a process of suffering.

And what he did, he suffered these things to enter into his glory. Now he's calling many sons to glory, to be like Jesus, to be brought into the image of the son. And that requires a very similar process.

We'll talk about why it does, but I mean, that's just something that's declared scripturally to be true. If you look at Romans 8 in verse 18, we see another interesting connection between suffering and glory, the glory to which we are called. In Romans 8 and verse 18, Paul said, Now, by the way, some translations say that will be revealed to us.

I've noticed quite a few translations have rendered that way. The Younger's literal translation is more like the King James and the New King James, says that it's the glory that will be revealed in us. In the Greek, it's the word eis.

We'd spell it e-i-s, eis. It's the word for into. So really, Paul says it's the glory that will be revealed into us.

I guess that could mean God will reveal it to our consciousness, or as it says in the King James and the New King James and the Young's literal, it'll be revealed in us. Now, if the glory is the likeness of Jesus, then that's what God is working in us. He's working in us to be like Jesus, and someday that glory, that likeness of Jesus, will be manifested in us.

And Paul says the sufferings that we're going through that get us there are inconsequential compared to that glory. They're not worthy to be compared with it. Now, when you suffer, suffering seems consequential.

I mean, maybe not so much if you stub your toe and you wrap it up and you go about your business and it hurts for a few days, but it's not too bad. I mean, that's not very consequential. But most of us have gone through suffering that's very consequential, life-changing, crippling even for a period of time of our lives, maybe long term, emotionally devastating.

There's all kinds of afflictions and suffering, some of them physical, some emotional, some of them spiritual, some of them mental. There's all kinds of ways that people suffer, and they're all in the same category of affliction. They're all in the category of suffering, and they all exist for the same reason.

And that is because it's only through suffering that God can bring sons into glory. It's the only way he can bring Jesus into glory. The Messiah had to suffer these things to enter his glory.

We've got to suffer them too. But as consequential and painful and significant as our sufferings feel sometimes at the times we're going through them, Paul says they're not

consequential compared to the glory. If you could only get a glimpse of the glory that would be revealed in us, you'd realize these sufferings are not even worthy to be measured on the same scales.

They're like the small dust in the balances. They don't affect the scales at all. They're so nothing.

They're not worthy to be compared. Now, similarly, in 2 Corinthians 4, Paul also speaks of the relationship of suffering with glory in a very interesting manner. In 2 Corinthians 4, verse 16 and following, Paul says, Therefore we do not lose heart, even though our outward man is perishing.

Now, he's been talking about the sufferings he goes through, including a deadly danger that he goes through. He's been through much that isn't deadly. He's been in prison many times.

He's been beaten. He's been shipwrecked. But he also has people trying to kill him all the time.

Paul has been through a great deal of sufferings. And he says, Therefore we do not lose heart, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. Now, Paul says, What's going on in my outward circumstances is actually having a positive impact on my inward state.

My outer man is afflicted. My outer man is in peril. My outer man is suffering.

But my inner man is going the opposite direction. These sufferings actually are bringing about an increase in improvement in my inner man. The inner man is renewed day by day.

Look at the next verse. For our light affliction, which is only for a moment, is working for us. Think of that phrase.

It is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we do not look at the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. We'll say more about verse 18 later on in the series, but I want to talk about verse 17 for a moment.

He described our afflictions, our light afflictions are but for a moment. That is, they're not very intense and they don't last very long. But the glory is an eternal weight.

It does last a long time and it's heavy, not like the light afflictions. It's heavy. It's a weight of glory.

It's not for a moment. It's eternal. Now, it's similar to what he said in Romans 8.18 that, you know, the sufferings of the first time are not worthy to be compared with the glory

that should be revealed to us.

But here he says something else. These light afflictions are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. That is, the glory is being produced, in a sense, through the afflictions.

It's not just that these two things correlate. There's a cause and effect. It's not just that while I am suffering, there's this correlative fact.

I know that someday things will be better and I'll be glorified. That's somewhat comforting while I have to go through this obnoxious suffering. It's rather this obnoxious suffering is working for me.

This results in me. Now, the glory that it's working is Christ-likeness. I cannot be like Christ if I do not suffer.

There's reasons for that. One is I'm too much unlike him in ways that cannot be changed without suffering. What are those ways? By nature, I am self-centered.

By nature, I put my interests ahead of others. It is not natural to do otherwise. But it's very unlike Christ to be self-centered.

Christ laid everything down. Though he was rich for our sakes, he became poor that you through his poverty might be made rich, Paul said in 2 Corinthians. In Philippians, he said, he exists in the form of God, but he emptied himself and took on the form of a servant, humbling himself even to the point of the cross.

And, you know, Jesus put others ahead of himself. That's unlike us, but that's how we need to become. How can I do that? Well, the best way to do that is to go against my selfish interests.

Nothing goes against my selfish interests as much as suffering. In fact, how would we even define suffering? I've mentioned there's suffering physical, there's emotional, there's, you know, economic suffering, there's, you know, there's all kinds of suffering. But what does, what is all suffering has in common is I don't like it.

By definition, suffering is what I don't like to experience. It can be anything that I don't like. But if I like it, I'm not suffering.

Any circumstance that I like does not qualify as suffering. It might be something someone else would hate. If they were going through it, they'd be suffering, but I'm not because I like it.

Well, then what makes suffering suffering? The fact that it goes against what I want. And in most cases, it's something I cannot rid myself of. It's something beyond my control.

I find that I am not able to have my way despite all my ingenuity and all my, all the things that I might trust in other than God to make my life work my way. When suffering comes, I don't have power over it. It's humbling.

It makes me more sensitive to other people, realizing, wow, other people would go through this all this time? I didn't, I was oblivious. Like I said, the guy who said, I can't believe in a God who let my daughter die. Well, daughters were dying all over the world before your daughter died.

You weren't sensitized to that, were you? Now you are. Now you realize there's other people out there besides you, or at least you should know it, because now you're experiencing what they've experienced. Suffering has a great number of ways it reorients those who receive it in the proper way.

Now, if we don't receive it the proper way, if we're not Christians, or if we don't respond like Christians to suffering, it just embitters us. And everybody knows that while it's entirely possible for suffering to make a person better, it's also possible to make them bitter. That all has to do with choices that we make.

The suffering, we don't choose the suffering. That happens without our choosing. We'd never probably choose suffering if we had the choice.

But if God has allowed suffering, then it's for us to choose. How am I going to respond to this? There's several ways the Bible instructs us, and we'll be talking about this before this is over this series. But the point here is, my response to suffering, if it is humble, if it is trusting, if it places others' concerns above my own, to the degree that I stop being so self-focused, to that same degree, my suffering ceases to be a torment.

The sufferings cause me... It's like somebody asked me once on the radio, if Adam and Eve had not fallen, and there's no sin, and there's a perfect world unfollowed, if Adam had dropped a rock on his foot, would it hurt? Now, what they're suggesting is, there would be no suffering, right? If there's no sin, there'd be no suffering. So dropping a rock on his foot would not hurt, or would it? Who's to say suffering is wrong? You know, if I lean up against a hot stove, it's going to hurt, and I'm glad it does, or else I'd just keep leaning on it until my hand was burned to a crisp. Pain is a warning signal.

It's a valuable warning signal. Do you know, we all know that lepers famously, you know, lose fingers and toes and things like that, and perhaps many people have the mistaken notion that leprosy is a disease that eats away these appendages. It does not.

That's not why lepers lose fingers and toes. It's because leprosy numbs the nerves, and they can't feel anything. We have no idea, because it happens instinctively all the time, how we favor our appendages.

If you kick something with your foot and stub your toe, you favor it for days until it's

better. A leper who's got leprosy in his feet, he doesn't know he stubbed his toe. He'll just keep doing it until he's broken it off.

You know, we're continually striking things by asking, you know, I cut myself the other day by cleaning a knife. It hurt, so I thought, oh, I've got something wrong. I better take care of this cut, but if it didn't hurt, I probably would cut the finger all the way off, because without pain, we don't know that we're injuring ourselves.

We don't know that anything is wrong that needs to be changed. Pain is a very good thing to experience. We'd rather not, but frankly, if there's something out of order that's going to damage us ultimately in a big way, pain warns us off of that behavior, because we are self-interested.

Pain and suffering is what interacts with our self-interest to make us change, stop doing what we were doing, and so, you know, it is because we have a disease that the surgery is required. In a perfect world where no one had ever sinned, probably it still hurt to drop a rock on your foot, and you probably wouldn't do it very often for that reason. You'd recover, but, you know, you'd avoid those kind of things.

That's what pain does. You hurt yourself, there's something you say, I know, that's a sharp edge. I don't want to touch that anymore, or that's hot, or there's a rock there.

I didn't know that. It stung my toe. I'm not going to do it.

I'm going to watch for it next time. Pain is a great behavior modifier, and modification is what we need, and if we weren't totally self-interested, then there wouldn't need to be quite the same amount of sufferings to make us rethink things, turn our thoughts toward God, turn our thoughts toward others, give us the ability to have compassion on others, make us humble to realize, hey, I'm not God. I'm not in charge of things.

If I was, I wouldn't be suffering. I'd stop it, but I can't, so it's humbling. There's many good effects that can come that all have to do with reshaping my twisted spirit and making me more like Jesus.

Jesus went through those things. I don't know that he needed them for all the same reasons we did, but he needed it to go through it to become mature and to become complete, and we need it too. Now, the glory of God is going to be revealed in us.

That is the image of Christ is going to be revealed in us, and this is, as I said, related to suffering. Now, the Bible indicates that the hope of the Christian is glory, not heaven. The hope of the Christian is glory.

Now, I believe we will be glorified when we're in heaven, but that glory is an increasing thing. We are being changed from glory to glory. It's sort of like Paul said, we're called to God's kingdom and his glory.

Well, his kingdom, that was started when Jesus was here with just himself and his disciples. It's been a growing proposition until he comes back and it becomes a universal reality. The glory is the same thing.

When we see Jesus, we take on something more of his image, which is the glory, but we're not all the way there. It's a lifetime of growth from glory to glory into that same image, Paul said. Now, what we're called to ultimately is to be just like Jesus, and the sufferings that we endure are the surgery, they are the therapy, they are the process by which this glory comes.

Now, I mentioned that we're called to glory, but let me just show you there's three times in the Bible that tell us what the hope of the Christian is, and they always agree. It's the glory of God. In Romans 5, 2, Romans 5, 2, Paul said, through whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

We are rejoicing in the hope of the believer, which is what? The glory of God, that God is glorified in us, that we will be like Jesus, and as Jesus glorified his father in all things, so will we glorify the Father. The glory of God is the purpose of the whole creation. The heavens declare the glory of God.

It says in Psalm 19, 1, God made the heavens to glorify him. Isaiah 43, 7, Isaiah 43, 7, God speaks of his people, he says, whom I have created for my glory. God created the world for his glory, created the universe for his glory, he created people for his glory.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, 31, 1 Corinthians 10, 31, he says, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. The purpose of our creation, the purpose of our existence, the purpose of our lives is that God would be glorified in us, in what we eat, what we drink, every decision we make is done for one purpose, the glory of God. Jesus said, let your light so shine before men, so men will see your good works and glorify your Father.

That's what you're here to live for. You let your light shine, you let the glory of the Lord shine through you, and you exhibit the, you know, the character of Christ more and more, and men will see your good works and they'll glorify your Father. That's the goal of the Christian.

Now, by the way, this is, in my opinion, the only goal of the Christian, is that God would be glorified. Now, I have other interests besides that goal. Like, I'd be interested in not suffering.

I kind of like not suffering. But if I have to suffer, then I say, let God be glorified in it. If this is going to glorify God, if God is happy to make me more like Christ through this painful process, let God be glorified.

That's what it's all about. The heavens declare it, I'm going to declare it. Whatever I do,

whether I eat or drink, it's going to be for the glory of God.

That's, there's, the purpose of existence is that God would be glorified. And that's what the Christian has to understand. Because many people are part of the Christian church who have never learned what it means to be a Christian or why.

They've been told, you need to become a Christian so that you don't suffer eternally. Well, that's, that's a pretty good thing to avoid, I have to admit. I would like to avoid suffering eternally, but isn't that just me being concerned with myself? What if it would glorify God for me to suffer eternally? Now, I don't believe that's a possibility.

I don't think that is. But what if it was? If you, on the day of judgment, God said, you know, you did pretty good, but I just think I'll be more glorified if you go to hell. What would you think? Oh, did I get a raw deal? Or would you think, well, if that, if God thinks that would glorify him, okay.

Now you might say, you're being unrealistic, no one would think that way. You're wrong. It's just that Christians haven't taught, have not been taught that that's the goal.

The goal is that God be glorified, not that I'd be happy, not that I'd be comfortable, not that I'd be pain-free, not that I'd be anything, except what God wants me to be. What did Jesus do to glorify God? What did it mean for Jesus to glorify God? It meant for him to give up heaven. Paul said he would give up, he could wish himself a curse from Christ if it would result in the glorification of God in the people of Israel.

You know, I mean, where do these people get these attitudes? Where did Jesus and Paul get this? Certainly not what I was taught in church. I was taught in church that Jesus is there to make my life better and give me eternal life too. It's all about me, right? Like everything else, before I was a Christian, it was about me.

Isn't the whole universe about me? No, not even a little bit of it is about me. And until I realized that, I haven't really converted. I'm just manipulating religion like I manipulate everything else in my life for me.

Conversion is when you say, it's not gonna be about me, it's gonna be about God. If God made everything, he deserves to get the glory, I'm here to glorify him. If I suffer and that glorifies him, well, so be it.

That's what Jesus did. I'm gonna be like him. And suffering, you just can't be like Jesus without suffering, because he suffered.

And so we have to understand that the hope of the Christian is that Christ to be glorified, not something more selfish than that. It says, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, Romans 5,2. But Paul also said about the hope of the Christian in Titus 2,13.

He said, Titus 2,13, we're looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ. Now the expression, the glorious appearing, that's how the King James reads it and some others. In the Greek, it reads the appearing of the glory, not the glorious appearing, but the appearing of the glory is how it reads in the Greek.

The New American Standard would be one example that renders that correctly. Paul said, the blessed hope is the appearing of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, where's that going to appear? Well, Paul said it's gonna be revealed in us.

Our hope is that I'll be like Jesus so much that God is glorified in me and God, the world can see what Jesus is like. They'll see the glory of the face of Jesus in me. And that's the hope of a Christian.

In Colossians 1,27, Paul said, to them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. The hope of glory is Christ in me. Christ manifested in me is the hope I have of glory.

Now, this is a series about suffering, but as I'm saying, the Bible does not divorce these two things. It joins them in a cause and effect relationship. Christ could not enter into his glory without suffering.

We cannot obtain the glory of Christ without suffering. And therefore, that's why suffering exists. It is to change me.

Now, something interesting that many Christians have not grasped about the glory of God, and that's what this lecture is obviously about, because the glory of God is the whole context and the whole rationale for making sense of suffering in the Christian life. The Bible says in Numbers 14,21, God said, truly, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord. As truly as God lives, how true is that? That's like 100% true, right? As truly as he lives, all the earth is going to be filled with the glory of the Lord.

That's the goal of the creation, to be filled with the glory of the Lord. In Isaiah 11,9, Isaiah 11,9 says, they shall not hurt nor destroy all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Now, we've had two verses.

One says the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord. The other says the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Those two ideas are put together in another verse, Habakkuk 2,14.

Habakkuk 2,14 says, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Now, one verse said the earth can be filled with the glory of the Lord. Another says it's going to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters continue.

The other says it's going to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. God's glory does fill the earth, but it's not known. When Isaiah saw his vision of God in Isaiah chapter 6, the angels were saying, holy, holy, holy is Lord God Almighty.

The whole earth is filled with his glory. God's, the heavens declare the glory of God. The glory, the creation shouts out the glory of God.

God is glorified in what he has made, but people don't know that. The earth is going to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. As the waters cover the sea, how much do waters cover the sea? I asked that question once to an audience that did three quarters.

Now, the question is not how much does the sea cover the earth? How much does water cover the sea? It's a hundred percent. The earth is going to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters continue. Now, that phrase, the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, is not accidentally, but deliberately picked up by Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6, Paul said, for it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness.

This is a reference back to Genesis 1, when God said, let there be light, when everything was dark, he said, let there be light. It is the God who caused light to shine out of darkness, who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Now, the earth is going to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Paul says God has given that light of the knowledge of the glory of God in our hearts. He's shined that light in our hearts in revealing Christ to us. In the face of Jesus, we see the glory of God.

And now we know it, but everyone on the earth has to know it, because the knowledge of the glory of God has got to fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. Well, I've got it. You've got it.

I know that I have the knowledge of the glory of God now because it's been revealed to me in Christ. This has to be revealed to everybody on the planet. And the emerging of the glory of God, both at the first coming and the second coming of Christ, is in the Bible referred to as a sunrise.

Let me show you this. There's some passages in the Old Testament about the first coming of Christ, which refer to it as a manifestation of the glory of the Lord seen by all. In Isaiah chapter 40, all right, Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be exalted, every mountain and hill shall be brought low, the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Now, what's the time frame of this? Anyone know? John the Baptist, isn't it? All four of the Gospels tell us that this is about John the Baptist.

He said, I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He quotes this passage. What's about to happen? The glory of the Lord is about to be revealed, and all flesh is going to see it together.

He's announcing that. He's announcing the fact that Jesus was about to be revealed to the world. Jesus was already in the world, but he was not revealed publicly until after John announced him.

If you look at Isaiah 60, it says in the opening of Isaiah 60, arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people, but the Lord will rise over you, and his glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Now, this is talking about a sunrise, and it's the glory of the Lord like the sun on a dark land. Darkness covers the earth, gross darkness covers the people, but the glory of the Lord rises up upon you. The Gentiles eventually come to this.

This, I believe, is again like chapter 40, referring to the first coming of Jesus. If you look over at Malachi, the very last chapter in the Old Testament, which also has a prediction about John the Baptist in it, it says in chapter 4, verse 1, Malachi 4, 1, for behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble, and the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that will leave neither root nor branch, but to you who fear my name, the Son of Righteousness, now this is S-U-N, it's not S-O-N, it's S-U-N, the Son of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. Now this is, I believe, many people apply this to the second coming, I believe this refers to the first coming, like Isaiah 60 and like Isaiah 40, the glory of the Lord being revealed, the glory of the Lord rising up, and everyone's seen it together, to those who fear my name, the sun will rise, it's a sunrise, now if you turn over to Luke, when John the Baptist was born, his father made a prophecy, understanding, perhaps only by revelation, what the significance of this whole thing was, in Luke chapter 1, verse 78, 79, Zechariah said, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the day spring, which is a strange old word, it really means daybreak, a dawning of a day, the day spring from on high has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness, the shadow, and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.

Now, when John the Baptist was born, his father prophesied that this was the dawning of a day, this is what Isaiah and Malachi, the Son of Righteousness arising, the glory of the

Lord rising upon you, the presence of Jesus in the world was like daytime, because he's the Son of Righteousness, but he left, he died, rose, and went away, and the sun isn't here anymore, it's now night, the night is far spent, by the way, and the day is close, and there's another day Jesus is going to appear again, and if you look over at 2 Peter chapter 1, and verse 19, Peter said, and so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns, and the morning star arises in your hearts. Now, wait a minute, the day dawned when Jesus came, but Jesus said the night is coming when no one can work, we must work while it's day, he was going away again, there'd be nighttime again, but there's going to be another day dawning, Jesus is going to return, and Peter says, until that day we have to pay heed to the scriptures as the light shines in a dark place until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts, the dawning of the day has something to do with what's going on in our hearts, now I believe Jesus is going to return visibly, and physically, but it's like the dawning of the day, let me show you something that you're familiar with, but you didn't probably know what I'm about to share with you about it, in all likelihood, in Matthew chapter 24, Matthew 24, 27, Jesus said, for as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be, now the second coming of Christ is going to be like Jesus said in this translation, like the lightning that flashes from the east to the west, now have you ever seen lightning, what direction does it generally go when you see it, vertical, right, do you suppose it was much different in biblical times, or do you think lightning went east to west, obviously lightning doesn't go from east to west, so why would Jesus say that, I puzzled over that for many years, because he's not telling us, he's not revealing lightning goes east to west, he's speaking of it as if it's axiomatic, everyone knows, as the lightning goes from east to west, that's like a given, so shall it be when the Son of Man comes, but it isn't a given, lightning flashing from east to west, that's not a given, does that really happen, and I was puzzling over this for years, and one day I was just thinking about this, I was driving and thinking as I always do when I drive, and I thought, I wonder if lightning might mean something other than what I'm thinking of, could lightning mean like illumination, could lightning mean like these lamps or lightning in this room, could it mean that, I didn't know, but when I got home I pulled out a lexicon and looked it up, and to my surprise and happiness frankly, I found out that the word lightning is the word astrape, astrape, as the astrape flashes from the east to the west, so shall the coming Son of Man be, the word astrape has two meanings in the lexicon, the first is lightning, the second is bright shining, now what does that thought do to this verse, as the bright shining comes from the east and shines to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be, sounds like the dawning of the day to me, now by the way, just so you don't think it's far-fetched, if you look over at Luke 11 and verse 36, Jesus said in Luke 11, 36, if then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light, this verse has the word astrape in it, where do you find it there, where do you suppose, where's the word astrape here, the bright shining of a lamp, he said as when the bright shining of a lamp

gives you light, the bright shining, that's the word *astrape* in the Greek, the same one that's translated lightning in Matthew 24, 27, only here it's translated bright shining, why, well because it has to, it wouldn't make sense to translate the lightning, the lightning of a lamp gives light to a room, no, the bright shining of a lamp does, now that's the same word, it obviously means bright shining in Luke 11, 36, it can't be anything else, could it mean bright shining in Matthew 24, 27, well there's no reason it couldn't, I've never found a translator that agreed with me, all translations I've ever found say lightning, flashes from east to west, but the Greek word doesn't necessarily mean lightning, in another place the same Greek word is translated the shining of a lamp, so there's no reason it couldn't be as the bright shining shines from the east to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be, and we give heed to the scriptures until the day dawns and the day star rises in our hearts, now let me show you maybe only one more passage, because we have to take another break here, it's break time, but there's a lot of good passages worth looking at, but this one maybe can be the last one to look at, I hope, Proverbs 4 and verse 18, I'm going to quote it from you, from the King James first, then I'm going to read the New King James, then I'm going to tell you what some modern translations say, the King James of this passage says this, but the path of the just is as the shining light that shines brighter and brighter until the perfect day, now how it reads in the New King James a little clearer, the path of the just is like the shining sun that shines even ever brighter until the perfect day, again the word perfect means complete, and so when you look in the New American Standard it'll say the path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day, the life of the Christian, the path of the righteous, it's like an ever-increasing light, like the light of the dawn actually, it gets brighter and it gets brighter until the full day, what is the full day? That's when the sun pops up over the horizon, you see the sun himself, but if you're up at dawn looking eastward or before dawn, as you know, long before the sun appears, at least a while before the sun appears, the sky stops being black and gets blue, then it gets orange, and you still can't see the sun because it's still over the horizon, but the sky is lightning, and then almost seemingly quite suddenly, if you keep watching, the sun kind of pops over the ridge and you see it's full day now, the sun is shining, everyone can see the sun, but in the meantime, the dawn is approaching, and the horizon is getting lighter and lighter, and that's what the path of the righteous we are told is, the path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn, it grows brighter and brighter until the full day, the day star will arise in our hearts, and that's when the dawn comes, now what does that mean? Well, I haven't really been able to sort it out entirely because the Bible doesn't explain it to believe, but it sounds to me like it exists, just as the glory of the Lord rose like a sunrise when Jesus first came and they saw the glory of the Lord in Jesus, so the glory of the Lord is going to be revealed again like a sunrise when he comes back, and that glory is going to be seen in his body as we become more and more like him, he will appear himself, I'm not denying the second coming of Christ, I'm talking about before that, before Jesus actually is visible, before he comes and is visibly seen, what will be observable? Well, it sounds to me like the glory of the Lord that

has worked in us through our suffering is growing brighter and brighter, that is the image of Christ, the church is becoming more like Jesus, now you might say, as I look at the churches, it seems like they're getting more worldly, I'm not talking about institutional church, I'm talking about the body of Christ, I'm talking about the fellowship of those who truly are following Jesus, who are walking in the spirit, who are faithful, if that's you, then you are becoming more like Jesus, that's the dawning of the glory of the coming of the Lord, my eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, right, and that's, I'm not sure the founding of America was to be considered the biblical dawning of the glory of God, but there is a dawning of the glory of God to be seen in the church, the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in us, our likeness to Christ, that's the blessed hope, that's the hope of the believer, is to be like Jesus and to glorify God, that when people see us, when they observe our lives, when they observe the church, when they observe our relationships, they see a different kind of humanity, they see the image of Christ in his body, and I don't know that 11 reads the case with the institutional churches, that's not what the Bible talks about, since the Bible doesn't talk about the institutional church, at least not until Revelation chapters 2 and 3, but this is what suffering is for, our light afflictions which are but for a moment work for us, a far more exceeding eternal way to glory, as we look not at the things we've seen, but the things they're not seeing, and so we're going to talk more about what it means to look at the things that are not seen, what exactly are we looking at, and what is it that's being accomplished by this, how is God working in our lives through suffering to be more like Jesus, that's what remains to be seen in our remaining sessions.