

The Blessing of Pain

Over the past weeks, we've studied a subject that most people try to avoid. It's uncomfortable. It's convicting. It's theologically deep. But it's also absolutely necessary. We've been walking through the doctrine of sin not to shame ourselves, but to sharpen our spiritual sight. Not to wallow in guilt, but to grasp the gravity of grace.

We've seen that sin is not just a list of bad behaviors. It is a condition of the heart. It warps the will, dims the understanding, and disorders the affections. Sin defiles, disables, deceives. Worst of all, it separates us from the God who made us for His glory.

We've examined how sin starts in small compromises and ends in catastrophe. We've seen how it makes us ineffective, self-justifying, and even self-destructive. We've watched it corrupt Saul's mind, burden David's conscience, and mar the image of God in man.

And here's the sobering truth: sin always leads somewhere. It does not sit still. It grows. And if left unrepented, it leads to death: spiritually for now, but eternally forever.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The fact that the ultimate judgment of God involves hell does not mean that all judgment is meant for destruction. Although there is suffering that is part of God's judgment for sin, not all suffering is because of our sin; so I will try to address this also this morning.

So today, as we bring this study to a close, I want to speak to you about judgment. But not only in the fire-and-brimstone sense. Judgment, in God's hands, can be a refining fire. Whether caused by sin, simply by living life in a fallen world, or by God's hand of discipline, suffering can be a blessing.

This is the conclusion of our doctrine of sin, but not the end of the story. For

wherever sin abounds, grace does much more abound. And the greatest mercy of all is that God does not waste our suffering.

1. Suffering *might* be due to our judgment (emphasis on might) -

Some sin is action, other sin is attitude. Some sin is intended against God and some against others. All our sin is ultimately against God because it is against God's divine peace and love and so even sins that we think affect *only us* will still fall under God's judgment. After having committed adultery against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, after having committed conspiracy with Joab, after having murdered Uriah, after causing Israel's suffering for the judgment of its king, David recognized this and said,

Ps 51:2-4 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

No matter what sin we commit, God is the ultimate judge.

I don't think it would be a stretch to say that all sin against society is some form of bullying and we generally hate bullying. Unless someone has hardened his heart and is calloused to sin, I think a bully must have a certain sense of self loathing. When we see someone mocking someone for the way they look or cheating someone, it bothers us. We really understand the judgment of sin when we feel indignation over some kid bullying *our* kid. Amen, moms?

Our sense of judgment probably doesn't allow for a sense of restoration when someone repents. It is probably more like a sense of getting even, which is why some people see a conflict with

God's mercy and His wrath. But, God is not arbitrary. There is a purpose in His judgment.

The purpose of judgment and punishment is to help us understand the pain caused by our selfishness and the false pleasure of sin and to have a chance to feel remorse for causing that pain. It could be the pain we have caused directly to someone or it could be the pain to a society that our actions or attitudes have contributed to. When someone fails to receive that lesson, they remain in judgment.

Heb 12:7-13 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Stop and think about that. If we didn't come under chastisement from God, it would be because we are not His children!

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Chastisement is not God getting even. When we are chastised we should pick up our feet and hands and get moving in the right direction. There is a peaceable fruit of righteousness that comes from learning from judgment.

2Cor 7:9-11 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Do we ever get a break from suffering for sin? Actually, yes.

Rom 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

If God spares us and is merciful, the purpose is to show us how good it can be if we turn to God. If you get hung up on God's divine wisdom as to how long He will be merciful, you could get lulled into spiritual complacency. You might end up trying to see how much you can get away with before God turns to you in judgment.

2. Suffering might not be due to *our* judgment (emphasis on our) -

Suffering might not necessarily be due to *our* judgment. It could be from God's judgment on someone else and we

are that person's collateral damage. God has judged this world in general.

Gen 3:22-24 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:
23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Now there will be sorrow bringing forth children, the ground is cursed, and in the sweat of our face we will eat our bread.

Sometimes God's judgment of decay and death impacts us and people make the mistake thinking that someone sinned and brought the judgment on.

John 9:1-3 And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

The man's *parents* had not sinned. The *man* had not sinned. This was just God's general judgment on the world and was now an occasion to be gracious and bless the man with sight.

Matt 5:44-45 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of

your Father which is in heaven:
for he maketh his sun to rise on
the evil and on the good, and
sendeth rain on the just and on
the unjust.

God evenly applies His justice across the world. For some, the sun is blessing and for others it is a curse. For some, the rain is a blessing, for others a curse. If you are standing next to someone who is getting rained on, you are going to get wet, too.

Sometimes we suffer because of someone else's sin. If you pull a trigger and shoot me...who sinned? Who suffered? (Actually, both: the shooter *and* the victim).

3. Suffering might not be due to our *judgment* (emphasis on judgment) -

Sometimes the suffering we go through happens because we need to grow spiritually. The trials we go through certainly do teach us.

Jas 1:2-4 My brethren, count it
all joy when ye fall into divers
temptations;

3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of
your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her*
perfect work, that ye may be
perfect and entire, wanting
nothing.

We need to be patient as we learn. I would *prefer* to learn my lessons only from reading the Book, but some things in life can only be appreciated by going through the experience. Before going through a trial, someone could underestimate the suffering of someone else. They might say, "What's the big deal about having a major sickness? You'll learn to adjust." But, then you get stricken and you find out what the big deal is. When that happens, our trials help us to bring comfort to others.

2Cor 1:3-6 Blessed *be* God, even
the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the Father of mercies, and

the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Many times the purpose of going through trials is so we can share what God has taught us with others.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

When we are afflicted, it is for the sake of being able to reach others.

4. Suffering is a blessing -

We have walked through the dark valley of human sin together. We have seen how sin begins with a decision, hardens with denial, spreads through defilement, and disables the heart and mind. We've seen how sin blinds, breaks, and builds strongholds that the flesh alone cannot tear down.

But as we conclude our study on the theology of sin, we must not end in despair. The final note is not damnation. It is hope. God does not judge merely to get even with us and punish us, but to purify. He does not permit suffering merely to cause pain, but to awaken, instruct, and even bless. Suffering can be a blessing. How can pain, that which we most dread, become a tool of grace in the hand of a loving God? While suffering is often the result of sin, either ours or others', it can also be God's instrument of redemption and instruction. Pain can also serve as a warning to back away from what you are doing. In one report I read:

Scientists have identified a genetic defect in children who cannot feel pain. Sound like a blessed way to live? It's not.

[Scientists] who found the gene describe six related children who have never felt pain in their lives because of the very rare disorder...Their experience illustrates that pain is an important warning of injury, disease or danger that signals people to save themselves from further injury. Life without that signal, the report shows, is dangerous.

Because the children felt no pain from biting themselves, for example, all six had injuries to their lips, some requiring later plastic surgery. Two had lost one-third of their tongues.

Most had suffered fractures or bone infections that were diagnosed only later on because of limping or lack of using a limb.

Some also had been scalded by boiling liquids or steam, or burned from sitting on radiators....¹

Let's develop four truths that show how suffering, especially through pain, serves a divine purpose.

- We struggle together.

We are in a network of struggle together. Sometimes struggling to overcome sin, sometimes to help someone else to overcome sin or life struggles. Sometimes we are struggling to learn. Sometimes we struggle as victims. We are not alone.

Rom 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to

¹http://www.nbcnews.com/id/16185231/ns/health-health_care/t/wish-you-could-feel-no-pain-think-again/#.V7YTyZgrl2w

himself.

No man is an island.

1Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

The struggle brings glory to God, peace to our hearts, salvation to our neighbors but the day will come when we shall see how it all worked together and the struggle will be over.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

1 Pet 2:20 teaches us that if we are going to have to go through struggles, at least let it not be because of sin.

1Pet 2:20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

Rev 21:3-7 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, **neither shall there be any more pain:** for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give

unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

- Pain gets our attention because it arrests and refocuses our thinking.

Pain is God's megaphone. It interrupts our routines, our ambitions, and our self-reliance. It halts the momentum of pride and forces us to reconsider our path.

Psa 119:67,71 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Even animals, when injured, pause to tend their wounds. How much more do human beings, made in the image of God, need those moments of discomfort to stop, reflect, and turn? Pain is often the first stage of repentance. Like the prodigal son in Luke 15, who "came to himself" only after hunger gnawed at his belly, so we often return to God only after suffering breaks the illusion that we can manage life on our own.

- Pain exists because anything outside the joy of God is not pleasant.

Why does pain exist at all? Because sin introduced a separation from the source of joy: God Himself. When we are distant from the presence of the Lord, even life's pleasures turn bitter, and suffering becomes a shadow of what we've lost.

Psa 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

When we step outside the boundary of God's will, we enter the territory of spiritual dissonance. Pain reminds us that

something is not right. It awakens a longing for restoration. The emptiness that sin produces is not just a consequence. It is a call back home.

- Pain, when it is judgment, reminds us that those who sin do not get away with it.

A world without consequences would quickly become a playground for wickedness.

Ecc 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

God uses the pain of judgment whether it be conscience, consequence, or chastisement to declare that sin matters. That rebellion is not invisible. That holiness still matters.

Judgmental pain is not vengeance. It is a warning. It is divine justice saying, "Sin is not a joke. You will not get away with it."

1Tim 5:24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some *men* they follow after.

If God's judgment seems slow, it is not because He is indifferent. It is because He is merciful. But do not mistake His patience for permissiveness.

- The ultimate judgment for which there is no remedy is Hell

Suffering in *this* life, whether chastisement or consequence, is always mingled with the possibility of redemption. But there is a suffering that bears no hope, no exit, no second chance.

Luke 16:22,23,26 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;
23 And in hell he lift up his eyes,

being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

Hell is not merely a theological concept. It is a real place of final judgment, eternal separation, and just recompense. It is where all pain converges into a single truth: "Sin cannot dwell with a holy God."

Heb 10:26,27 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

We will not come back multiple times after this life to see if we can finally 'get it right.'

Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Pain in this life is a grace because it's not yet Hell. If you're still breathing, you're still invited to repentance as long as you have not been so confirmed in your sin that you are in utter rebellion. Don't waste your pain. Let it turn you toward the Savior. If you've never turned from your sin and placed your trust in Jesus Christ, then all the pain in your life is just a shadow of something worse to come. I don't say that to frighten you, but to warn you that hell is real, and it's final. There is no second chance after this life. There is no reincarnation. There is no cosmic do-over. There is judgment.

But God has not left you without hope. He sent His only Son to take the judgment you deserve and to suffer in your place. The cross is where justice

and mercy meet. He suffered for you so that you wouldn't have to suffer forever. The pain you're feeling now may be God's way of calling you to repentance before it's too late.

2Cor 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

If you're hurting today, I want you to know that pain is not the end of your story. It may be the beginning of something redemptive. God never wastes pain: not in His children, and not even in those who are still far from Him.

If you're here and you've never turned from your sin and trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, then let this moment of pain or conviction be a warning, but also an invitation. The discomfort in your soul is not cruelty. It's mercy. God is calling you before it's too late. He sent His Son to suffer in your place, to bear your judgment, so that you might be spared eternal separation from Him.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You do not have to walk away under the weight of your sin. You do not have to carry the guilt, the shame, or the fear any longer. You can be forgiven. You can be made new. You can come to Christ today and find that even your worst pain was leading you to the greatest Person: Jesus.

But I also want to speak to the Christian. Maybe you've been under the heavy hand of God's chastening. Maybe you've been asking, "Why this trial? Why this season?" Let me remind you: God's chastisement is not His rejection. It's His love. He disciplines those whom He calls sons.

Heb 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be

joyous, but grievous:
nevertheless afterward it yieldeth
the peaceable fruit of
righteousness unto them which
are exercised thereby.

Maybe God's trying to teach you.
Maybe He's trying to draw you closer.
Maybe He's trying to break something in
you that needed to be broken. Or He
could be building something in you that
could not come any other way. But He's
not trying to destroy you. He's trying to
restore you.

So come. Don't waste the pain. Don't
waste the tears. Let God use them. Come
to the altar and say, "Lord, I am turning
back to you. I believe You're working,
even in this. Help me to be healed. Help
me to grow." Jesus suffered the pain of
the cross for our salvation. He bore the
ultimate pain of our judgment so we can
escape the pain of hell.

Today is not just a sermon. It's a call
to repentance, to restoration, and to trust.
Will you answer? This might be the
season God wants to bear fruit in you,
not in comfort, but in correction.

Heb 12:12 Wherefore lift up the
hands which hang down, and the
feeble knees;

Today would be a good day to say,
"Lord, I repent. I want to be healed."

Rom 6:23

1. Suffering might be due to our
judgment (emphasis on might) - Ps
51:2-4, Heb 12:7-13, 2Cor 7:9-11
2. Suffering might not be due to our
judgment (emphasis on our) - Gen
3:22-24, John 9:1-3, Matt 5:44-45
3. Suffering might not be due to our
judgment (emphasis on judgment) -
Jas 1:2-4, 2Cor 1:3-6,
4. Suffering is a blessing - Rom 14:7,
1Cor 12:26, Rom 8:28, 1Pet 2:20,
Rev 21:3-7, Psa 119:67,71, 16:11,
Ecc 8:11, 1Tim 5:24, Luke
16:22,23,26 , Heb 10:26,27, 9:27,
2Cor 6:2, Rom 6:23, Heb 12:11,
12:12