

SUNDAY MORNING

Announcements
Bill Brittenham

Song Leader
Daniel Allgor

Lord's Supper
Mike Davis Bill Rinehart
Sonny Monaghan Jerry Schnelle

Prayers
Rodney Ellis Cole Meador

SUNDAY EVENING

Announcements
Bill Brittenham

Song Leader
Jack Calvert

Lord's Supper
Mike Davis Bill Rinehart

Prayers
Melvin Potts Joseph Barry

WEDNESDAY

Announcements
Dee Minter

Song Leader
Daniel Allgor

Prayers
Jack Calvert W.H. McFerrin

Invitation
Bill Brittenham

ABOUT US

Elders
Jack Calvert Rodney Ellis

Deacons
Jon Barry Bill Brittenham
Mike Davis Dave Massey

Evangelist
Bryan Garlock

SERVICE TIMES

Sunday
Bible Study9:30 A.M.
Worship10:15 A.M.
Worship6:00 P.M.

Wednesday
Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION

Hear the word of truth Romans 10:13-17

Believe the truth..... Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24

Repent from all sins Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38

Confess the name of Christ ... Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:35-30

Be Baptized in His name Mark 16:16;
1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12

Walk in newness of life and **be faithful** unto death Romans 6:1-4; Revelation 2:10

Think On These Things

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Issue 32

The Benefits of Suffering

Bryan Garlock

Understandably, many are confused as to why God allows suffering in this world. It has even caused some to deny the existence of God – “How can I believe in a loving God when there is so much suffering?”

Why is there so much suffering? Much suffering is self-inflicted (alcohol and drug abuse and various crimes), some is the collateral damage attached (suffering the consequences of another’s evildoing like their selfishness or hate, gambling habits or crime), and other suffering is even a byproduct of choosing to do the right thing (consider Jesus, Paul, and Joseph). Regardless of the reason, it is not true that suffering irrefutably proves there is no God. Ironically, it is God who ought to be asking us why there is so much pain and suffering in this world. Everything He created was good and He gave us His Son and His word. What went wrong? Us!

Even more so, what has God done about worldly sorrows? Interestingly, it is often argued, “Why would an all-good and all-

loving God allow bad things to happen to good people?” However, God’s answer to the suffering in this world was by reconciling us back to Him through Jesus’ suffering on the cross (cf. Gen. 3.14-24; 12.1-3; Matt. 26.28; Luke 24.26; 2 Cor. 5.17-21, etc.). Thus, because “God is love” (1 John 4.8), even He has suffered in all of this (John 3.16). That is why it is strange how some never consider how God has been actively fighting the suffering. His intentions are to eliminate much suffering through obedience to His word and all physical suffering through rest in a heavenly home.

However, this article is not necessarily about why God allows suffering, but why suffering is beneficial for us. While it seems that “beneficial suffering” is an oxymoron, there are many reasons why suffering is *necessary* for our salvation.

Suffering makes us fully dependent upon God. What if there was no suffering? Would we even seek after God? Our

FAMILY TALK

Continue to remember and check on our shut-ins: **Willie Margaret Mobley, Bob Buls, Bonnie Allgor, Maxine Burnham,** and **Francine Davis.** Cards, calls and visits are ALWAYS needed and appreciated.

Melvin Potts is home recovering from his back surgery.

It has been good to see **Bob Buls** and **Bonnie Allgor** able to be at services some recently.

Nancy Rowe's brother, **Sammy Walker,** got a good report back on his cancer scan.

Cont. from page 1

response to suffering determines our trust in God. When we are tested, will we turn to God to get us through, or will we run from God – forsaking Him. Our suffering, then, keeps us from pride, causing us to rely on God rather than ourselves (2 Cor. 12.1-10).

Suffering shows us that God is not a respecter of persons. “...For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matt. 5.45)

Suffering helps us to learn to be content with what we have on earth (Phil. 4.11). Even more so, it makes us grateful for the good things – of which there are many – in this life.

Suffering helps us to see God’s greatness and to remain faithful to reach heaven – where there is no suffering. If we allow it to, suffering points us to God’s grace

poured out at the cross and keeps us coming back there each time we encounter sorrows.

Suffering makes us stronger and wiser for future trials (Rom. 5.3-5). Consider all the hardships you have faced in this life. How have previous troubles helped you in the present? Additionally, the character we develop helps us to avoid future suffering. This is one of those things where we say, “I won’t do that again!” and “I’ll be sure to teach others not to do that either!”

Suffering helps us to be sympathetic toward others and comfort them in their difficult times (2 Cor. 1.3-7).

With a new perspective on suffering, how will we respond? We can choose to obey Jesus and suffer for doing what is right (1 Peter 4.12-16), or we can suffer as an evildoer for our selfish choices. Either way, everyone suffers. We can suffer now, knowing that one day we will be blessed in God’s presence (Rom. 8.17; 2 Cor. 4.16-18), or we can suffer for all eternity in hell (2 Thess. 1.8-9) – only then will true suffering begin. BG

[some thoughts adapted]

What Needs to Go Down

Aaron Kemple

Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee!
E’en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be, nearer, my God, to Thee.

The words of that hymn comfort many oft troubled hearts. In it, the petition for God to be near and the assurances that He will be near can make every darkness a light and every sorrow a joy.

And Scripture says that anyone can come. James says that anyone can draw near to God and that when they do, He will draw near to

them (4:8). Peter said that anyone “in every nation who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him” (Acts 10:35). And Paul said that God is not far from anyone, wherever in the world they may be, for if they “grasp for Him, [they will] find Him” (Acts 17:24–28). Usually, it is the barriers that we create that broadens our distance from God. God wants fellowship with everyone since He aims to save everyone (1 Timothy 2:4). It is God who has forged the way for *anyone* who would come and be saved, “for all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21) – and that means you and me.

So, what can we do to remove those barriers and find that true communion and closeness with God?

We only get close through humility. He’s no superstar Rockstar being harassed for a signature or a selfie. He’s the Creator of the universe who sees who we are before we ever come – and still calls us to come. That’s why James tells us to “cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord...” (4:7-10). He’s already there with hand outstretched to “lift you up” even when He sees who we are.

And that same humility will help us get closer as we overcome sin. We have been assured that when we resist the Devil, he will flee. But resistance is washing the scent of it from our hands. It is filling our eyes with the tears of its pain. And when we do, we find solace in the heart of God because we have seen sin in us for what it really is (Gal 5:19–21; 1 John 2:3–4). Once forgiven, God will lift

us to no longer regret, no longer remember, and no longer reminisce because in the light of His presence, we will welcome His brightness in our every darkness.

Humility is making yourself “low” in comparison and as Vine’s calls it, “lowliness of mind.” Just as mountains were “brought low” (Luke 3:5) and Christ “emptied himself” (Philippians 2:7), Christians should lower themselves before God to draw near to Him.

Yet, in our culture as men, we have been taught to earn our place, position ourselves and never admit defeat.

And we wonder why closeness with God – in true communion and relationship – evades us? When humility shows us our place before the Creator as sinners and exposes the needs of others in our view above and beyond our own, we can come down. Mind you, this is not to say we are “down on yourself” or any such thing. Instead, it is the awakening of spirit to see how far up we must go to be anything like God. But with each self-view before the Creator and with others, we inch ever closer – on step at a time – closer to God. And we will find Him.

So, **start with humility.** Scripture affirms it; recommends it; and commands it.

What needs to go down is me. It’s the place to begin: Down. Because only in going down can it be possible that God will lift us up.

Our Fall Gospel Meeting is Sept. 9-12 with **Gary Henry.**