

Isaiah 43:1-3

But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹² So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. ¹³ It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. ¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

“Suffering – Buddhism says accept it, karma says pay it, fatalism says heroically endure it, secularism says avoid or fix it. From the Christian perspective, all of these cultures of suffering have an element of truth. Sufferers do indeed need to stop loving material goods too much. And yes, the Bible says that, in general, the suffering filling the world is the result of the human race turning from God. And we do indeed need to endure suffering and not let it overthrow us. Secularism is also right to warn us about being too accepting of conditions and factors that harm people and should be changed.... (but) Christianity teaches us to walk through it with God.

(Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, p. 31)

“Why Does Suffering Often Seem So Unfair?”**Discussion Questions**

1. What do the following passages teach us about suffering? (Rom. 5:3-5; 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 4:12-13; James 1:2-8; 1 Peter 1:6-7; Dt. 8:2-5).
 2. What are some other Bible passages that speak on suffering? What can they add to this week’s sermon?
 3. What would be your answer if someone asked, “Why is suffering at times so disproportionate and unfair?”
 4. Does suffering ‘automatically’ grow our faith and make us better? What are some factors that enable suffering to grow our faith vs. weaken our faith?
 5. What has been helpful for you during your times of suffering and pain?
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If you would like to discuss the subject of suffering further with Pastors Matt Lee or Michael Homan, feel free to email them at mlee@fpchouston.org or mhoman@fpchouston.org.

If you want to learn more about this topic, check out the resources below:

Walking with God through Pain and Suffering, Timothy Keller
Disappointment with God, Philip Yancey

Surprised by Suffering, R.C. Sproul
A Grace Disguised, Jerry Sittser