HaDavar Messianic Ministries

Making Sense of Suffering
With Pastor Jeff Carter

Week One

Network: ICC_Guest1
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I. Introduction

A. Caveats
1) This will not be an exhaustive or authoritative treatment of “suffering.”
2) “When dealing with the evil of suffering we have a double problem. First, something acceptable to the intellect needs to be said to help us understand some of the reasons for pain. Second, something emotionally satisfying needs to be said to help us bear the pain.” (Murphree)

3) If I can make sense of it intellectually, then I can more easily accept it emotionally.
4) We will approach suffering from a very specific perspective
5) Theodicy = a vindication of the goodness of God in light of the existence of evil
6) We will approach this topic from the perspective of the believer

B. Where did this idea come from?
1) The starting point was in developing a philosophy of history
2) Our minds cannot endure pointlessness
“We are all of us in our unbuttoned moods, philosophers of history. It is almost instinctive with us. We cannot live with our minds in chaos. When we learn something which upsets our mental framework we set about making a new framework into which we can fit experience ... we become philosophers of history ... because we cannot help looking for light upon our own lives.” (M. C. D'Arcy, The Sense of History)

“Have human events throughout the centuries had a specified direction, or have they been in an up-and-down movement without coherence? Is there a thought behind events in their succession?” (Berkhoff)

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B. Where did this idea come from?
3) Why has God designed history in this way?
4) God not only controls the contours of history in the outworking of His eternal plan, but He has also designed the succeeding historical phases through which mankind has sojourned in such a way so as to display His infinite glory and demonstrate His limitless mercy in providing for man the only way of salvation possible.
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B. Where did this idea come from?
5) The period of time before the fall—the time of innocence
6) The period after the fall—the time of human government and conscience
7) The choosing of Abraham and the calling of Moses—the time of law
8) Every era proclaims our need for God

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B. Where did this idea come from?
9) The age of the Millennium—the promised Sabbath rest
10) Each era lays out the subsequent steps in the unfolding plan of God
11) How does the church age fit in with the flow of divine history?

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C. Moving toward a solution
1) God never uses anyone without preparing them first
2) God prepares us for what is to come
Amos 3:7
“For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.”

I. Introduction
C. Moving toward a solution
3) God is interested in our faith
4) What future event will be the most overwhelming, shocking change in history—the second coming!
5) The purpose of this age seems to be the preparation of the world for the coming kingdom
6) The magnitude of the coming change requires a preparation that is immense as well

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C. Moving toward a solution
7) Mankind is finally grown up as a race
8) Spiritually, as well, we have reached a level of sophistication
9) This preparation was necessary before the dawning of the next age
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D. The limitations of this study
1) The road to glory leads directly through suffering
2) Other ways God prepares:
   - saving His people
   - sending His people to evangelize
   - using the Gentiles to save Israel
3) The path to the place of preparedness for the kingdom leads unavoidably through suffering

E. The Procedure of this study
1) A major purpose of the tribulation is the preparation of Israel for the second coming
2) Birth pangs = “suffering as preparation for significant change”
3) We will explore how God leads us through suffering to glory
4) Birth pangs in scripture
5) God uses discipline, training and refining
6) We are to share in the suffering of Christ
7) The church as the “body of Christ”
8) What are the “messianic woes”?
9) Suffering is the necessary path to glory
10) The “messianic woes” are “the birth pangs of the new creation”
“The steps by which we ascend to the place of joy are usually moist with tears.” (Spurgeon)

“When you have no experience of pain, it is rather hard to experience joy.” (Wald)

“If we suffer we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim 2:12 KJV).

“...to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation” (1 Pet 4:13).

“For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor 4:17).

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22b).

“But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering” (Rom 8:17 NLT).

“...as you share in suffering, you will also share God’s comfort” (2 Cor 1:7b NLT).
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F. Seeing suffering as necessary
   1) “The only road that leads to hope passes through suffering and death.” (McGrath)
   2) There must be something about the nature of suffering that God finds necessary
   3) Suffering is an intrusion—a favorite tool of Satan
   4) Suffering is also a tool in the hand of God

“...The great prize set before us is none other than a relationship with God Himself. But our vision is so distorted by sin that we see nothing but the lesser prizes around us ... our hearing is so dulled that we hear only the voices of the world and its transient goals.” (McGrath)

G. Why suffering?
   1) Sin has broken our relationship with God
   2) Sin has distorted the image of God within us
   3) Sin can be seen as the distortion of our natural tendencies
   4) God is using the suffering we experience to mold us into the image of His Son
   5) Suffering seems to be the only tool that is truly effective in capturing our attention
“... pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (Lewis)

“Suffering strips away our illusions of immortality. It causes anxiety to rear its ugly, yet revealing head. It batters down the gates of the citadel of illusions. It confronts us with the harsh facts of life and makes us ask those hard questions which have the power to erode falsehood and propel us away from the false security and transient rewards of the world toward our loving God.” (McGrath)

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G. Why suffering?
6) Suffering alone is immediate and powerful enough to force us to loosen the grip we have on the things of this world
7) Suffering helps make it clear that this world is not our home
8) Suffering enables us to put to death the deeds of the flesh
9) Suffering builds character
10) Jesus learned obedience through suffering

“These statements do not suggest that Christ was in some way disobedient or sinful. Rather, the growth He knew through suffering was a growth from immaturity to maturity.” (Robert L. Saucy)
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G. Why suffering?

11) Suffering builds our faith and trust in God’s sovereign wisdom

“Suffering is the crucible in which faith and confidence in God is developed.” (Anderson)

12) Suffering also plays a significant role in helping Christians grow toward holiness

“Suffering is integral, not optional, to those whose lives are, through the working of the Holy Spirit, being conformed to Christ” (McGrath)

13) Ten biblical reasons for suffering (blog):

- God may be working in a person’s life in a way that may not be immediately apparent
- This suffering may remove a cause for boasting
- Suffering may be used by God to display His glory to others
- Suffering may be used by God to demonstrate how the Body of Christ works
- Suffering may promote sanctification
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G. Why suffering?

- There might be a ministry that results from our suffering
- Suffering may serve to prepare us for future trials
- Suffering can be for our ultimate good
- Suffering may be an opportunity for God to exalt us
- Suffering may serve as a means to take us home to be with the Lord

“Affliction leading to death may just be God’s way of promoting someone to His presence.” (Feinberg)

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G. Why suffering?

14) Scripture indicates that suffering “must” take place
15) Just as it is necessary for Christ to suffer — so too, we must suffer (1 Peter 4:12)

21) But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.” (Luke 9:21-22)

25) “But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (Luke 17:25)

6) “He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” (Luke 24:6-7)
25And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24: 25-26)

6“You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. (Matt 24:6)

7“When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end. (Mark 13:7)

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22)

“One must pass through eschatological tribulations in order to enter the eschatological kingdom of God.”