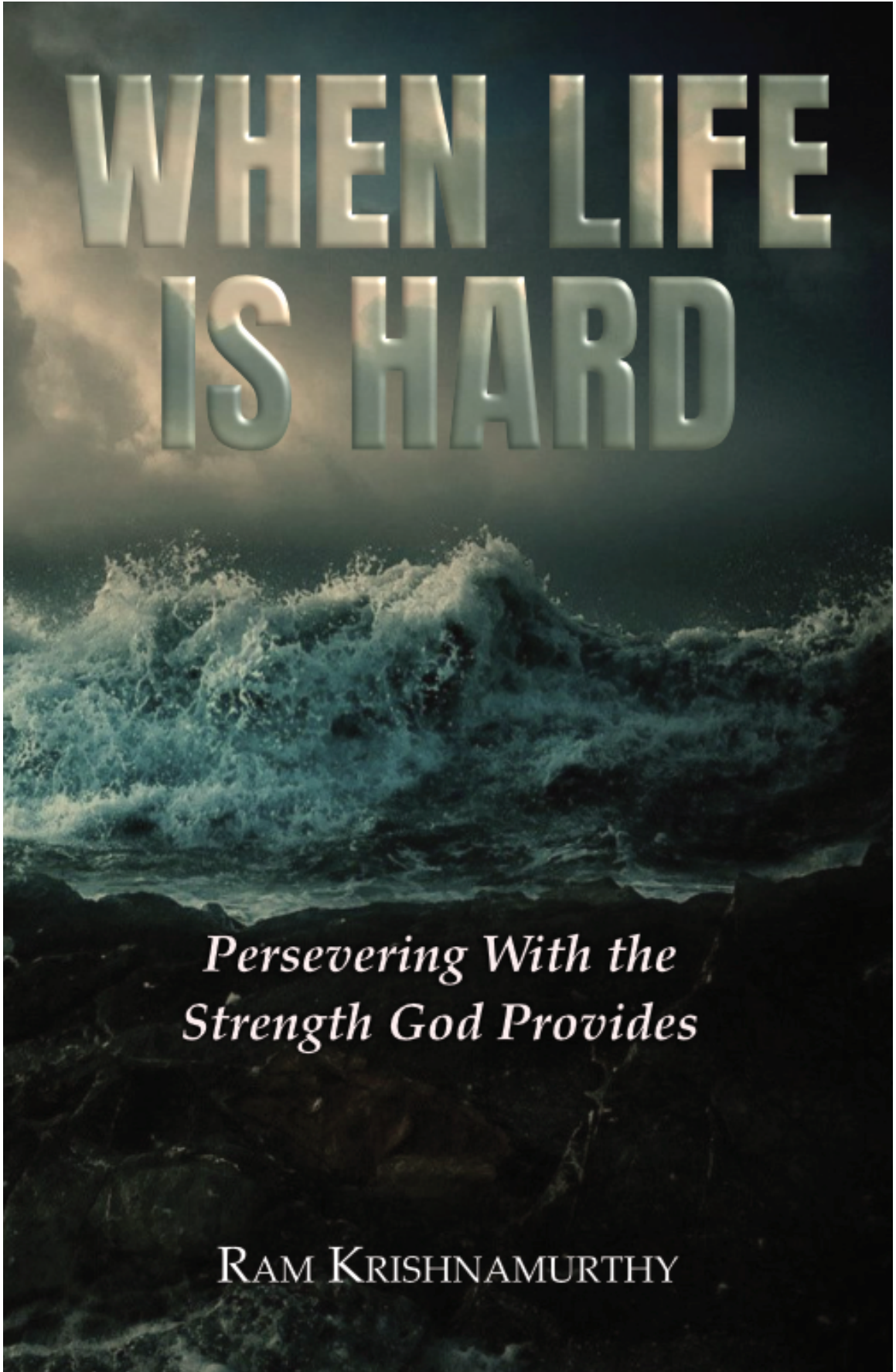




WHEN LIFE IS HARD

*Persevering With the
Strength God Provides*

RAM KRISHNAMURTHY

When Life Is Hard

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by Ram Krishnamurthy

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To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

—Jude 1:24-25

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When Life Is Hard, by Ram Krishnamurthy, compiles sermons and articles into a practical guide for Christians navigating trials. The twelve chapters explore suffering, endurance, and hope in Christ, blending Scripture, reflection prompts, discussion questions, and hymns. It emphasizes that God cares in hardship, that suffering is part of the Christian story, and that believers are empowered to persevere through God's strength.

The outstanding work establishes a framework for understanding suffering: Does God care? The storm in Mark chapter 4 yields four truths: obedience doesn't guarantee smooth sailing; God may seem silent but is never absent; storms push us toward Jesus; and trials reveal who God is. Chapter 2 argues that we should not be surprised by suffering, highlighting Rowland Taylor's martyrdom and Jesus' and the Apostles' warnings about persecution; true disciples endure.

The book also emphasizes God remembering His people and how to wait well. God's remembering means covenant action—Noah, Abraham, Hannah, and the thief on the cross are cited as examples of mercy in time. Chapters 4–5 teach how to defeat discouragement and learn contentment in Christ, while the waiting chapter (Ch. 6) pairs a high view of God with holy obedience.

The book guides readers in facing death with confidence and enduring persecution with joy, offering six motivations to endure: prayer, tested faith, compassion, maturity, obedience, and hope of glory. Chapter 10 counsels how to comfort others—weep with those who weep, avoid harmful clichés, speak Scripture carefully, and provide practical help. Real stories—Karen Watson and a “No reserves” ethos—illustrate costly faith.

Ram concludes by articulating joy in hope and three cross-related sufferings of Jesus. Christ suffices in life and death and the cross conquers fear of death, sin, and judgment. The book closes with the author's pastoral calling and an invitation to fix eyes on Jesus, who suffered for us and remains faithful, for indeed Christ is enough.

Dr. Ahmed Joktan
July 17, 2026

Aspects of Suffering

This book was compiled from a series of sermons and articles to serve as a tool for anyone going through trials—or walking with someone who is. If you touch people's lives, you will also touch suffering, because suffering is a part of life in a fallen world.

It contains twelve chapters drawn from sermons and articles that explore different aspects of suffering, endurance, and hope in Christ.

People experience sickness, the death of loved ones, unanswered prayers for a child, loss of employment, estrangement or persecution from friends and family, and so much more. Even for the Christian, suffering remains part of our life journey.

The Apostle Peter writes:

1 Peter 4:12-13 — *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

One of the greatest missionaries, the Apostle Paul, repeatedly prayed for God to take away his suffering. But God answered him in a way he did not expect:

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 — *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

All our present suffering reminds us that we are not yet home. It points us forward to the blessed reality of our eternal home. We may lament the pain and brokenness of this world, but we must not lose sight of the story of redemption—the story of the One who took our sin and suffering upon Himself. Through Christ, we are reconciled to the Father,

strengthened by His grace in every trial, and assured that one day He will make all things new.

How to Use This Book

Read each chapter slowly. Reflect on the truths before moving to the next, allowing Scripture and reflection to sink in rather than rushing through.

While there is a general movement from suffering to endurance, to hope, and ultimately to Christ, the chapters are not strictly sequential. Each one can be read on its own.

You may therefore begin wherever you find yourself spiritually. You can also scan the table of contents and choose the chapter that most resonates with your current situation—whether discouragement, waiting on God, persecution, grief, or questions about God’s care.

As you read, pray that God will give you grace to endure suffering through the strength of Christ and wisdom to walk faithfully with others in theirs.

Does God Care When I Am in Trouble?

“How can a God of love, who has everything under His control, let this happen to me?” asked a young woman who had been badly injured after falling from a horse.

Her pastor paused, then gently asked, “Did it hurt when they put your cast on?”

“Yes, very much,” she said.

“Did your father allow the doctor to hurt you like that?”

“Yes, but it was necessary.”

“Did he allow it because he loved you *or* even though he loved you?”

She stopped. Then quietly said, “You mean, because God loves me, He allowed me to get hurt?”

The pastor nodded gently. “Yes. Even this is under His care. It is not random. And if you belong to Him, He is working through it for your good, even when you cannot yet see how.”

*In sickness, let me not so much say, “Am I getting better of my pain,”
but “Am I getting better through this?”*

—Shakespeare

In the same spirit, we should not only ask, “When will this trial end?” but also, “What is God teaching me through this?”

That question—*Does God care when I am in trouble?*—is one many believers quietly ask. It is the same question the disciples asked in a storm. Their story in Mark 4:35–41 gives us clear answers.

Jesus in the Storm (Mark 4:35–41)

³⁵*That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”* ³⁶*Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”*

³⁹*He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

⁴⁰*He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

⁴¹*They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”*

This passage shows us not only Christ’s power, but also His care for His people. It gives us four important truths about how God works in our trials.

Truth #1. Obedience Doesn’t Mean Smooth Sailing (vv. 35-37).

Jesus knew the storm was coming, yet He still led His disciples into it. This storm was part of their training.

Sometimes we think trouble only comes from disobedience. That was true for Jonah, a prophet—a messenger sent by God—who disobeyed and found himself in a storm. But that was not the case here. The disciples were in the storm *because* they obeyed.

Consider Job, a man whom God described as upright and devoted (Job 1:8; 2:3). Yet he still experienced great suffering. His story reminds us that doing what is right does not always lead to an easy life.

The lesson is clear: obedience does not always guarantee freedom from trials. At times, God does not remove the storm, but He remains present with us in it. Sometimes the situation changes; other times, we are the ones who are changed.

*Being with Christ in the storm is far better than being
without Him in calm waters.*

Truth #2. God May Seem Silent, But He Is Never Absent (v. 38).

As the storm raged, Jesus was asleep. To the disciples, it felt like He did not care. That led them to cry out, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

Their words echo the cries of the psalmists:

Psalm 10:1 – *Why, LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*

Psalm 44:23 – *Awake, LORD! Why do you sleep?*

We, too, may ask in difficult moments, “Lord, where are You? Do You see what I’m going through?”

But God never stops watching over His children. Even when He seems silent, He is still at work, calling us to trust Him in the darkest hours.

Isaiah reminds us:

Isaiah 51:10 – *Let the one who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on their God.*

Silence does not mean absence. God is present, even when we cannot feel Him.

Truth #3. Storms Drive Us to the Savior (v. 38)

The storm pushed the disciples toward Jesus. They were afraid, but they still came to Him. Their faith was weak, but it was real. Jesus did not rebuke them for coming to Him. He corrected their lack of trust, but He still welcomed their cry.

Trials do one of two things: they push people away from God, or they draw them closer. For God’s children, trials draw us nearer. We pray more, depend less on ourselves, and begin to lean more on Him.

*In the storm, we learn what it means to trust —
not in our own strength, but in His.*

Truth #4. In the Storm, We Discover Who God Is (vv. 39-41)

When Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples were amazed: “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” Through the storm, they began to see more clearly who Jesus is.

The same is true for us. Trials deepen our understanding of God. We see His power, His authority, and His care in a more personal way. We do not just know *about* Him—we begin to know *Him* more deeply—that He is mighty, sovereign, and tenderly loving.

Trials deepen our understanding of God.

Faith That Endures the Storm

Becoming a Christian does not remove trouble from our lives. Sometimes we misunderstand this. Some think God’s main purpose is to make life easier and more comfortable. But that is not the gospel. If we believe that, we may begin to doubt God’s love when trials come.

As one writer wisely said:

Satan has very subtly diverted our attention from our core message. Instead of proclaiming the Good News that sinners can be made righteous in Christ and escape the wrath to come, we have settled for a “gospel” that implies that God’s primary purpose in saving us is to ... solve problems, make us happy in Christ, and rescue us from the hassles of this life.

Those who come to faith [mainly for] happiness in Christ ... may even believe that God has forsaken them when trials come, and their happiness is taken away. But those who look to the cross as a token of God’s love will never doubt his steadfast devotion to them.

When we look at the cross, we see the true measure of God’s love.

“The cross is the pulpit from which God preaches His love to the world.”

—Charles Spurgeon

And that love does not change when life becomes hard.

As God’s children, we’re called to trust Him wholeheartedly—even in the fiercest storms. If we trust that Jesus can save us from sin and death, surely we can trust Him with our daily struggles. Faith drives out fear, just as fear weakens faith.

So we pray as the man did in Mark 9:24: “[Lord] *I do believe—help me overcome my unbelief!*” And as we do, God will fulfill His promise: “*You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you*” (Isaiah 26:3).

Yes—God Does Care When I’m Hurting.

*Storms will come—even when we are walking in obedience.
But they never come without Christ.*

And when He is with us, we can say with confidence: **Yes, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ cares for me—even in the darkest storm.**

Discussion Questions -----

1. The disciples cried, “Teacher, don't you care?” (Mark 4:38). When have you felt that way in a storm? What did you say to God?
2. Truth #1 says obedience doesn't mean smooth sailing. Share a time when you obeyed God and a storm still came. What did God teach you through it?
3. God may seem silent, but He's never absent (Truth #2). What helps you trust God when He feels distant in your trials?
4. Trials either push us away from God or draw us closer (Truth #3). How has a recent storm drawn you nearer to Jesus? What changed in your prayer life?
5. Close with prayer. “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Share one step of faith you'll take this week, trusting Jesus cares for you in your current storm. Pray for each other's storms.

Hymns/Songs -----

- “Sometimes He Calms the Storm” - Scott Krippayne
- “A Shelter in the Time of Storm” - Vernon J. Charlesworth

Don't Be Surprised by Suffering

The Joyful Resolve of a Martyr

By the mid-1500s, the Bible had been translated into English, and Hadley, England, was among the first towns to receive it. Dr. Rowland Taylor, the pastor there, faithfully preached God's Word.

As expected, he was arrested as a heretic and ordered to recant or be burned at the stake. He boldly replied, "I will not stop preaching the truth. I thank God for calling me to suffer for His Word."

On the way to his execution, Taylor was so joyful that onlookers thought he was going to a wedding. His earnest words to his guards moved many of them to tears as he called them to repent.

At the stake before his weeping congregation, he said, "I have taught you nothing but God's holy Word from the Bible. Today I seal it with my blood."

He knelt, prayed, kissed the stake, and stood with hands folded and eyes toward heaven. As the fire was lit, he prayed, "Merciful Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, receive my soul into Thy hands." Taylor stood unmoving until a merciful blow ended his suffering.

Thomas Watson said of such martyrs:

They went to heaven singing.

Don't Be Surprised by Suffering

How could Taylor face such suffering with joy? It's because he understood the Christian life includes suffering and was not surprised when it came. He took to heart the words of 1 Peter 4:12:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

Peter commands believers not to be shocked by trials. Our natural reaction is to think, “Something strange is happening!” But *informed* Christians expect suffering. They understand that both Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warned us about it.

Suffering should not surprise the Christian.

Jesus Warned Us

Matthew 5:11 – *Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*

Matthew 10:34-36 – *Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword...a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.*

Mark 10:29-30 – *No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age... along with persecutions.*

John 15:20 – *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.*

The Apostles Warned Us

2 Timothy 3:12 – *Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

James 1:2 – *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.*

1 Peter 2:20-21 – *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

1 John 3:13 – *Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.*

The book of Acts and Hebrews 11 remind us of the stonings, imprisonments, whippings, and killings God's people faced in the early church. Church history—from then until now—bears witness to this same reality.

Ever since the Fall, there has been a constant enmity between the world and God's people. Because Satan stands against God, he stirs opposition against all who belong to Him.

*Where the Word of God is missing, there the devil rules.
But where it is preached, there suffering follows.*

—Martin Luther

Why God Allows Painful Trials

Peter describes trials as a “fiery ordeal,” like a furnace that purifies. This was true in Peter's time and is still true today, especially where believers face persecution.

But what is the point of such intense suffering? Peter answers: they “come on you *to test you*.” Suffering tests faith. Genuine faith endures and grows purer, like gold refined by fire (1 Peter 1:6-7). False faith, on the other hand, collapses under fire.

Suffering also shapes us to become more like Christ. It teaches us to love our enemies, humble ourselves, and care for others in deeper ways.

*“Fire makes the gold purer, trials make
faith more precious.”*

—Richard Sibbes

Counting the Cost of Discipleship

But when we forget that God uses suffering to refine His children, we will react as though something strange is happening.

Jesus taught that His disciples must count the cost of following Him. He says:

Luke 14:26-27, 33 — *If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother...even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple...whoever does not carry their cross...cannot be my disciple...those who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.*

This is the opposite of the false gospel many teach today, which promises health, wealth, and happiness. No, Jesus taught that following Him would cost everything.

Jesus was never interested in half-hearted disciples who abandon the faith when it becomes costly. He described such people as false disciples—those who respond emotion-

ally but fall away when trials come. He compared them to the seed thrown on rocky ground:

Mark 4:16-17 – *Like seed sown on rocky places, [they] hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.*

In contrast, true disciples persevere during trials. Trusting in Jesus and enabled by the Holy Spirit, true disciples are like good soil that endures trials and produces fruit.

Luke 8:15 – *But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.*

*"The trying times of affliction are times when
hypocrites fall off and saints hold fast."*

—John Owen

True disciples expect hardships. That is why they are not shaken when it comes. Starting well matters, but enduring faithfully to the end—by the power of the Spirit—is what counts for eternity.

Encouragement to Endure Joyfully to the End

Rejection and suffering in various forms will come when we live for Jesus. When we understand suffering biblically, at least two things happen:

- **We stop grumbling against God** in trials.
- **We count it a privilege** to suffer for Christ:

Philippians 1:29 – *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.*

*"Suffering for Christ is not a
penalty, but a privilege."*

—Charles Spurgeon

May these truths strengthen us. May we not be surprised by suffering, but endure joyfully by the Spirit's power, for the glory of our risen Savior, King Jesus.

Discussion Questions-----

1. Rowland Taylor faced death with joy (opening story). What surprises you most about his attitude? How does 1 Peter 4:12 speak to your own reaction to trials?
2. "Do not be surprised" (Jesus' & Apostles' warnings). Which of Jesus' warnings about suffering (Matt 5:11, John 15:20, etc.) most challenges your expectations of the Christian life?
3. Trials test and purify faith like fire refines gold. Share a time when suffering revealed whether your faith was genuine. How did God shape you through it?
4. False disciples fall away; true disciples endure (rocky soil vs. good soil). What does "counting the cost" look like practically in your life right now? How are you preparing to endure?
5. Close with prayer. "It has been granted...not only to believe, but also to suffer" (Philippians 1:29). Share one way you'll view suffering as a privilege this week. Pray together for endurance in trials.

Hymns/Songs -----

- "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"
- "Be Still, My Soul"

The Lord Remembers You

Have you ever felt abandoned by God during prolonged trials—financial challenges, chronic illness, family heartbreak? When suffering drags on, what is your response?

1. Disappointed with God?
2. Anger toward Him?
3. Discouraged and depressed?
4. Patiently waiting on Him to bring deliverance in His time?

This chapter encourages us to choose response #4—**Patiently waiting on Him** to bring deliverance in His time—when relief seems nowhere in sight. But that is often easier said than done. How can we live this way?

The answer lies in embracing this truth: God remembers His children, even when we *feel* abandoned.

When Scripture says, “God remembers,” it does not mean God forgets or He has a memory lapse. It means that He turns toward His people in faithful action. He moves to act with kindness.

In other words, to say “God remembers” is to say He acts with covenant love:

*He protects, delivers, and fulfills His
promises in His perfect timing.*

Let's see this truth unfold...

Examples of God Remembering His People Noah

Genesis 8:1 – *But God remembered Noah.*

The “But God” shines brightly against the backdrop of total darkness. Genesis 7:24 tells us, “The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.” Noah's family—locked in the ark for over a year (Genesis 7:6, 11; 8:13-15)—must have wondered, “*Will we ever leave?*” as everything outside died.

But just when all seemed lost, God remembered and acted: “Noah came out together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. All the animals... also came out” (Genesis 8:18-19).

When all seems lost, the “But God remembered” changes everything.

Abraham

In His kindness, God heard Abraham's bold and persistent prayer for his nephew Lot (Genesis 18:16-33) and spared him when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah:

Genesis 19:29 – *So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.*

Israelites in Egypt

As the Israelites suffered in slavery in Egypt:

Exodus 2:23-25 – *They cried out, and their cry for help...went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.*

In His kindness, God raised Moses to lead them out of slavery.

Hannah

Godly but childless, Hannah poured out her soul before the LORD Almighty:

1 Samuel 1:11 – *Look on my misery and remember me—give me a son.*

In response, “the LORD remembered her” and enabled her to conceive and give birth to Samuel (1 Samuel 1:19).

Psalms

The Psalms repeatedly testify that God remembers His people in distress—delivering them and showing covenant faithfulness:

Psalm 98:3 – *He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel.*

Psalm 105:42 – *He remembered his holy promise given to Abraham.*

Psalm 106:45 – *He remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented.*

No wonder they praised Him:

Psalm 136:23 – *He remembered us in our low estate. His love endures forever!*

Repentant Thief on the Cross

Perhaps the most moving example is Jesus' response to the dying thief, even in His own agony.

As Jesus hung on the cross bearing our sins, one thief cried out:

Luke 23:42 – *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*

Despite his excruciating suffering, Jesus answered with astonishing grace:

Luke 23:43 – *Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.*

Not tomorrow. Not next month. Not a few years from now. But –**Today**.

From "Remember me" to "Today in paradise" – this is how God remembers those who look to Him for mercy.

*"In our darkest moment, Jesus gives
heaven's assurance."*

—Charles Spurgeon

Imagine the thief's joy as he heard those words! Hours later, that joy overflowed as he entered heaven—where Jesus was already waiting for him!

Brothers and sisters, this is how God remembers those who call upon Him in their distress!

What God Does NOT Remember

If the above examples aren't enough, here is one of the greatest comforts for troubled hearts: The God who *remembers* His people promises *never* to remember the sins of all who trust Jesus as Savior.

Hebrews 10:17 – *Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.*

The basis of this promise is the finished work of Christ:

Hebrews 10:12 – *Jesus offered himself for all time one sacrifice for sins.*

Hebrews 10:18 – *Where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.*

All our sins are buried under the blood of Jesus. There is no more fear of judgment because there is no more penalty left to pay.

That's the greatest encouragement, especially when we feel abandoned! God promises never to “remember” our sins in a way that would separate us from His presence. **What joy! What comfort!**

All our sins are buried under the blood of Jesus.

What God DOES Remember

However, this comfort belongs only to those who trust Jesus. Those who reject Him and die unforgiven face a different reality: God’s final judgment, when every sin will be remembered and each person called to account:

Revelation 20:11-15 – *Then I saw a great white throne... books were opened...each person was judged according to what they had done... Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Every sinful thought, word, and deed—every failure to do right—will be brought into account on the day of judgment for those who are not in Christ.

Nobody is perfect. All of us stand guilty before God and are unable to meet the standard of His holiness. Only Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life, and only He was qualified to bear the full penalty for sin. And that is exactly what He did on the cross.

So, the choice is clear:

- *Trust Jesus now:* Repent of all your sins, receive complete forgiveness, experience new life today, live for him for the rest of your life, and spend eternity with Him in heaven.
- *Reject Jesus now:* Continue in your sinful path, face Him as Judge in the future, and be condemned to the lake of fire—truly abandoned forever.

God does not remember the sins of those who trust in Jesus, but He will remember every sin of those who do not when he calls them to account.

So, what will you choose?

- Jesus, remembering you in kindness as **Savior**...
- Or Jesus, remembering your sins as **Judge**?

God Has Not Forgotten You

In every story we have seen—from Noah to the thief on the cross—the same truth shines through: when God “remembers,” He acts in kindness, often when hope seems gone. None of them were forgotten. Not in the flood, not in the fire, not in slavery, not in sorrow, and not even on a cross.

If you are in a prolonged trial, it may feel like God is distant or silent. But Scripture assures us that such is not the reality. The God who remembered Noah, heard Israel’s cries, answered Hannah, and saved the dying thief is the same God who remembers you.

Your feelings may say, “God has forgotten me,” but His Word says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Your circumstances may not change immediately. The trial may last longer than you expect. But do not measure God’s faithfulness by your circumstances. Measure it by His promises and His track record. He has never failed His people—not once.

So hold on. Wait on Him. Trust His timing. At the right moment—His moment—He will act. And when He does, you will see that He never abandoned you. He was working all along.

Discussion Questions-----

1. When have you felt like God “forgot” you during prolonged trials? How does the truth that “God remembers = God acts with kindness” change your perspective on those seasons?
2. Read Revelation 20:11-15 together. Why does the reality of God remembering *every sin* on Judgment Day make Jesus’ complete forgiveness so precious? Share what this stirs in your heart.
3. Nobody is perfect. Nobody can pay that price alone. Only Jesus paid it in full on the cross. How does this truth give you confidence to choose patient waiting (#4) over disappointment, anger, or discouragement (#1-3)?

4. If you are in a prolonged trial, what story from this chapter most encouraged you to wait on the Lord's timing? Are there any other examples or passages from the Scriptures that encourage you to trust God during trials?
5. Close with prayer. Thank God He *forgets* the sins of those who've trusted Jesus. Pray for one or two people needing this eternal choice today. Share specific names as a group.

Hymns/Songs -----

- "Great is Thy Faithfulness"
- "Promises" –Maverick City Music

Defeating Discouragement

The Willis Family Tragedy

In Joe Stowell's *Eternity*, a heartbreaking true story is told. Duane "Scott" and Janet Willis, parents of nine from Chicago's Mount Greenwood, were a godly couple. Duane was a schoolteacher and part-time minister. Unspoiled by worldly greed, they devoted themselves to family and church.

One day, Scott, Janet, and six children drove their new van to Milwaukee. A metal piece from a truck pierced the fuel tank, igniting flames. Only Scott and Janet survived—the inferno claimed their six children.

"Why them? Why then?" Why give godly parents children, then snatch them away? Why allow this when neglectful families escape? Such tragedies threaten to erode faith and shake our confidence in God.

Yet in a broken world, some believers remain unshaken, anchored in God's sustaining presence and His promise of a better world to come. Scott and Janet were among them. As Janet cried out, "No! No!" toward the burning van, Scott whispered, "Janet, this is what we've been prepared for. It was quick, and they are with the Lord."

Burned and bandaged in a Milwaukee hospital, they later requested a news conference. The *Chicago Tribune* reported their "extraordinary grace and courage" as Scott declared: "God has purposes...He has demonstrated His love to us. God is good, and we praise Him in all things."

Paul's Eternal Perspective

Like Scott Willis, Paul also saw beyond this world. And he helps us cultivate that same unshakable hope in Romans 8:18:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

The word “consider” shows that Paul carefully evaluated his trials—both internal and external troubles that came from following Christ—and reached a clear conclusion:

*The certainty of future glory frees us from
present discouragement.*

Paul's Intense Sufferings

Paul was no stranger to suffering. He endured trials far beyond what most believers will ever experience. He gives us a brief summary in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29:

I have... been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked.

*What a list and yet Paul did not grumble
or abandon his faith.*

So the next time we are tempted to expect a trial-free Christian life, we must remember Paul's sufferings—and his steadfast response.

Job's Unshakable Faith

Like Paul, Job—described as “blameless and upright” by God Himself (Job 1:1)—endured unspeakable pain. Satan predicted he would curse God (Job 1:11), but Job did not.

Their Secret? An eternal perspective.

Even in agony, Job declared:

Job 19:25-27 – *I know that my redeemer lives... yet in my flesh I will see God.*

If we asked Paul, “Why endure this? Is it worth it?”, he would answer, “I have set my eyes on the glory that is to be revealed to us. That's why I endure without discouragement.”

What is this future glory?

Scripture reveals two certainties.

Certainty #1: New Bodies Like Jesus

We will be made like Christ—receiving glorified bodies like His own. Paul writes:

Philippians 3:20-21 – *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who...will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

One day, our perishable, sin-sick bodies will be perfect—sinless, deathless, and free from all sickness.

This will happen when Christ returns. We can call it our “final redemption”—the moment every believer long for! In light of this, present suffering need not lead to discouragement.

Certainty #2: A New Heaven and a New Earth

God will one day make all things new, not only His people, but all creation.

Revelation 21:1 – *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*

At that time:

Revelation 21:4 – *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

This present world will be judged, brought to an end (2 Peter 3:7, 10), and replaced with a new creation filled with everlasting joy in the presence of Christ.

That is why Peter says, “In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13).

It is in the light of this future glory that we are able to endure present trials.

Closing Thoughts

Just before his death, famous atheist Jean-Paul Sartre wrestled with despair, declaring, “I know I shall die in hope.” Then, in deep sadness, he added, “But hope needs a foundation.” His words reveal the emptiness of hope without Christ.

Christian hope, on the other hand, stands on rock-solid ground—God's unchanging Word. This is not the “I hope I win the lottery” kind of wishful thinking. It is confident certainty, not “maybe,” but “will be.”

Paul had this kind of confident hope. Job had it too. So did Scott and Janet Willis, who lived it out through unimaginable loss. As we meditate on God's promises—new glorified bodies like Christ and a renewed universe free from sin and suffering—this eternal perspective strengthens us to overcome any present discouragement.

However, this promise is only for those who truly trust in Jesus. Those who merely profess to be Christians, or reject Him altogether, will one day be raised to face God's righteous judgment, which He has promised for all who disobey Him (Ephesians 5:6). They will stand before the Great White Throne of judgment and be cast into "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15). For all eternity, they will be separated from God's gracious presence.

Only by repenting and fleeing to Christ now can anyone escape this final judgment. Then they too can rest in the hope that comes through faith in Christ, a sure and living hope that sustains them through life's trials.

Scripture is clear: "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus called those who are insulted and persecuted "blessed" (Matthew 5:10-12). Paul, Job, and the faithful sufferers of Hebrews 11:35-39 were not exceptions—and neither are we.

Prosperity teaching, however, stands in contrast to this reality. Suffering is part of life in a fallen world—"man is born to trouble" (Job 5:7; cf. John 16:33). Suffering comes "because man is born to trouble" (Job 5:7) in a fallen world (John 16:33). But God promises His presence to His children: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

*Our sufferings are but a drop compared
to the ocean of glory.*

Let us therefore resolve:

- To embrace inevitable suffering as a small cost in light of eternal glory.
- To reject teachings that promise health and wealth as the goal of faith.
- To view present pain through the lens of eternity.

This heavenly focus strengthened the Willises even in their darkest hour.

The Chicago Tribune editorial captured it well:

There are only two possible responses to the kind of loss that Scott and Janet Willis suffered: utter despair or unquestioning faith. For the Willises, despair was never an option.

Shouldn't that be our perspective as well?

Scott once said:

Janet and I have had to realize we're not taking the short view of life. We take the long view, and that includes eternal life.

Their words remind us that Christian hope is not proven in comfort, but in suffering. It is not a fragile hope that collapses under pressure, but a steady anchor that holds when everything else gives way.

So the question is not whether trials will come. The question is what kind of hope we are holding onto when they do.

Discussion Questions-----

1. The Willis family's response to unimaginable loss showed unshakable faith. When have you faced trials that shook your confidence in God? How do Scott's words—"It was quick, and they're with the Lord"—challenge your perspective?
2. Read Romans 8:18 and Paul's sufferings list (2 Corinthians 11:23-29). Why do you think Paul "considered" his trials worth enduring? Which of his hardships resonates most with your own life?
3. Two eternal certainties anchor us: new bodies like Christ, new heaven/earth. Which promise gives you the most hope for your current discouragements, and how can you meditate on it daily (Romans 15:4)?
4. Sartre died without hope's foundation; pretenders face judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). How does this contrast strengthen your resolve to examine your faith? Who in your life needs this "sure hope" warning?
5. Close with prayer. Share one resolution from the list (embrace suffering, reject prosperity lies, eternal lens). Pray for strength to take "the long view" like the Willises—name specific trials your group carries.

Hymns/Songs -----

- "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less" – Edward Mote
- "Yes I Will" – Vertical Worship

Contentment: Three Misconceptions

The Grumbling Father

Picture a little girl whose father grumbled about everything. She told her mother, “Johnny likes hamburgers! Janie likes ice cream! Willie likes bananas! Mommy likes chicken!”

Irritated, her father asked, “What about me?”

Her innocent reply? “You like everything we haven't got.”

But let's be honest, don't we often act just like that father?

Perhaps it's because of three common misconceptions about contentment that can affect even Christians. Let's explore them together.

Misconception #1: Contentment Isn't a Big Issue

“I'm just human—I need to vent.” We treat complaining as normal, don't we?

The Biblical Response

God commands contentment repeatedly:

- *Be content with your pay.* –Luke 3:14
- *Be content with what you have.* –Hebrews 13:5
- *Guard against all kinds of greed.* –Luke 12:15

Disobeying God's clear commands is sin. Contentment matters greatly to a holy God. Why? Because:

- a) Discontentment challenges **God's sovereignty**, questioning His right to rule our lives: “Lord, why are You doing this to me?”

- b) Discontentment attacks **God's goodness**, implying: "If You loved me, You'd give me what I want."

While it is not sinful to cry out to God for help in trials, it *is* sinful to question His character.

One Beautiful Exception

There is one area where we should *not* be content: our spiritual growth. We should always long to become more like Jesus and grieve when we fail to reflect Him faithfully in our daily lives. But regarding our circumstances, we are called to be content.

*Be content with what you have, but never
content with where you are spiritually!*

When we grasp how serious discontentment is before God, we begin to see why it grows whenever we stop trusting His heart. Contentment is ultimately a matter of faith, believing that our Heavenly Father always knows best, even when His ways puzzle us. The moment we doubt His wisdom, grumbling begins to grow, and peace begins to fade.

Misconception #2: Contentment Depends on Circumstances

Ever think, "*If only my situation would change*"? Single? You want marriage. Married? You miss freedom. Childless? You long for children. Have children? You want "better" ones. "*Anything would be better than now!*"

As the saying goes:

*As a rule, man's a fool.
When it's hot, he wants it cool.
When it's cool, he wants it hot.
Always wanting what is not.*

A man once envied the big houses his friends owned, so he listed his own home for sale. Later, he saw an ad for his *dream house* and called the realtor. The agent laughed and said, "Sir, that's your own house!"

Biblical Response

Adam and Eve had everything—except one tree. So Satan whispered, "Did God *really* say, 'You must not eat from *any* tree'?" (Genesis 3:1).

His lie was simple: “*God’s holding out on you.*” He shifted their focus from all they had to the single thing they lacked. The result? Misery instead of joy.

The lesson is simple: Even paradise could not satisfy discontented hearts. True contentment is not circumstantial—it is godliness with an eternal perspective. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).

Godliness begins by coming to Christ—our all-sufficiency. If, by God’s grace, you are in Christ, remind yourself daily that *having Jesus means having all that you need*. Guard against the lie: “I will be satisfied if I just had...” Instead, pray earnestly that God would turn your eyes “away from worthless things” (Psalm 119:37).

When our hearts rest in Christ, circumstances lose their grip.

*The secret of contentment is not having everything we want,
but learning to want what God wisely gives.*

Even after knowing the truth, we often find our hearts drifting back toward discontent. Why? Because contentment must be learned, not assumed.

Misconception #3: Contentment Comes Naturally for the Christian

We might assume that once we become Christians, worldly desires disappear and we find total satisfaction in Christ.

Biblical Response

How we wish that were true! Yes, salvation renews our hearts, but saying “no” to the flesh remains a lifelong battle.

Paul’s Prison Testimony

Writing from a prison in Rome, Paul confessed, “I have *learned* to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11).

Did you notice? Paul “learned” contentment. He repeats it: “I have *learned* the secret of being content in any and every situation” (Philippians 4:12).

*If even the Apostle Paul had to learn
contentment, then so must we.*

That truth is deeply comforting: contentment is not automatic, but it is learnable through the Spirit, God's Word, and prayer.

In Paul's world, philosophers admired the self-reliant man who could calmly endure life's pressures. But Paul's secret was not inner strength—it was *Christ*. Jesus was his sufficiency and strength: "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

Paul was not claiming power to accomplish any dream, but strength to endure every circumstance with contentment *because he had Christ*.

His example helps define Christian contentment clearly:

*To be content is to be completely satisfied
because we have Christ.*

Have Christ? You have everything—both for time and eternity.

No Christ? You have nothing that will last.

Contentment is learned one day, one trial at a time. The classroom may be hard, but the Teacher is kind.

*Through every test, Jesus invites us to rely less on
ourselves and more on His sufficiency.*

Living Contentment Daily

The Hypocritical Prayer

We kneel, thanking God for saving hell-deserving sinners like us, and then complain when He does not change our circumstances. "Why me? Why do worse people prosper while I suffer?" We claim unworthiness, yet expect privileges as rights. That is hypocrisy.

God promises to meet our *needs*, not every want:

Philippians 4:19 – *My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

1 Timothy 6:8 – *If we have food and clothing, we will be content.*

Remembering grace silences pride and stirs a thankful heart. Gratitude, in turn, gives birth to peace. When we truly remember that every good thing comes from a loving God, murmuring fades into worship.

*Remembering grace silences pride
and awakens gratitude.*

Your Hard Place

Afflicted without healing? Financially broken? Career stalled? Still single? Caring for a sick child? Unloved at home? Learn to pray:

Lord, help me to joyfully accept whatever You give or withhold. Help me glorify You in it.

Stop counting troubles. Start counting blessings and naming them one by one. Think on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable (Philippians 4:8). As you meditate on Christ, His peace will surround you:

Philippians 4:7 – *The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:9 – *And the God of peace will be with you.*

True contentment blooms when we trust that God's heart for us is good—even when His hand withholds something we want. Every trial is a classroom where the Holy Spirit teaches us to rest in Christ's sufficiency.

*Contentment is not found in changed circumstances,
but in the unchanging presence of Jesus.*

Remember, You Are Complete in Christ

Ephesians 1:3 – *Blessed... with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

Colossians 2:10 – *In Christ you have been brought to fullness.*

Rest in God's good and gracious promises:

Isaiah 46:4 – *Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

With that assurance, we can say with David:

Psalm 23:1 – *The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

Contentment does not come from trying harder but from trusting more deeply. As our gaze shifts from “what we lack” to “Who we have,” peace guards the heart, and gratitude takes root.

*Christ Himself is our contentment—
yesterday, today, and forever.*

Discussion Questions-----

1. The grumbling father wanted “everything we haven't got.” When do you catch yourself acting like him? Which misconception (#1-#3) most tempts you to discontentment?
2. Read the 3 contentment commands (Luke 3:14; Hebrews 13:5; Luke 12:15). Why does God take discontentment so seriously (sovereignty/goodness)? Share a time when your complaining questioned His character.
3. Adam/Eve had paradise but wanted one tree. The realtor story shows we do the same. What “one thing” are you tempted to focus on instead of God's abundance? How can Psalm 119:37 help?
4. Paul “learned” contentment in prison (Philippians 4:11-13). What does “*To be content is to be completely satisfied because we have Christ*” mean for your hardest circumstance right now?
5. Close with prayer. Share one “hard place” from your life. Declare together, “*Lord, help me to joyfully accept whatever You give or withhold. Help me glorify You in it.*” Pray Isaiah 46:4 for each other: “The LORD will sustain you.”

Hymns/Songs -----

- Psalm 90 (Satisfy Us With Your Love)
- “I'd Rather Have Jesus”

Waiting on God

Our Instant Gratification Struggle

It has been said, “Waiting for God to bring His purposes to pass is one of the greatest struggles we face in our Christian life; there is something within us that would rather do the wrong thing than wait.” How true this is!

None of us naturally loves to wait. We want what we want, and we want it now. Even when rushing ahead has brought painful consequences, we often repeat the same mistake. But our all-knowing God understands this weakness.

But our all-knowing God understands this weakness. That is why Scripture repeatedly calls us to wait on Him rather than push forward in our own strength.

What Does Waiting on God Mean?

Waiting is not laziness or passivity. It means actively trusting God to come through for us and a deliberate turning away from reliance on our own wisdom, strength, resources, or connections.

Rushing ahead or grumbling steals peace and leads to misery. George MacDonald warned, “In whatever man does without God, he must either fail miserably or succeed even more miserably.”

Wayne Stiles explains in *Waiting on God*:

We want happiness first; God wants holiness. We want pleasure; God wants purity. Just like waiting at a red signal—if we skip the signal, we can [and at times do] get into an accident. Same way, if we jump ahead of God because waiting seems to be such a waste of time, we will get hurt. Waiting is a process through which God changes us—more than changing the circumstances.

Waiting is not wasted time. Waiting is a process through which God changes us more than He changes our circumstances.

God is not only working for us while we wait; He is working in us through the waiting.

If you are tired of waiting and crying, “How long, O Lord?” do not give up. Isaiah 64:4-5a gives hope:

Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.

Isaiah shows us two truths about waiting on God.

First, he declares the greatness of God: “No eye has seen any God besides You” —a God who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him (v. 4). This reveals the first mark of those who wait well: they have a high view of God’s character.

Second, Isaiah describes the kind of people God helps: “those who gladly do right, who remember Your ways” (v. 5a). This reveals the second mark of those who wait well: they pursue holiness with glad obedience.

#1. They Have a High View of God’s Character (Isaiah 64:4)

“Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.”

Isaiah saw God’s uniqueness. Before this verse, he recalled God shaking the mountains in Isaiah 64:3, a reference to Mount Sinai, where He gave the Ten Commandments. He knew this God—unlike any other—was mighty, powerful, merciful, and gracious (Exodus 34:6). This high view of God strengthened Isaiah’s confidence that the Lord would act on behalf of His people.

We have even greater reason to wait with confidence. We live after the cross and see God’s character most clearly in Jesus. That should move us to reflect often on who He is: Creator, Covenant-Keeper, Deliverer, and the Father who gave His Son.

Yet waiting can test this very confidence, especially when answers seem delayed. In those moments, will we trust His wisdom or insist on our own timing?

*A high view of God leads us to rest in this:
“Lord, I know You will act in Your time.”*

#2. They Pursue Holiness With Glad Obedience (Isaiah 64:5a)

A high view of God not only strengthens our trust, but it also shapes our obedience. That is why Isaiah could confidently say:

“You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.”

God works powerfully for those who obey Him with joy. True waiting brings together trust in God’s character and submission to His commands.

Israel learned painfully that sin blocks blessing:

Isaiah 64:5b – *But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry.*

Isaiah 59:2 – *Your iniquities have separated you from your God... so that he will not hear.*

They stopped calling on God’s name: “No one calls on your name” (Isaiah 64:7). Even their fasting became hypocrisy (Isaiah 58). No wonder God seemed silent!

The same is true for us. Unconfessed sin hinders our awareness of God’s help, while holiness opens the way for God’s gracious work:

“You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.”

To “gladly do right” is to obey God with joy, while consciously remembering His faithful ways.

*God moves powerfully for those who
walk in joyful obedience.*

As we wait, let us pursue both a high view of God’s character and a life of holy obedience. Then we will see His hand at work in His perfect time.

Waiting with Quiet Confidence

It is not uncommon to grow discouraged while waiting on the Lord. When answers seem delayed, doubts rise. We may become impatient, irritated, or even envious—just as Asaph did when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous (Psalm 73). In those moments, we easily forget that a righteous God still rules over all.

Waiting can also reveal spiritual weakness. Thoughts like, “What is the point? Does God care? Why keep serving Him when nothing changes?” can creep in if we are not careful.

Yet even in the waiting, God is at work. He shapes our character, exposes idols, and calls us to repentance. He teaches patience, humility, compassion, and endurance, making us more like Christ and more tender toward others.

Even in the waiting, God is at work.

Waiting also reminds us of God's sovereignty. He is the potter; we are the clay. He rules over all things and acts according to His perfect wisdom, in His perfect time, and in His perfect way. We cannot make Him follow our schedule. He calls us to trust Him with surrendered hearts.

John Piper wrote, *"God aims to exalt Himself by working for those who wait for Him."* Warren Wiersbe added, *"The best thing you and I can do is to stop looking at our watches and calendars and simply look by faith into the face of God and let him have his way—in his time."*

*God works for those who wait—and He
does His work in His time.*

Second only to suffering, waiting may be one of God's greatest tools to shape godliness and maturity in us. So let us not dwell on how long we have waited or how much longer we may need to wait. Let us not become irritated, fearful, or discouraged and lose our peace or weaken our testimony. Instead, let us wait with quiet confidence, trusting that God is doing a deeper work in us than we can yet see.

Is God good only if He acts quickly and in the way we prefer?

If the answer is yes, we are not trusting Him; we are using Him. That attitude calls for repentance.

So let us lean on the Lord for strength to wait in a way that pleases Him. We need not worry about tomorrow, for each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:34). God gives grace for today's waiting, and when tomorrow comes, His grace will be sufficient for that day as well.

Let's remember that even when God says no, He is still working for our good and His glory.

So I encourage you to wait on God biblically. This great God—unlike any other—"longs to be gracious" to those who wait for Him (Isaiah 30:18). He comes to the help of those

who gladly do right, who remember His ways (Isaiah 64:5a). He is never late, never indifferent, and never unkind. He works in mercy, wisdom, and perfect timing.

*God longs to be gracious to all
who wait for Him.*

Discussion Questions-----

1. None of us naturally loves to wait. When are you most tempted to “rush ahead” of waiting on God, and what usually happens when you do?
2. Waiting on God is not laziness or passivity; it is actively trusting Him alone. How does that look in your current situation, and what competing “strengths” are you tempted to rely on instead?
3. Isaiah 64:4-5 says God acts for those who wait, who have a high view of His character and pursue holiness with glad obedience. Which of those two marks is harder for you right now and why?
4. The chapter says waiting is often how God changes us more than our circumstances. What is God possibly forming in you during this waiting season, and how has it exposed your heart?
5. Close with prayer. Ask the Lord to help you wait biblically with a surrendered heart, holy living, and quiet confidence in His perfect timing.

Hymns/Songs -----

- “The Lord Is My Salvation” – Keith & Kristyn Getty
- “You’ve Already Won” – Shane & Shane

Facing Death with Confidence

When Power Cannot Stop Death

History is filled with people who have tried to prepare for death in elaborate ways. One example is Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China. Fearing death, he constructed a massive tomb complex for himself, complete with thousands of life-sized clay soldiers and elaborate provisions in preparation for the afterlife. Yet despite all his power and wealth, he could not stop death from coming.

His tomb now stands as a silent witness to the fear of death that grips the human heart and the extraordinary measures it can drive people to take—measures that, in the end, can never deliver anyone from the grave.

*Death is one appointment no human
power can cancel.*

The Fear That Holds Millions Captive

This fear still grips millions today. But the Bible does not leave us without hope. It gives us reasons why we do not need to live in fear of death.

Before we look at those reasons, we must first ask a simple question: What is death?

What Is Death? The Bible's Three Answers

In the simplest sense, death is separation. That is the basic idea. The Bible describes three kinds of death:

#1. Physical Death

Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. Hebrews 9:27 teaches that “people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” The Bible makes clear that there is no reincarnation. People die once, not repeatedly.

Death is certain, and it happens only once.

#2. Spiritual Death

Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from the life of God. Ephesians 2:1 reminds us of our condition apart from Christ: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.”

We are all born spiritually dead—alive physically but cut off from the life of God. And apart from Christ, that condition leads not only to physical death, but ultimately to eternal death.

To be spiritually dead is to be physically alive but cut off from the life of God.

#3. Eternal Death

Eternal death is the final and irreversible separation of both soul and body from God, experienced by those who reject Christ in this life.

Revelation 20:15 describes the destiny of those whose names are not written in the book of life: “Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.” This is eternal separation from God.

*Those who reject Jesus will remain forever
separated from God in the lake of fire.*

Hope Beyond the Grave

With that essential understanding of death, let us consider three reasons why Christians can confidently face it.

Reason # 1: Death Has No Power over the Christian

When the Lord Jesus came to earth, He took on a human body, lived a perfect life, died as our substitute for sin, and rose again. Because of His finished work, those who trust in Him for forgiveness will never face eternal death. Even now, they do not need to live in fear of death, because Jesus has set “free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrews 2:15).

*The believer need not fear death because Jesus
has once for all broken death's power.*

For the Christian, physical death is not the end; it is a passage into the presence of God. That is why the Bible often describes the Christian's death as "sleep" (1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Death has no final authority over those who are in Christ. This is the first reason we can face it with confidence.

Reason #2: Death Brings the Christian into the Lord's Presence

When a believer dies, the body remains behind, but the soul immediately enters the presence of Christ. Paul expressed this hope when he said he would prefer to be "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). To be "away from the body" is to be released from earthly life; to be "at home with the Lord" is to be with Christ Himself.

Jesus gave this same assurance to the repentant thief when He said, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). That word "today" leaves no room for delay. The believer does not enter a waiting state or temporary holding place, but the immediate presence of Christ.

*At death, the Christian is immediately
at home with Christ.*

And for those who are alive when Christ returns, there will be no death at all—only instant gathering to Him (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). This is the second reason Christians can face death with confidence.

Reason #3: Death Enables the Christian to Receive a New and Perfect Body

The body we have in this life is subject to sin, weakness, and sickness. That is one reason physical death exists in a fallen world. But when Jesus returns for His people, all believers will receive new, perfect bodies—bodies that are free from sin and suffering. Even those who have died and whose souls are already in the presence of the Lord will be raised and given glorified bodies at that time.

This is what the Bible calls **glorification**. Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 15:51, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." He adds in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 that the body is sown perishable but raised

imperishable, sown in dishonor but raised in glory, sown in weakness but raised in power, and sown a natural body but raised a spiritual body.

This is the resurrection body, the imperishable body, the glorious body for which believers eagerly wait. That is why we long for “the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23). This is the third reason Christians can face death with confidence.

We will all be changed.

Are You Ready for Death?

These three truths help the Christian face death with confidence: death has no power over us, death brings us immediately into the presence of the Lord, and death prepares us for a new and perfect body. Even so, believers may still wrestle with fear, especially in old age or during illness. Yet God has given this promise:

Isaiah 46:4 – *Even to your old age and gray hairs...I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you*

The Lord will complete the work He has started in us (Philippians 1:6). Every day brings us closer to our final home with Him, and that truth strengthens us to persevere faithfully through seasons of weakness and sorrow.

For the one who does not trust in Christ, the future is one of certain judgment. When death comes, the body goes to the grave, but the soul enters Hades, a place of conscious suffering, awaiting the final judgment. At that judgment, those whose sins have not been forgiven will stand before God and be judged according to what they have done and will be cast into the lake of fire—also called hell—eternally separated from the gracious presence of God (Revelation 20:11-15).

The unbeliever's end is solemn and tragic.

Yet, it does not have to be that way. Jesus promised in John 5:24: “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” That verse gives three glorious assurances: eternal life now, freedom from future judgment, and deliverance from spiritual and eternal death into life.

*Whoever believes has crossed over
from death to life.*

These promises free us from the fear of death. Death is certain, and no human plan can prevent it. But for the Christian, death is not defeat—it is victory through Christ. That is why the believer can say, “Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Death is not defeat. It is victory through Christ.

Discussion Questions-----

1. The chapter begins with Qin Shi Huang’s massive tomb complex. What does that example show about the fear of death and the lengths people will go to avoid it?
2. The chapter says death is separation. How do physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death help us understand why death is such a serious issue?
3. Why can a Christian face death without fear according to Reason #1...that death has no power over the believer?
4. What difference does it make to know that the Christian is immediately at home with Christ at death? And how does the promise of a new and perfect body help a believer face death with confidence instead of dread?
5. Close with prayer. Thank God for defeating death through Christ, ask Him to free your heart from fear, and pray for those who do not yet have eternal life.

Hymns/Songs -----

- “Christ Our Hope In Life And Death” – Keith and Kristen Getty
- “In Christ Alone” – Keith and Kristen Getty

Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted

Matthew 5:10–12 – *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

The Paradox of Persecution

Persecution is never something we naturally welcome, especially when it comes as a result of righteous living. Yet, in this final Beatitude, Jesus calls those who suffer for righteousness “Blessed.” This is perhaps the most paradoxical and sobering of all the Beatitudes. It calls us to count the cost of following Christ and discover a reward far greater than anything this world can offer.

Persecuted for Righteousness: A Modern-Day Witness

The life of missionary Karen Watson powerfully illustrates this Beatitude. Before leaving for Iraq, she wrote a letter with instructions that it be opened only if she died. In March 2004, Karen and four others were tragically killed.

Her letter remains a profound testimony:

*“I wasn’t called to a place. I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected; **His glory my reward.** I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience. There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him.”*

Karen’s words remind us that suffering for righteousness is not merely a theological concept but a present reality. It calls for faith, courage, and hope that reaches beyond this life.

To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected; His glory my reward.

—Karen Watson

A Call to Examine Our Hearts

Her story challenges each of us to ask:

- Are we living for comfort or for obedience?
- Are we living for our success or for His glory?

These questions expose what we truly value and whether we are willing to follow Christ wherever He leads, no matter the cost.

The Reality of Suffering

Jesus does not say *if* people insult, persecute, or lie about us because of His name, but *when* (Matthew 5:11). While the form of persecution may differ from place to place, every believer should expect some form of suffering for righteousness.

The apostles make the same point clear:

Acts 14:22 – *We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.*

2 Timothy 3:12 – *Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

1 Peter 4:12 – *Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*

Even in Revelation, John speaks of the suffering believers will face (Revelation 13:10). Scripture shows again and again that persecution has always been part of the Christian life.

*Suffering for Christ is not unusual;
it is expected.*

The Reason for Suffering

Jesus not only tells us that we will suffer, but He also explains why. In verse 10, we are “persecuted because of righteousness,” and in verse 11, we suffer “because of Me.” This is suffering that comes from obedience to Him. When we live for Christ, darkness pushes back. Persecution is not failure; it is evidence that His light is shining through us.

*Persecution is not failure; it is evidence that
His light is shining through us.*

The Response to Suffering

When persecution comes, Jesus tells us plainly how to respond: “Rejoice and be glad” (Matthew 5:12). Luke puts it even stronger—“leap for joy” (Luke 6:23). The New Testament consistently calls believers to joy in the midst of suffering.

Peter says, “Rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 4:13). James writes, “Consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials” (James 1:2). After being flogged, the apostles rejoiced that they were “counted worthy” to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41). Paul and Silas, beaten and imprisoned, prayed and sang hymns to God (Acts 16:23-25). The early Christians did not retreat when persecuted; they remained faithful and joyful, even in chains.

Our response is often very different. A small insult can unsettle us—sometimes for days or even years—because the world still pulls on our hearts, or because our pride is so easily wounded. We may even withdraw, feeling we’ve paid too high a price for following Christ.

Why does this happen? Is it because the world still holds too strong a grip on our affections? Or because we have not fully taken Jesus’ words—or their cost—to heart? These are often the reasons why even the thought of persecution makes us uneasy.

But Jesus reminds us clearly that persecution is part of life in His kingdom. True joy comes from knowing that we suffer for the One who suffered for us. When that truth grips our hearts, even though we may be sorrowful, yet we can still be “always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

In Christ, sorrow and joy can exist together.

The Reward for Enduring Suffering

Why endure suffering for Christ? Jesus gives the answer: “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10) and “Great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). This reward is not symbolic. It is the real joy of living in God’s kingdom forever—worshiping the Father, Son, and Spirit and being fully cleansed and redeemed by Christ’s blood.

Great is your reward in heaven.

—Jesus

Jesus reminds us that God's people have always faced persecution: "In the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:12). We walk a path the faithful have walked for centuries. And the eternal reward—life with the Triune God—is worth every insult, every tear, and every trial in this life.

Final Thoughts

Where there is true righteousness, there will be resistance—but that resistance shows we belong to Jesus. God calls His children to reflect these qualities, including the willingness to suffer for His name.

Suffering has always marked God's people. Scripture says, "It has been granted...to suffer for Him" (Philippians 1:29). Suffering for Christ is a gift, just as believing in Him is a gift. When insulted or rejected, we follow Jesus' example: He "did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23). One day, we will see that our suffering was nothing compared to His.

*Suffering for Christ is a gift, just as
believing in Him is a gift.*

Ask yourself: Are you suffering for Christ or for your own sin? If for Christ, rejoice. If not, repent and seek the Spirit's strength to live faithfully.

No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets

William Borden, heir to the Borden Dairy fortune, received a trip around the world after high school in 1904. Seeing the needs of the nations, he felt called to give his life to Christ as a missionary. In his Bible, he wrote: "**No reserves.**"

Returning to the United States, he enrolled at Yale, where his passion for Christ only deepened. He started a Bible study that eventually reached most of the student body and founded the Yale Hope Mission to serve the poor. Offered high-paying jobs after graduation, he turned them all down and wrote: "**No retreats.**"

He then went on to Princeton Seminary and sailed for China to reach Muslims with the gospel. Stopping in Egypt to study Arabic, he contracted meningitis and died at twenty-five. When his Bible was found, a final line was written beneath the others: "**No regrets.**"

Those who grasp the price Christ paid for their redemption know that a life surrendered to Him is never wasted. Borden lived — and died — for the One who ransomed him.

No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.

—William Borden

How about you?

- Are you willing to follow Jesus at any cost?
- Will you live with no reserves, no retreats, and no regrets?
- Will you receive suffering as privilege, not punishment?

*Do not waste your life in resistance to Christ.
Rejoice in Him —because He is worth it.*

Discussion Questions-----

1. In what ways does your context (family, church, workplace, or community) make it tempting to avoid any real “persecution-level” cost for following Christ? What would it look like for you, like Karen Watson, to say, “To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory my reward”?
2. The chapter says persecution is often evidence that “His light is shining through us” rather than a sign of failure. Can you recall a time when you faced resistance, insult, or rejection specifically because you were living for Christ instead of comfort or success, and how does seeing that as a sign of light change your attitude?
3. Jesus calls us to “rejoice and be glad” when falsely accused (Matthew 5:12), and Paul says we are “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10). How have you struggled to hold tears and sorrow together with genuine joy in your suffering, and where do you most need the Spirit’s help to respond with joy instead of resentment?
4. William Borden’s phrases—“No reserves,” “No retreats,” and “No regrets”—reflect a life fully surrendered to the One who ransomed him. In which of these three areas are you most likely to hold back, hesitate, or feel regret, and where would living out one of them most clearly push you out of a self-centered, “comfortable-Christian” lifestyle?

5. Close with prayer. Ask God to help you receive suffering for Christ not as punishment, but as a privilege, and to give you the strength to “rejoice in it—because Jesus is worth it,” so your group can pray with you for obedience, joy, and trust in His eternal reward.

Hymns/Songs -----

- “Hymn of Heaven” –Phil Wickham
- “Christ Be Magnified” –Cody Carnes

Six Motivations to Endure Suffering

No faith is so precious as that which lives and triumphs through adversity.

—Charles Spurgeon

Charles Spurgeon also wrote that trials reveal both our weakness and God’s strength. Corrie ten Boom said it another way:

*You may never know that Jesus is all you
need until Jesus is all you have.*

Scripture calls us to the same truth. Romans 12:12 tells us to “be patient in affliction.” This is not easy, but it is possible, because the Holy Spirit strengthens us to obey every command, including this one.

The word “affliction” describes crushing pressure, like grapes being squeezed for juice. “Patient” means to remain firm—to endure without giving up. Together, they call us to remain calm and steady even under intense pressure.

When suffering comes, we usually respond in one of three ways:

1. We try to escape if possible.
2. We endure, but with a negative spirit.
3. We endure patiently, trusting God to act in His time.

My prayer is that we embrace the third response. To help us do so, here are six motivations for enduring suffering in a way that honors God.

Motivation #1 — Suffering Drives Us to Seek God in Prayer

Suffering exposes our weakness and reminds us how much we need the Lord. It breaks our pride and pushes us to call out to Him. That is why Paul follows with the command: “Be...faithful in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

Paul cried out to God about his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). Job’s suffering led him to deeper communion with God. The same is true for us—trials strip away self-reliance and open the door to deeper prayer.

Every hardship is an invitation from God to deeper prayer, not a reason for despair.

God often uses suffering the way ripples pull a drifting boat back to shore. Though painful, trials pull us closer to Him.

So the question is: Are your hardships driving you to prayer, or are you trying to manage them alone? Suffering is meant to soften our hearts, not harden them. When trials hit, let them turn you toward God, not away from Him.

Motivation #2 — Suffering Tests and Proves the Genuineness of Our Faith

Peter writes that trials come “so that the proven genuineness of your faith” may result in praise and honor when Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:6–7). How we respond to suffering reveals the true nature of our faith.

Tested faith is trusted faith.

Jesus said that false believers fall away when trouble comes because of the Word (Mark 4:17). But true believers “by persevering produce a crop” (Luke 8:15). Perseverance through suffering is evidence that our faith is real.

If suffering exposes impatience, resentment, or unbelief, it should drive us back to trust in the Lord. God’s love does not keep us *from* trials—but He keeps us *through* them.

Motivation #3 — Suffering Makes Us More Compassionate Toward Others

Pain tenderizes the heart, slows us down, and teaches us to listen. It makes us kinder to those who are hurting.

God is the “Father of compassion” and the “God of all comfort” who “comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Here is God’s design: we receive comfort so that we can give comfort.

One missionary in Pakistan who lost her infant wrote that a friend came to comfort her and her husband in their grief. He said, “A tragedy like this is similar to being plunged into boiling water. If you are an egg, your affliction will make you hard-boiled and unresponsive. If you are a potato, you will emerge soft and pliable, resilient and adaptable.” Looking back, she admitted that, as strange as it may sound, she often found herself praying, “O Lord, let me be a potato.”

Has your suffering made you softer or harder? Do you take time to sit with the hurting, pray with them, and understand their pain? God’s purpose in suffering is to form in us a compassion that reflects His own heart.

God uses our pain to deepen our compassion.

Motivation #4 — Suffering Matures Our Faith

Paul writes, “Suffering produces perseverance” (Romans 5:3), and James reminds us that perseverance grows from the “testing of your faith” (James 1:3). Trials refine us, much like fire purifies precious metal.

A silversmith once explained that silver is refined only until he can see his reflection in it. If heated too long, it is ruined; if too little, it stays impure. He watches it closely and removes it at just the right moment.

That is what God does with us. He keeps His hand on the thermostat and His eye on the clock. He knows exactly what each of us needs to become more like Christ.

Every trial is an opportunity for spiritual growth—if we submit to God’s refining work.

God refines His children through suffering.

Motivation #5 — Suffering Leads Us into Deeper Obedience

The psalmist said, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word” (Psalm 119:67). And again: “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees” (v. 71).

Suffering often exposes sin, pride, worldly attachments, and misplaced loves. It reminds us that God is holy, His commands are good, and His ways are always best. It draws our hearts back to obedience.

A story is told of a soldier under Commander Antigonus who fought fearlessly because he carried a terminal illness. When the commander discovered his condition, he arranged for him to be healed. Strangely, the soldier stopped fighting bravely. Now that he had comforts to live for, he no longer risked his life as before.

The lesson is clear: suffering often stirs greater zeal for God, while ease can make us spiritually sluggish and self-focused.

Does suffering move you toward greater obedience or toward self-pity? Trials are meant to lead us into deeper obedience, not away from it.

*God often uses affliction to
deepen our obedience.*

Motivation #6 — Suffering Strengthens Our Hope of Future Glory

Romans 12:12 tells us to “rejoice in hope”—the certain promise of future glory when we will be made perfectly like Christ. Romans 5:3-4 connects our present suffering to this future hope.

Believers who endure intense suffering often long more deeply for Christ’s return. The comforts of this world do not distract them; their hearts are fixed on the glory to come. Many of us, however, allow life’s comforts to dull our longing for Jesus. Suffering loosens our grip on this world and strengthens our longing for the next.

Does your suffering increase your desire for Christ and your longing for heaven? It should. God uses trials to loosen our grip on this world and deepen our anticipation of the glory to come.

*Trials cultivate hope the way storms deepen a tree’s roots.
Hope grows best in the soil of hardship.*

Conclusion: How Suffering Helps Us Endure

Here are the six motivations again:

1. Suffering drives us to prayer.

2. Suffering proves our faith.
3. Suffering makes us compassionate.
4. Suffering matures us.
5. Suffering leads us to obedience.
6. Suffering strengthens our hope of glory.

God reserves these blessings for those who endure patiently—not for those who seek escape through shortcuts or endure with bitterness. True endurance produces lasting spiritual growth.

J. C. Ryle put it beautifully:

*Today is the cross, but tomorrow is the crown...
Today is the battle, but tomorrow is the rest...
Today is the weeping, but tomorrow is the joy.
Today is but seventy years, but tomorrow is eternity.
Be patient and hope unto the end.*

This is precisely what Jesus did. Hebrews 12:1-3 calls us to run with perseverance, fixing our eyes on Him who “for the joy set before Him endured the cross” and is now seated “at the right hand of God.”

God knows what He is doing, even when hardship makes no sense to us. We are called to trust Him wholeheartedly and endure with faith, hope, and quiet confidence.

*If God sends us on stony paths,
He provides strong shoes.*

— Alexander MacLaren

Discussion Questions-----

1. The chapter says suffering exposes our weakness and drives us to seek God in prayer. When you face hardship, is it more likely to pull you toward prayer or push you to manage things on your own? Why?
2. The chapter explains that suffering tests and proves the genuineness of our faith. Which of these six motivations stands out most as evidence that your faith is real: prayer, compassion, maturity, obedience, or hope?
3. The chapter says suffering should make us more compassionate toward others, like channels of God’s comfort. Has your own suffering made you softer and more

tender toward the hurting or has it made you more hardened and withdrawn?
Give one example.

4. The chapter connects suffering with maturity, obedience, and longing for heaven. In what area of your life do you most need to let suffering draw you closer to Christ instead of to self-pity or escape?
5. Close with prayer. Ask God to help you endure suffering with patience, to see every trial as a path to deeper dependence on Him, greater compassion for others, and a stronger hope of future glory.

Hymns/Songs -----

- “Christ Is Mine Forevermore” –CityAlight
- “Lord From Sorrows Deep I Call” –Matt Papa

Weep With Those Who Weep

The Bond of Tears

The second half of Romans 12:15 commands us to “mourn with those who mourn” or “weep with those who weep.” Few things bind us together in friendship like sorrow. We tend to remember most the people who stood beside us in our darkest valleys, not merely during our happiest moments. That is why tears create a bond that is deep and lasting.

A simple story illustrates this well. A woman expressed sympathy to a servant after her aunt's death and assumed the servant had been a close friend of the deceased. The servant replied that they had often laughed and talked together, but they were not really friends. “You see,” she said, “we never shed tears together.” The point is clear: sorrow forms a bond that casual companionship cannot.

*Tears create a bond that casual
companionship cannot.*

As Christians, we are called to share not only in each other's joys but also in each other's sorrows. Yet too often we fail in this. We rarely draw near to others by entering their suffering. At times, if we are honest, we may even be tempted to think, “*He got what was coming to him.*” But Proverbs 17:5b warns that “whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.”

To weep with those who weep means to feel another believer's pain as though it were our own. It is part of loving our neighbors as ourselves. This is what Christian fellowship is meant to be.

God Is a God Who Weeps

God is not distant from human sorrow. In Isaiah 63:9, we read that “in all their distress he too was distressed.” When Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, He identified not only with Mary and Martha’s grief, but also with the sorrow sin has brought into the world. He also wept over Jerusalem—the very city that would soon reject and crucify Him.

This reflects the heart of God in Ezekiel 18:32: “For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!” Our God is not like the cold and unfeeling gods that the world worships. He grieves over sin, death, and the pain they bring. He is a caring and compassionate God who enters into our suffering.

Psalm 56:8 gives us a beautiful picture of how God views our tears: He notices them and treasures them. Our tears matter to Him. And since we are called to imitate God and grow in Christlikeness, we too are called to weep with those who weep.

What Not to Do: Five Cautions

#1. When we come alongside those who are suffering, we must be careful not to wound them further. We should not tell people to “get over it” or rush them through their grief. Careless words can deepen pain. Proverbs 25:20 warns that careless words to a heavy heart are like vinegar on a wound—they only make it worse.

#2. We must also avoid making promises God has not made. We should not assure people that they will certainly be healed, find a job, get married, or any other specific outcome unless Scripture has clearly promised it. God is able to do all these things, but we are not omniscient, and we must not speak as if we were. False promises only deepen disappointment if the expected outcome does not occur.

#3. We should also avoid comparing one person’s suffering with another’s. Pain is real to the one who is experiencing it, and minimizing it by saying others have it worse is not helpful.

#4. Neither should we judge those who are suffering, as though their pain must be the direct result of some hidden sin. If they raise that question themselves, we should gently encourage them to seek the Lord and reassure them of our willingness to walk with them.

#5. And we must not avoid them simply because their grief is uncomfortable or we do not know what to say.

In all of this, love must govern our words, our assumptions, and our presence.

What To Do: Five Considerations

#1. When we seek to comfort those who are hurting, prayer must come first. We should pray privately and regularly for their deliverance, for God's presence in their trial, and for wisdom to know what to say and how to help. Prayer should also shape our words so that they bring healing, whether spoken in person, by phone, or through a message.

#2. Where possible, we should visit at the sufferer's convenience, not our own. We must not rush them or make them feel like an interruption in our schedule. Instead, we should be present, patient, and willing to stay long enough to truly care.

#3. Often, the most meaningful help we can offer is not words but a listening ear and a compassionate presence. Quiet attentiveness can minister more deeply than anything we say.

*Compassionate presence is often
the greatest comfort.*

#4. We should also encourage them through Scripture. God's Word gives endurance, hope, and strength to the weary. We should acknowledge their pain honestly while also reminding them that the Lord is near and that tears will not last forever.

#5. Finally, we should offer practical help whenever needed—food, transportation, childcare, cleaning, or any other support that eases their burden.

Practical help is love in action.

In all of this, love is not only spoken—it is shown.

A Word to Those Who Weep

Those who are suffering should also remember that comforters are not perfect. They may say the wrong thing, and sometimes they may not know what to say at all. It is wise to overlook their faults, since they are fellow sinners too. We should also guard against resentment if we feel misunderstood or overlooked. The Christian life is meant to be lived in community, and we do not suffer best when we try to carry our burdens alone.

If you are suffering, let others know. Do not isolate yourself and then expect others to know what you need. It is not a weakness to ask for help; it is wisdom. We are called to

share one another's burdens, and that includes allowing others the opportunity to care for us.

It is not a weakness to ask for help; it is wisdom.

Being Better Comforters

Ecclesiastes 7:2 reminds us that "it is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone and the living should take this to heart." Mourning helps us see life more clearly. It gives us perspective on what matters most and reminds us of the reality of eternity.

Yet if we are honest, our schedules often show that we spend more time with those who are rejoicing than with those who are grieving. We are quick to attend celebrations, but slower to sit with the brokenhearted. In a world that often ignores suffering, believers should care even more deeply, not less.

We live in a broken world, but God has promised to make all things new and wipe away every tear. Until that day, He calls us to comfort others with sympathy, patience, and presence rather than with polished words alone.

*Often, the best comfort is not eloquence but
a quiet, understanding heart.*

Weep for the Lost

We must also learn to weep for those who do not weep for themselves. Many of our loved ones and friends remain indifferent to Christ, and for such people, we should cry out to God for their salvation. This is not weak sentimentality; it is a biblical burden for souls.

Jesus wept over the city that would reject Him (Luke 19:41). Paul wept for his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1-3), and he spoke of those who rejected Christ "with tears" (Philippians 3:18). We should do the same. If we truly love the lost, we will not only speak to them but also pray for them with sorrow and urgency.

The lost condition of humanity broke Jesus' heart; it must break ours too.

Discussion Questions-----

1. The chapter begins by saying tears create a bond that casual companionship cannot. When have you seen suffering deepen a relationship in a meaningful way?
2. Which of the five cautions in “What Not to Do” is easiest to violate when someone is hurting, and why?
3. Which of the five considerations in “What to Do” do you find most difficult to practice, and which one would help you most in comforting others?
4. Why is it important to remember that God weeps with those who suffer, and how does that shape the way we care for others?
5. Close with prayer. Ask God to give you a tender heart toward the suffering, wisdom to comfort well, and a burden to weep for the lost.

Hymns/Songs -----

- “Jesus Strong and Kind” –CityAlight
- “All to Honour Jesus” –CityAlight

Rejoicing in Hope

A Joy the World Cannot Give

A third-century man, anticipating death, wrote these last words to a friend:

“It’s a bad, incredibly bad world. But I have discovered a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret in their midst. They have found a joy that is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians—and I am one of them.”

That is the joy of the Christian: a joy that does not depend on the pleasures or hardships of this world. It is not rooted in comfort, success, or circumstances. It is deeper than those things and more lasting than all of them. That is the subject of this chapter.

*The Christian has a joy that is independent of
the pleasures and hardships of this world.*

The Cure for Discouragement

Joy is a much-needed reminder because all of us face discouragement from time to time. Left unchecked, discouragement can deepen into depression, bringing numbness, fear, and a clouded mind. For those who battle depression, even making it through the day can feel like a struggle. Night brings its own struggle, and morning often begins the cycle again.

Romans 12:12 gives us a simple and gracious command: “Be joyful in hope.” Paul does not merely say, “Be joyful.” He says, “Be joyful in hope.” Joy is to be rooted in something greater than present circumstances. It is joy grounded in what God has promised and what we are still waiting to receive.

This matters because Christian joy is not the same as earthly happiness. Worldly happiness rises and falls with changing circumstances. But biblical joy can remain steady even when life is painful. It is not a denial of sorrow; it is confidence that God's promises are better than our present troubles.

*Biblical joy is not denial of sorrow, but confidence
in God's promises over present troubles.*

The Hope We Await

What is this hope? It is the believer's future glorification, when we will at last be made like Christ. By faith in Christ, we have been justified—made right with God—and the war between God and us is over. We now stand in peace with Him.

But justification is not the end of salvation. Romans 8:30 says, "Those he justified, he also glorified." Though glorification is still future, Paul speaks of it as already accomplished because it is certain. One day, when Christ returns, we will receive new bodies and be fully conformed to His image. What God has promised, He will surely bring to pass.

That is the hope that fuels Christian joy. It means no more sorrow, no more tears, no more pain, and no more sin. It means unending joy in the worship of God—the very purpose for which we were created. This hope is not vague wishful thinking; it is a confident expectation grounded in the faithfulness of God.

Christian hope is a confident expectation grounded in God's faithfulness.

Rejoicing While We Suffer

At the same time, we still live in a fallen world, and sorrow remains part of life. That is why Paul could say in 2 Corinthians 6:10 that he and the other apostles were "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Those two realities are not contradictory. We can sorrow because we live in a sin-cursed world, and we can rejoice because our future is secure in Christ.

This is also why Romans 12:15 tells us to "mourn with those who mourn." Christian joy does not deny sorrow; it lives alongside it. With each passing day, we are one day closer to the fulfillment of our hope. Christ will return, and when He does, our joy will be complete.

Joy, then, is not the absence of tears; it is the presence of hope. We may be burdened, but we are not abandoned. We may be weary, but we are not defeated. The Christian heart can carry sorrow and joy at the same time because the future is secure.

We rejoice because our hope is secure.

What Our Joy Is Based On

We need to take this command seriously. Since we are told to be joyful not in our possessions or position, but in the hope of Christ's return, a lack of joy is not a small matter. It is easy to mistake temporary comfort for real joy. A secure job, good health, strong friendships, and financial stability can all produce happiness, but that kind of joy is fragile.

All those things can disappear. Jobs can be lost. Money can vanish. People can fail us or die. Proverbs 11:28 says, "Those who trust in their riches will fall," and Proverbs 11:7 reminds us that "hopes placed in mortals die with them." If our joy depends on earthly stability, then it will rise and fall with our circumstances.

So ask yourself: what is the main thing that gives you joy? If it were taken away, would your joy remain? That question matters because it exposes where we have been placing our hope. If our joy is tied only to what we can see and control, it will always be vulnerable whenever life changes.

If our joy is in this world, it will not last.

How Joy Grows

According to Galatians 5:22-23, joy is part of the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit, and He produces this joy through the Word He has given us. As we meditate on Scripture, believe it, and apply it, He forms joy in our hearts.

The more we dwell on God's promises—especially the hope of Christ's return and our future glorification—the more our hope grows. And the stronger our hope becomes, the deeper our joy, even in affliction. Jeremiah expressed this beautifully: "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jeremiah 15:16).

A person who feeds on God's Word and rests in His promises becomes a person marked by joy. But the one who neglects God's promises will be controlled by circumstances. When life goes well, joy rises; when life changes, discouragement returns. Let us not live that way.

Instead, let us rejoice in hope. Let us believe God's promises, delight in them, and live in the light of them. It's this kind of life that shows that the Spirit is truly at work, renewing our minds and shaping our hearts.

*A person who feeds on God's Word and rests in
His promises becomes marked by joy.*

Discussion Questions-----

1. The chapter begins by describing a Christian joy that is independent of the pleasures and hardships of this world. What is the difference between that kind of joy and the kind of happiness people usually pursue?
2. Paul says, "Be joyful in hope." What is the hope in this chapter, and why does that future hope matter so much for present joy?
3. The chapter says believers can be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." How can sorrow and joy exist together in the Christian life without canceling each other out?
4. What earthly things are most likely to become the basis of your joy, and why do they make such fragile foundations?
5. Close with prayer. Ask God to make your joy rest in Christ's promises, not in changing circumstances, and to use His Word to produce lasting hope and joy in you.

Hymns/Songs -----

- "Rejoice" –Keith and Kristen Getty
- "His Glory & My Good Lyrics" –CityAlight

Three Cross-Related Sufferings of Jesus

As we come to the end of this book, it is fitting to look once more at Jesus. No one has ever suffered as He did. My prayer is that as you consider His pain, you will be strengthened to persevere by fixing your eyes on Him with love and gratitude.

The earthly life of Jesus was touched by suffering, but this chapter focuses on three kinds of suffering He endured as He secured our redemption: **physical, emotional, and spiritual**.

#1. Physical Suffering: The Brutality of the Cross

The Gospel writers describe the crucifixion with a short, almost understated line: “They crucified him” (Mark 15:24). To the people of that time, those words carried the weight of terror. Everyone knew what crucifixion meant. But because we live far from that world, we can miss the brutality of what Jesus endured. Taking time to understand this ancient method of brutal execution helps us see more clearly the depth of His physical suffering.

Crucifixion was slow, public, and humiliating—reserved for the worst criminals as a warning to all who passed by. But long before the nails were driven in, the suffering had already begun.

The Scourging and the Thorns

Before reaching the cross, Jesus was scourged. Tied to a post, He was beaten with a whip embedded with bone and metal that tore His flesh with every strike. Many victims died from this alone.

A crown of long thorns was then pressed into His head. He was mocked, spat upon, and forced to carry His heavy wooden cross. Carrying your cross meant one thing: death was certain, and there was no return.

Carrying your cross meant one thing: death was certain, and there was no return.

The Iron Spikes

At the place of execution, the two wooden beams were fitted together to form the cross and set flat on the ground. Jesus was stripped of His clothing and placed on the wood, His torn and bleeding back pressed against the rough surface, adding to His pain and shame.

The iron nails—more like heavy, rough spikes—were then driven through His wrists and feet. These crushed the nerves and sent shocks of unbearable pain through His body. Above Him hung the charge: *King of the Jews*. But Scripture tells us it was our sins that truly put Him there (Colossians 2:13-15).

The Struggle for Breath

When the cross was lifted, every breath became a battle. To inhale, He pushed up on the nails in His feet; to exhale, He slumped back down, scraping His torn back against the wood. Death came slowly through blood loss, exhaustion, and suffocation.

For six hours, Jesus hung there. Yet it was not the nails that held Him in place—it was His love for the Father and for us.

The nails did not hold Jesus on the cross. Love did!

As Jesus Himself said:

John 10:18 – *No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily.*

This is the physical suffering Jesus bore for our sins.

But His pain was far deeper still.

#2. Emotional and Relational Suffering:

Rejection and Shame

Jesus also endured profound emotional and relational suffering—abandonment, shame, and isolation. To redeem us, He faced the full weight of human rejection.

He was betrayed by Judas for the price of a slave. Peter denied Him three times. His disciples fled. False witnesses accused Him, soldiers mocked Him, and passersby hurled insults at Him.

The Weight of Shame

Crucifixion was designed not only to kill but to disgrace. Victims were stripped and exposed. The Son of God hung in shame before the very world He created. He bore the humiliation that belonged to us.

The Deepest Wound

Yet the deepest pain was not human mockery. It was the sense of being forsaken by His Father. Jesus—who had enjoyed perfect fellowship with God for all eternity—entered absolute loneliness.

- He was **forsaken** so that we would never be forsaken.
- He was **condemned** so that we might be declared innocent.
- He was **cast out** so that we might be welcomed into God's family.

Through His loneliness, the way back to God was opened.

*Jesus was forsaken so that we might
never be forsaken.*

#3. Spiritual Suffering: Bearing Sin and Wrath

As terrible as the physical and emotional agony were, the deepest suffering of Jesus was spiritual. Many have died by crucifixion, but only one Person bore the sin of the world.

The Cup of Wrath

Before the cross, Jesus spoke of a cup (Matthew 26:39). It represented God's holy wrath against sin. The thought of drinking it caused Him to sweat drops of blood. Yet on the cross, He drank it fully.

He took the judgment we deserved until not a drop remained. Because He bore the penalty for us, no judgment remains for those who trust in Him. The storm of God's justice fell on Him so it would never fall on us.

Legal Abandonment

As Jesus hung on the cross, darkness covered the land—a sign of God's judgment. Out of that deep darkness came His heart-wrenching cry:

Matthew 27:46 – *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

For the first time in eternity, the Son of God experienced the loss of the Father's comforting presence. This was not a break within the Trinity. It was a legal judgment—Jesus was standing in our place and receiving the judgement our sin deserved.

Jesus was rejected so we could be accepted.

Our Debt Transferred

On the cross, a “legal exchange” took place. Jesus did not become a sinner, but He took our place. Our guilt was transferred to Him. Every lie, every act of pride, and every secret mistake—past, present, and future—was placed on Jesus.

The Bible says in Isaiah 53:5-6:

He was pierced for our rebellion...crushed for our iniquities... the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And 2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Because Jesus, as our Substitute, took our punishment, the debt is fully paid. God remains perfectly just. He did not ignore our sin or pretend it did not matter. He placed the penalty on His Son. And at the same time, Jesus’ righteousness—His perfect standing before God—was given to us.

Now forgiveness is offered freely. God can set the guilty free because the price has been paid by another.

Jesus was treated as guilty so we could be treated as children of God.

For Reflection

The next time we are tempted to sin, let us pause and remember the suffering Jesus endured for our redemption—physical, emotional, and spiritual. Let the cross move our hearts to say *no* to sin.

Can we look at Jesus hanging in agony between heaven and earth and still cling to the very sins that put Him there?

Unthinkable.

May God stir in us a holy hatred for sin because of what it cost our Savior. And may our love for Jesus grow so that, even in the hardest moments of life, we keep looking to Him and continue to persevere.

Discussion Questions-----

1. The chapter begins by saying no one has ever suffered as Jesus did. How does looking at His suffering help strengthen your perseverance when life is hard?
2. The chapter traces Jesus' suffering as physical, emotional, and spiritual. Which of those three do you tend to think about least, and why do you think that is?
3. The chapter says that Jesus was forsaken so that we would never be forsaken. How does that truth affect the way you think about rejection, shame, or loneliness?
4. The chapter emphasizes that Jesus bore our sin and wrath as our Substitute. Why is it important that the cross involved a real "legal exchange" and not just a general example of suffering?
5. Close with prayer. Ask God to help you look to Jesus in the hardest moments of life, to grow in hatred for sin because of what it cost your Savior, and to persevere with love and gratitude because Christ has fully paid your debt.

Hymns/Songs -----

- "You Are My King" (Amazing Love) –Billy Foote
- "Thank You Jesus for the Blood" –Charity Gayle

When Life Is Hard, Christ Is Enough

Suffering is not an interruption to the Christian life. It is part of it. From the opening question of whether God cares in our trouble, to the final reflections on the sufferings of Christ, Scripture consistently reminds us that God is not distant from our pain. He is present in it, purposeful in it, and faithful through it.

When life is hard, we are not left without direction. We are reminded that God cares deeply for His children (chapter 1), and that suffering is not strange to the Christian experience (chapter 2). Even when we feel abandoned, we are never forgotten by the Lord who remembers His people (chapter 3).

Yet suffering does not only test our circumstances, it tests our hearts. It exposes discouragement (chapter 4), reshapes our understanding of contentment (chapter 5), and teaches us to wait on God rather than run ahead of Him (chapter 6). Even death itself is reframed, because in Christ, the grave is not the end (chapter 7).

For those in Christ, suffering is never without meaning. Persecution is not a sign of God's absence but of our identification with Jesus (chapter 8). And in the midst of it all, God gives us motivations to endure, not by denying pain, but by redeeming it (chapter 9). He calls us into a community that weeps with those who weep (chapter 10) and into a hope that refuses to die (chapter 11).

Above all, suffering is not ultimately about us. It is about Christ. The sufferings of Jesus—rejection, sorrow, betrayal, and the cross itself—stand at the center of our faith (chapter 12). He did not remain distant from pain; He entered it fully. And because He suffered, we are never alone in ours.

This is the great anchor of the believer's life: we endure because Christ has endured for us. We persevere not in our own strength, but in the strength He provides. And we hope—not because life is easy—but because Christ is risen, reigning, and returning.

So when life is hard, we do not despair. We pray. We trust. We wait. We rejoice in hope. And we fix our eyes on Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith.”

Because in the end, the answer to every chapter in this book is the same: **Christ is enough.**

Author

I'm a sinner saved solely because of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I come from an orthodox Hindu Brahmin (Indian) background. The Lord saved me primarily through the loving, faithful, and persistent witnessing of a Christian friend, Vijay, an ex-Hindu who was graciously converted to Christ, and through the reading of a Bible placed at my doorstep by an unknown individual while studying in Texas, USA, at the same time.

One verse, in particular, deeply moved me and brought me face to face with the Savior: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Primarily through that verse along with many others, the Holy Spirit opened my heart to the reality of the gracious Shepherd and Savior—the Lord Jesus Christ—and led this rebellious sinner into a saving relationship with Him.

I am married to Geetha, and we are blessed with two adult married children: Paul (married to Kaitlyn) and Preethi (married to Jake). By God's grace, all of them know and follow the Lord, which is a precious gift my wife and I never take for granted.

Since 2003, I've had the great joy and privilege of serving as the pastor of Grace Bible Church in Windsor, Ontario. This loving church family has walked with me through many seasons of life, including times of intense personal health challenges. They've done so with steadfast love and prayerful support. It was to them that these Beatitudes were first preached as a sermon series back in 2019. They've been a continual source of encouragement and grace to me.

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Copies of this book are available on the Amazon website, both print and Kindle versions.

*A free PDF version of this book is also available
on the sites mentioned below:*

*<https://english.biblebasedhope.com/>
<https://gbc-windsor.org/>*

If you have any questions or feedback—whether about this book or the Scriptures in general—I’d be honored to hear from you. Please don’t hesitate to reach out. I’m also well aware of my own limitations and am continually seeking to grow in my understanding of God’s Word.

NOT IF, BUT WHEN

Jesus told His disciples they would have trouble in this world—and He told them to take heart, not *if*, but *when* that trouble comes (John 16:33).

Each chapter in this book offers encouragement for believers walking through hardship, showing from Scripture how we can face trials in God's strength and rest in the unchanging love and hope that are ours in Christ. Through illustrations, biblical truths, and practical application, every chapter carries a pastoral tone that gently guides readers through the challenges of suffering.

Beyond personal encouragement, the book also serves those walking alongside friends or family who are suffering, offering wisdom on life's hard questions. And finally, it extends hope to unbelievers who may wrestle with why a loving God allows suffering—pointing them to the lasting hope found only in Christ.

Life will be hard. May this book be a blessing and an encouragement as you persevere with the strength God provides.

Ram Krishnamurthy has been pastoring Grace Bible Church, located in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, for over two decades. He is married to Geetha, and they have two children. More details about him can be found at:

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