

September 18, 2016
The Bridge Bible Fellowship
Pastor Paul S. Brown
Selected Scriptures

“Tough Questions: The Problem of Suffering – Part Four”

Intro: 2 Cor. 4:7-11

- **Afflicted, but Not Crushed**
- **Perplexed, but Not Despairing**
- **Persecuted, but Not Forsaken**
- **Struck Down, but Not Destroyed**

- I. Problem of Suffering
- II. Purpose of Suffering
- III. Perspective on Suffering (eternal vs temporal)
- IV. Practical Issues Today:
 - A. Suicide
 - B. Euthanasia
 - C. **Counseling the Suffering**

- **Pray and ask God for His compassion and wisdom (2 Cor. 1:3-4; James 1)**
- **Simply be with them when suffering comes and listen (Job 2:13; 1 Cor. 12:26)**
- **Admit that you don't know all the answers to their tough questions (Dt. 29:29)**
- **Talk about suffering**

“We must talk so as to make suffering seem normal and purposeful, and not surprising in this fallen age. The forces of American culture are almost all designed to build the opposite worldview into our minds. Maximize comfort, ease, and security. Avoid all choices that might bring discomfort, trouble, difficulty, pain, or suffering. Add this cultural force to our natural desire for immediate gratification and fleeting pleasures, and the combined power to undermine the superior satisfaction of the soul in the glory of God through suffering is huge.” (John Piper, *Counseling Suffering People*, JBC, Winter 2003)

- **Go over the principles from the previous three sermons**
- **Refer them to good Christian articles and books**
- **Focus on faith (Jn. 16:33)**
- **Help build a foundation on the goodness and sovereignty of God (Lk. 6:47-48; 2 Sam. 24:14; Ps. 34:8)**

- **Tell them that the Scriptures affirm the appropriateness of bringing our pain and honest complaints to God (Jer. 20:7; Ps. 62:8)**
- **Pray with them and/or for them (Eph. 1:15-23)**
- **Think practically how to serve them, especially in the midst of a crisis (Gal 6:13)**
- **Don't be afraid to ask for outside help (Prov. 11:14; 15:22)**

Discussion & Application:

1. What specific encouragement do you get from Paul's example in 2 Cor. 4:7-11? Have you ever been in "dire straits" like Paul was? Looking back, what lessons did you learn about yourself and about God's faithfulness in those difficult times?
2. Rom. 15:14 says that all believers are capable of counseling others. Who do you know that could use some godly counsel from you right now? How could you improve as a counselor? If you are interested in taking some Biblical Counseling classes at TBBF please call the church office.
3. Did anyone ever come alongside of you when you were suffering and provide real help? If so, what specifically did they do that ministered to you?
4. What does it mean that God is sovereign? What passages of Scripture tell us about God's sovereignty? How does having an ever deepening understanding of God's sovereignty and His goodness help us when we are suffering?
5. Are you honest with God when you pray? Do you feel free to tell him what you are thinking and feeling? If not, why not?
6. What resources would you give to a believer who is going through suffering? What book(s) would you recommend?
7. List practical things you could do for someone when they are suffering (i.e., watch their kids; run an errand; etc.):
8. Are you suffering right now? The body of Christ is here to help you. God to God in prayer and then ask someone for help. Let someone else help you bear your burdens (Gal. 6:1-2).