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INTRODUCTION: How do you view life's problems & pain?

1. To most pain is an enemy invading, an adversary taking advantage of its victims.
 2. Have you ever considered affliction as a friend? One that is there to learn by its very presence?
- Specific Objective: I want my hearers to grow rather than simply groan when confronted by life's pains - (cancer).

Interest Getters: All of the following have spoken to this issue at hand:

1. Physician Scott Peck - calls it "the road less traveled"
2. C.S. Lewis - "God's megaphone"
3. English Poet Byron - "the path to truth"
4. Isaac Watts hymn - "Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed thru bloody seas?"
5. Philip Yancey - "the gift nobody wants"

Application: The average person reacts by crying out, "What are you saying? That I should accept pain, suffering, affliction, cancer and suffering? Just the mention of these often creates tension, fear and sorrowful memories.

Illustration: Suppose you went for an annual checkup and the X-ray revealed a shadow; as a result, the Doctor suggests further tests and ends up taking a biopsy. The report comes back – **CANCER!** It is like somebody just punched you in your gut and knocked the air out of you. How will you respond? Perhaps there are some lessons that we can learn both through the word of God and what we know about cancer.

I would like to share this message with you after having spent a week in a Cancer Residency Program for Ministers at the Orlando Regional Medical Center and as a result of hearing of the symptoms suspecting; latter confirming that my Dad had terminal cancer.

I. SUFFERING IS INEVITABLE VV.3-4

A. BIBLICAL REFERENCES ON SUFFERING BEING INEVITABLE

1. Jesus promised that we would all suffer in life.

John 16:33 (KJV) These things I have spoken unto you. that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

2. Some say that all suffering is a proof that one is a sinner and simply lacks faith. That is an unwarranted heartless and unbiblical thing to say. The Bible time and time again acknowledges we all suffer.

2 Cor 4:7-10 (UV) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

a. Yet a tremendous promise is given of what Jesus can do for us even in the midst of our suffering:

2 Cor 4:16 (KJV) For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

B. BIBLICAL REFERENCE THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED THAT SUFFERING IS INEVITABLE

1 Pet 4:12-13 (KJV) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are

partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye maybe glad also with exceeding joy.

Illustration: A wonderful older saintly women that all of us called Ma Ma Jenkins developed cancer. While my wife Pam and I (Robert De Corah) were visiting with her see during the last stages said, "I do not understand why I have cancer and why I have to suffer. I have always tried to live for Jesus. I just had fluid removed from around my heart and they could give me no pain medication. As the Doctor prepared to operate with no medication he asked me if there was anything he could do. I told him yes. I asked to be allowed to prayed. I cried out to the Lord for help to endure the pain and that He would be with me. She said I think the Lord touched the Doctors heart. It was one of the most painful things to endure without pain medication. Last week my sister sat by my bed and I told her Jesus loved her and asked her to become a Christian. She said yes and prayed and accepted. Christ. I have been trying to reach her all my life. If this is what it took even though I am suffering I would do it over again to see her saved!"

APPLICATION: GOD ALWAYS HAS A PURPOSE IN SUFFERING IF WE WOULD ONLY LOOK TO HIM IN FAITH FOR THE ANSWERS.

II. SUFFERING IS OFTEN A GREAT TEACHER

A. THE PSALMIST ACKNOWLEDGE SUFFERING WAS A TEACHER

1. Note the benefit that suffering brings: Psa 119:67 (KJV) Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Psa 119:71 (KJV) It is good for me that I have *been* afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Psa 119:75 (UV) I know, °LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness bast afflicted me.

QUOTE: A.W. TOZER - "IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER GOD CAN BLESS A MAN GREATLY UNTIL HE HAS HURT HIM DEEPLY."

**2. Note the Biblical call to ponder the role of suffering:
Dad 7:13-14 (KJV) Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity**

consider: **God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.**

B. SOME THINGS WE LEARN FROM SUFFERING THROUGH CANCER

1. Overall Survival Rates:

- a. 1900 - few survived
- b. 1930 - 1 in 5 survived (survival medically for cancer is still being alive five years later = cure)
- c. 1950 - 1 in 4 survived
- d. 1984 - 1 in 3 survived
- e. 1990 - 1 in 2 survived

2. Specific Survival Rates - using five year guide = cancer free

- a. thyroid = 92%
- b. endometrium = 87%
- c. testicle = 82%
- d. bladder = 72%
- e. prostate = 67%
- g. brain = 25%
- h. lung 13%
- i. lung localized = 36%

3. For every 6 who get cancer today 2 survive and 4 die; 1 of 4 could have survived if treated in time; 3 of 4 there is no cure no matter time.

4. Seven Signs that may indicate a person has cancer:

- a. a change in bowel or bladder
- b. a sore that does not heal
- c. unusual bleeding or discharge
- d. thickening or lump in breast or elsewhere
- e. indigestion or difficulty in swallowing
- f. obvious change in wart or mole
- g. nagging cough or hoarseness

5. Progress of cancer: cancer = 100 plus diseases

- a. a cell goes wild and when it is dividing to multiple it does not stop and continues to multiple uncontrollably unless stopped - everyone has cancerous cells present - the lymphatic system and body's defenses usually take care of them.
- b. it is first localized - most on surface of some tissue = "in situ"
- c. it then begins to move towards underlying tissue = "invasive cancer"
- d. stays there = "localized"

- e. moves some distance - metastasis - local lymph gland = "regional involvement"
- f. spreads all over - advanced cancer = "systemic"

6. Questions to ask the Doctor:

a. What kind of cancer is it?

b. What stage is it in? - The pathologist will give the Dr. a numerical scale for both the degree it has spread and the mutation of the cancer cell - both numbers have a range of 4 - the smaller the number the better the chance of survival - the higher the more advanced and depending on the type of cancer the choice for treatment or non-treatment needs to be considered - sometimes death is coming whether treated or not - then it is often better to spend time with the family then begin something that will not help and only make one worst off then the cancer would. Both of these numbers are what is really important. If higher rate of possibility of survival go for the treatment with a good attitude that you will survive.

c. What further tests are needed? Note: only definitive answer to whether something is cancer is through a biopsy = pathologist looking at tissue sample - be forewarned sample can be destroyed as frozen - second opinion maybe warranted.

d. What forms of treatment are available - surgery, radiation, drugs = chemotherapy or experimental treatment - (often the cost for experimental programs is about 20,000 a month up front with the survival rate being about 3 months on average. Insurance does not normally cover this.)

e. Call 14800) 4-cancer for latest research, statistics and treatments for particular cancer - do not rely on Dr. for being up to date.

--early detection has between a 20 - 50% higher survival rate - go now and do not let fear of what the Dr. might find decrease your chance for survival

ILLUSTRATION: In May of 1990 I went to Orlando Regional Medical Center to live for a week learning about cancer to become a better pastor in ministering to my church flock at First Baptist Church of Conway in Orlando, Florida. Little did I realize that week would radically change my life. I had called my parents a few days prior. My Dad talked with a hoarse voice that we both attributed to laryngitis. During the seminar they mention the loss of voice often being a sign of advanced lung cancer which is past the stage of any hope of survival. I called my Dad at the end of the week and you could barley hear him. I had hoped to hear his voice. I encouraged him

to see an oncologist. Sure enough it was cancer of the lung which had already gone to his throat. I wish I could have offered him some hope. I asked my Mother and Dad to get the two numbers that would rate his cancer from the Pathologist and to ask the Oncologist if any treatment had a chance. I said the reason why I want you to find out is that I have seen so many people die early and needlessly painfully. It would be better for him to opt for radiation to slow the cancer down and to forgo most other treatments so he could enjoy his family. He became angry and asked what did I know. He asked the Doctors. The Doctors were honest. He did not take full treatment. He outlasted everyone he knew that had opted for full treatment for advanced lung cancer. God gave me the privilege of leading both my Mother and Father to the Lord in August of 1990. He died in June of 1992 with the peace of God two years later.

Lung cancer 157,000 cases 1990 = 142,000 deaths from lung cancer a year; lungs act as a filter for blood and cells so it spreads all over the body - 85% caused by smoking - 10% of nonsmokers get it - 10% metasis and go into the brain - 60% of lung cancer would be eliminated if people stopped smoking.

III. SUFFERING PEOPLE NEED TO BE MINISTERED TO NOT FORSAKEN BECAUSE WE FEEL WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. VV 1-2

A. SUFFERING PEOPLE NEED YOU THERE TO LISTEN

1. The two greatest emotions that a cancer patient will feel are fear and anger. Fear of dying and anger that they have cancer - why me?
2. A flood of emotions sweeps over the shell shocked soul in waves - disappointment, depression, anxiety, fear, anger, denial, loneliness, resentment, and bitterness.

Illustration: One day my Dad, who had been strong and afraid of no one, said to me, "Son, I am afraid." I asked if he knew why he was afraid? He shook his head yea while looking down at the floor with a fearful depressed look. I said, "Dad, you're afraid that if you go to sleep you will not wake up and that at the end you do not know how much pain you will be in. I said, "Dad you're going to have to trust Jesus Christ as Savior who claims to have the keys of hell and death. You need to confess your fear to Him and ask that He will give you that peace and reassurance that if you do not wake up that you will be in heaven. You need to ask Jesus to take the fear and help you with the pain when it comes." He went through a long process of I

grieving his own impending death but arrived at the end with the acceptance he needed. His smile and humor returned. That was the way I wanted to remember him.

APPLICATION: ONE DOES NOT NEED TO HAVE ALL OF THE ANSWERS NOR IS IT A TIME TO TOP THEIR STORY NOR CUT THEM OFF, BUT RATHER LISTEN TO ONE'S OWN SOUL THE EMOTIONS THAT STIRS WHICH OFTEN IS A REFLECTION OF THE HURTING OF THE ONE GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO MINISTER TO.

B. SUFFERING PEOPLE NEED US TO:

1. Be there by: one's presence = greatest fear all will forsake as dying; prayer; using Scriptures to win or comfort; cook meal; clean house; take to treatment; arrange for grass to be cut; walk to be shoveled of snow; stay with so spouse can go shopping or do hair = emotional and physical relief to carrying spouse; talk realistically; keep up on church life; send cards; take flowers...etc.

2. Encourage faith

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT WHEN SAUL WAS HUNTING HIM

1 Sam 23:14-16 (KJV) And David abode in the wilderness in strongholds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. 15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. 16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

IV. SUFFERING SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE

A. FROM TEXT WE LEARN

1. Suffering need not keep us unsettled v. 3a
2. Suffering sees with eyes of faith - God still in control vv. 3-4
3. Suffering requires three attitudes to overcome
 - a. resentment - by good news v.6
 - b. desire to be isolated - 6b - "desiring to see us"
 - c. indifference or doubting faith v.7

B. SUFFERING OFTEN DEMANDS LOVING PERSISTENCE FROM THE ONE SUFFERING AND THE ONES GOD LEADS TO MINISTER,

ILLUSTRATION: God recently brought across my path a man whom I had never met who had advanced lung cancer. His wife requested prayer. I went to try to visit with him, but he refused to even talk with me as he had all church members before me. I tried calling on the phone once again he refused to talk and requested that I wait to talk with his wife who was a church member. Later I would call and ask him if he would let us put him on our churches prayer list, which he allowed. The day after prayer meeting I sent him a card to let him know that we called his name before the Lord. God kept him on my heart. I was called and told he would probably not survive the Christmas holiday. The flu which was going around kept me in bed for over a week. I kept praying please don't let him die without Jesus. By the grace of God I went to his house to find him, his Dad and wife home. I said, "Ron, I have come to pray for you and to read from the Bible with you. He turned the TV. down. As we talked I shared how my Dad had died from cancer. I shared how he feared choking to death in his sleep. But how he wrestled through his fears by accepting Christ and reading the Bible through one and three quarters times. I then said he died happy knowing he would be with Jesus in the home Jesus was preparing for him in heaven. He simply took a last breath and died and went home. With tears streaming down his face from the fear that was welled up inside Ron indicated that he would like to trust Jesus as Savior. He prayed the sinners prayer and welcomed Jesus into his heart. His wife said he carried that Bible with him from room to room for the next three days until he to quietly died about noon with his family in his room to go home to be with the Lord and to meet my Dad in heaven to give him a report on how his son was doing until he met him in death or when Jesus comes.

CONCLUSION:

I stand here wondering if you are surprised when suffering comes. Jesus promised we would experience it, but thank God he also promised that He has the ability to overcome our suffering united with Him. Will you trust the Lord Jesus as Savior. Will some of you also truly trust as a loving Lord who you can trust to help you work through your pain and the emotions of fear and anger that seem to want to drown you. Why not come forward this day "Casting all of your cares on Him for He cares for you." By the grace of God He can make you better than to go it alone and simply end up bitter.

Grace: Heaven Is A Free Gift

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." [Romans 6:23](#)

We can't earn our way to heaven, and none of us really deserve to go. It is a gift.

Man: We Are All Sinners

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." [Romans 3:23](#)
Every person who has ever lived has missed God's standard of perfection.

God: He Loves Us

"God is love." [1 John 4:8](#)

While God loves us and doesn't want to punish us, we should also know that, as a just God, He must punish sin. "The soul who sins shall die." [Ezekiel 18:4](#)

Christ: God Balanced Justice And Love Through His Son Jesus

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." [John 3:16](#)

Jesus is the infinite God-man, God in the flesh. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay the penalty for our sins and to purchase a place for us in heaven, which He offers as a free gift.

Faith: The Gift Of Eternal Life Is Received By Faith

Saving faith is not merely intellectual assent. It is trusting in Jesus Christ alone and what He has done rather than what we can do to get us to heaven. "What must I do to be saved? ... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." [Acts 16:30b, 31](#)

The Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You can do that now by simply praying:

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. But I believe You died and rose from the grave to purchase a place in heaven for me. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins, and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone for my salvation, and I accept Your free gift of eternal life.

If this prayer is the sincere desire of your heart, look at the promise of Jesus: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has eternal life." [John 6:47](#)

If you, having read this, trusted Jesus for eternal life, please let us know. We want to rejoice in what God has done in your life and help you to grow spiritually. [Please contact us and let us know.](#)