



Suffering for Your Good

By Mr. Alexander S. Brown, Minister

Pain and suffering can be one of the most difficult things for Christians to get their heads around. It is hard to reconcile how a good God could permit evil, especially in light of the suffering we face in our lives. And to make it worse, we can, at times, be ashamed to voice our confusion, afraid that we will be cut-down or criticized for being unspiritual.

However, the fact is that pain and suffering is exceedingly difficult to understand, and it can be something which knocks our faith in severe ways. We may know our doctrine of the sovereignty of God, and we may know our doctrine of the providence of God, but when we find ourselves in the heat of suffering, it can be hard to marry what we know with what we feel.

In the wisdom of God we have been spending quite a bit of time on this topic over the past few weeks, as we have begun digging into 1 Peter in our morning services, and have continued in our series in Jeremiah in the evening. Both of these books deal with the topic of suffering head on, and specifically suffering in the life of an obedient Christian.

There is nothing but good to the saints in God's purposes and promises.

- John Flavel

The Christians to whom Peter was writing were Christians who were not finding themselves suffering because of their sin, but rather they were suffering simply because they were living faithful lives. Similarly, the prophet Jeremiah did not suffer because of his sin against God, but rather because he was faithful to preach the gospel to a hostile people.

Now, there are times when we suffer because of our sin. Our actions have consequences, and at times we will have to endure pain or loss because of something which we have done. But that was not the case for Jeremiah, nor for Peter's readers, and, I think, not usually for us either. It is here that we have the most difficulty in processing our suffering.

Our culture looks at suffering, and wonders why bad things happen to good people. An almost karma-like mentality has gripped our culture, which says if you live well then you will have a happy life. Or, as some would articulate it, what goes around, comes around. It is hard for us to not be overtaken by that mentality. It seems as if it makes sense – if you do good things, then surely you will have a happy life.

However, that is not the way of life which the Bible describes. What Peter's readers, and what Jeremiah, were experiencing was not life gone wrong, but life as it is supposed to work. The Bible never leads us to expect a carefree life, but rather leads us to expect a life of great care, and great sorrow. But it is a care and sorrow which leads to deeper and lasting joy.

The Puritans wrote a lot about this. They were, after all, men who were faced with a great deal of suffering because of their commitment to Biblical Christianity and their refusal to submit to the corrupt hierarchy of the Established Church. One of them, John Flavel, wrote one of the most honest and insightful comments on when the providence of God takes us down a hard road:

(Continued on the next page)



March Calendar

Sundays

9:30 a.m. Sunday School
"Two Ways to Live"

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship
"I Peter: Strangers in a Foreign Land"

6:00 p.m. Evening Worship
"Jeremiah: Judgment and Restoration"
Children's Church, Nursery available

- Sat 3/3 *Walk for Life*, to benefit CareNet of Coastal GA (ourpartners.org)
- Sun 3/4 Communion (AM)
- Tue 3/6 Stated Session Meeting
- Tue 3/6 "Beyond the Pages" Book Group for Women (6:30 p.m., Taylor home)
- Wed 3/7, 14, 21, 28
Midweek Prayer Meeting (6:30 p.m., GIPC)
- Sat 3/10 "Second Saturday" Men's Breakfast & Bible Study (8:00 a.m., Brown home)
- Sun 3/11 *Daylight Savings Time (Clocks spring forward!)*
- Tue 3/13, 20, 27
Ladies Bible Study (6:30 p.m., Dr. Diane Bowen's office)
- Wed 3/14, 21, 28
Ladies Bible Study (9:30 a.m., GIPC; child care provided)
- Fri, Sat 3/16, 17
New Members Class (Details—see pg. 2.)

In this issue

Committee Updates.....	2
New Members Class.....	2
Bible Reading Plan.....	3
March Fighter Verses.....	3

Suffering for Your Good

(Continued from the previous page)

“And (which is sweet to consider) all [the] products and issues [of God’s providence] are exceedingly *beneficial* to the saints. It performs all things for them. ‘Tis true we often prejudge its works, and unjustly censure its designs, and in many of our straits and troubles say: ‘All these things are against us’; but indeed Providence neither does nor can do anything that is really against the true interest and good of the saints. For what are the works of Providence but the execution of God’s decree and the fulfilling of His Word? And there can be no more in Providence than is in them. Now there is nothing but good to the saints in God’s purposes and promises; and, therefore, whatever Providence does concerning them, it must be ... ‘the performance of all things for them.’”

John Flavel was simply re-stating what Paul said in Romans 8:28, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.” Paul says, *all things* work together for our good – even our suffering. So, when we go through times of pain and times of hardship we know that God has not forgotten us, or that He is unable to help us, but that, in some mysterious way, He is, in fact, blessing us! Another Puritan, Richard Sibbes, addressed this apparent anomaly when he wrote:

“Christ may act the part of an enemy a little while, as Joseph did, but it is to make way for acting his own part of mercy in a more seasonable time. He cannot restrain his bowels of mercy long. He seems to wrestle with us, as with Jacob, but he supplies us with hidden strength to prevail at length. Faith pulls off the mask from his face and sees a loving heart under contrary appearances.”

No one enjoys suffering. And the Bible is not trying to get you to “smile through the pain.” But when we find ourselves in times of difficulty, we must see two vital things: God is all-powerful, and God loves His children with an intense love. If you are to understand your trials correctly, and if you are to understand your faith in the midst of trial, you have to see that this is not because God has lost control, nor is it because He does not love you, but rather that in His great wisdom He has ordained that you go through this trial, and that you go through it for your good! ▪

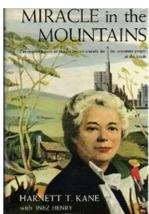
Women in the Church

Ladies Bible Study

All women are invited to meet for Bible study each Tuesday evening (except the first) at Dr. Diane Bowen’s office, or each Wednesday morning (except the first), at the church. The current study is entitled, “Meeting Jesus: Women of Faith from the New Testament.” Childcare is available at the Wednesday morning meeting.

“Beyond the Pages” Book Group for Women—Tuesday, March 6th, 6:30 p.m.

The Book Group will meet on Tuesday, March 6th at the home of Sue Taylor. Our new meeting time is 6:30-7:30 p.m. The March selection is, “Miracle in the Mountains,” by Harnett T. Kane with Inez Henry.



“While ‘Miracle in the Mountains’ may be influenced by popular stories surrounding Martha Berry’s character and actions, the authors none the less do an excellent job of picturing her impact on her world. Kane and Henry catch the spirit of social and educational reform that Martha Berry embodied. Her persevering character allowed Martha Berry to establish a school that is now one of the premiere small colleges in the United States.” (Susan Asbury, Curator, Historic Berry; September, 2002).

—Sue Taylor, Book Group Chair

Finance Committee

GIPC Monthly Update— Loan Balance

Loan Balance 1/1/12	\$840,102
Principal Paid YTD	\$ 5,425
Loan Balance	\$834,677
March Payment:	
Interest	\$ 2,419
Principal	\$ 2,830
Total Payment	\$ 5,249

Men in the Church

“Second Saturday” Breakfast and Bible Study—

March 10th, 8:00 a.m.

All men are invited to gather for fellowship at the Brown home on Saturday morning, March 10th. The current topic of discussion is *biblical manhood*. (Led by Mr. Brown.)

Significant Sessional Actions

- Approved vacation for Mr. Brown, April 9-15 and June 23-29, 2012.

The next Stated Session Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 6th.

GIPC Membership Class March 16 & 17, 2012

For those who are interested in becoming a member of Golden Isles Presbyterian Church, or if you would simply like to learn more about what membership entails, the next Membership Class will be offered the third weekend in March (Friday evening and Saturday morning).

Additional information is available in the Sunday bulletin.

Connect with us!

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MARCH

"Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19)

Family Worship

Old Testament Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<i>Exodus</i>	12:22-51	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		14	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		15	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		16	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		18	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		19	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		20	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		21	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		23	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		24	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		25	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		26	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		27	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		28	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		29	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		30	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		31	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		32	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		33	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		34	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		35	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		36	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		37	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		38	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		39	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		40	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	<i>Leviticus</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
31		2,3	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Family Worship

New Testament Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<i>Luke</i>	15	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		16	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		18	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		19	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		20	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		21	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		22	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		23	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		24	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	<i>John</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		14	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		15	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		16	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		18	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		19	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		20	<input type="checkbox"/>
31		21	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Private

Old Testament Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<i>Job</i>	30	<input type="checkbox"/>
2		31	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		32	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		33	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		34	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		35	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		36	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		37	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		38	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		39	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		40	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		41	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		42	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	<i>Proverbs</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
15		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
21		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
27		14	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		15	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		16	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		17	<input type="checkbox"/>
31		18	<input type="checkbox"/>

MARCH

"Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." (Luke 2:19)

Private

New Testament Reading

Date	Book	Chapter	✓
1	<i>I Corinthians</i>	16	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<i>II Corinthians</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
3		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
4		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
5		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
6		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
7		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
8		7	<input type="checkbox"/>
9		8	<input type="checkbox"/>
10		9	<input type="checkbox"/>
11		10	<input type="checkbox"/>
12		11	<input type="checkbox"/>
13		12	<input type="checkbox"/>
14		13	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	<i>Galatians</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
16		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
17		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
18		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
19		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
20		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	<i>Ephesians</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
22		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
23		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
24		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
25		5	<input type="checkbox"/>
26		6	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	<i>Philippians</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
28		2	<input type="checkbox"/>
29		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
30		4	<input type="checkbox"/>
31	<i>Colossians</i>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>

Week beginning FEBRUARY 26

Psalms 103:1-4

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy.

Week beginning MARCH 4

Psalms 103:5-7

Who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the people of Israel.

Week beginning MARCH 11

Psalms 103:8-10

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

Week beginning MARCH 18

Psalms 103:11-14

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

Week beginning MARCH 25

Psalms 103:15-18

As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to those who keep His covenant and remember to do His commandments.