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This morning we are going to be looking at the subject of ~~suffering in the~~ believer's life, ~~the purpose that~~ God has designed for that suffering, and His intended objective in suffering. In I Peter, chapter four, we have Peter's words in conjunction with suffering-- the fact that suffering should be as normal to the believer today as it was when Jesus was here, ~~but~~, by virtue of the fact that the believer is to be a testimonial and a representation of something totally different from that which he was, the world, of course, immediately takes offense at his life and purpose as the result of having been ~~from~~ from above. So, throughout the Word of God you will notice that suffering is normal and natural for the believer. In fact, if the believer is not opposed, if the believer is not suffering, he is missing the will of God, and the grace of God, and the privileges that God has given to him to suffer. Chapter four of First Peter:

So much for the reading of God's Holy Word, let us bow our heads in prayer:

Our heavenly Father, we again thank you this morning for your precious Word. It's the only thing that we have that we can turn to to find out how you look at things, and to find out what your mind is in any given matter. We pray that as we look into your Word from day to day, that we might be willing as children to take you at your word, and to indeed commit our souls unto thee, knowing that you can keep us and protect us, and indeed fulfill your perfect will in, and through us in glorifying your Son, which is your only objective with us, and which, in turn, should be our only objective for ourselves--to glorify Jesus Christ. We would pray that as we've come here this morning, that your Spirit would use the Word to encourage our hearts. May we be strengthened and built up in the inner man as the result of what we hear. May we look at things differently, and then operate in a different way, and fulfill the purpose for which you have designed us. We pray that wherever thy Word is being proclaimed today in truth by your servants that the Holy Spirit of God would use it to build up the Church, the body of Christ, and that each of us who name the name of Christ might, in turn, Father, be used of Thee in an ever increasing way to fulfill your perfect will. And we ask to dear Father that you might direct with those who are sick this morning, those that are at work this morning, those that might be discouraged this morning, we pray for them, that your Spirit, Father, could deal with each of us, and that in turn we might have a desire to submit to you, and to again allow you to fulfill perfect will. Now direct this morning, throughout the day, as well as this evening. May everything that's said and done in this place bring glory to Jesus Christ, for it's in His Name we pray. Amen.

①
"Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." "Man is born into trouble as the sparks fly upward." As one would visualize a piece of steel put against a grinding stone, and watching the sparks fly, he would have an illustration of his very own life. Suffering is part of our daily experience. We recognize the fact that suffering, sorrow, yea, even death fell upon the human race because of sin, and ~~of course~~, as we live from day to day, this curse finds its fulfillment through each individual. ~~And~~ Though a believer has been redeemed from the penalty of sin, (or hell) and from the power of sin, he lives in an unredeemed body, and is still subject to suffering in the midst of an unredeemed creation; ~~Thus~~, we see suffering all around us with an unredeemed old sin nature which is as antagonistic toward the things of God as it was before we had been regenerated or born again.

Thus, the believer suffers physically as does everyone else. But along with that physical suffering, there is an added dimension of suffering in conjunction with the fact that he has been called to suffer for Jesus Christ. This brings him into a sphere of suffering that the unbeliever knows nothing about, and yet, through it all, the Lord has a specific purpose in all the sufferings that we are involved in. ~~Now to begin with, I'd like to have you open your Bibles to Ephesians 2, and we'll just lay some groundwork by looking at some verses which indicate God's objectives with us.~~ The reason why we become discouraged and melancholy and want to throw in the sponge and want to quit is because we fail to see what God's objectives are; thus, we are not looking at things the way God is looking at things. We are not expecting God to fulfill the purposes and objectives which He says He will through all things that come our way. So, when He says to "pray evermore, rejoice without ceasing, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you," we are reluctant to accept that as the truth. But, in Ephesians 2, we have in verses 8-10 (very familiar verses, which I hope most of you can quote) a principle: "For by grace are ye (you are) saved, through faith, (perfect tense--they had been saved; thus, they are saved), that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Thus we have a simple declaration given by the Apostle Paul in conjunction with how these Ephesian saints had gotten saved or had been "quickenened" (verse 1 of chapter 2--"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Verse 10 goes on to say "For we are (now (present tense) His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus... For if any man be in Christ, he is a brand new creation." (II Corinthians 5:17) This creation was as the result of God's workmanship in us. He is the only Creator; thus, the believer is a miracle, and something that is actually supernatural by virtue of the fact that God created within that believer something brand new, and gave that believer a brand new position in Christ Jesus. What's the purpose of it all? What's God's objective behind it all? Well, "we're created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Now, we have here the doctrine of eternal decrees and the fact that God is the divine, eternal planner of the ages. ~~We are chosen in Him, or~~ we were chosen in Him before the world even was. (Ephesians 1:3,4) God knew before you were born that you would be born. He knew before you were born again, that you would be born again; thus, in His divine wisdom, He designed a plan in eternity past that included you. God's objective for the believer is that he might be willing to allow the Spirit of God to fulfill that purpose and plan for which he has been redeemed or saved. When that plan is finding fulfillment or fruition throughout the believer's life, he then is producing the "good works which God hath before ordained." Which means, that if anyone does, or produces good works apart from those works fitting into the plan of God as the result of having been reclaimed and redeemed by God, those works are not classified by God as good works. In fact, they're classified (Isaiah 64:6) as "filthy rags." Thus, the necessity of being born again before one can do anything that's acceptable to God. So, our first approach to the unsaved is not to rehabilitate, remodel, rejuvenate, or readjust your behavior pattern--the first message that the believer has, is to seek to get this person to be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. "What is your relationship with Jesus Christ? Not 'what is your relationship with the community or social projects that may be taking place,' or anything else. In fact, it doesn't even hinge on your relationship with your husband or wife; because, until a person is born again, he cannot fulfill the admonitions given in the Word of God as we have it Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." And if this is the only love that God recognizes to make a marriage work, he cannot produce that until he

Angels

understands, and has personally experienced that divine love which has brought him into the true Church of Jesus Christ (he's been born again). This objective that God has for the believer is in contrast to the life and objectives he had before he was saved. We have in the first three verses of this particular chapter some statements made concerning our former behaviour pattern. And, I mention this because it fits into I Peter 2, verse 4, where Peter mentions, as we just read, that before you were saved, you lived a very riotous life, lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, and such the like, and because you do not run in the same excess of riot as the unsaved; thus, they have no recourse but to speak evil of you to justify their own life style by virtue of the fact that your life style has now been radically changed, and your whole behavior, objective in breathing and living down here is totally different than what it was before. This exposes the unbeliever, and because the believer is referred to as a "living epistle, known and read of all men," if the unsaved individual has no use or time for the Word of God, and if the believer is the reproduction of that book, the Bible, then, consequently and logically, the unbeliever has no use for you because you're duplicating the book which he naturally hates. So, if you're here this morning, the Bible is a book that you don't gravitate towards. Logically speaking, then, if you're here this morning, and you're not saved, you don't logically gravitate towards believers, and as the Bible irritates you, believers irritate you. That's exactly the way it ought to be. In other words, the believer is no longer in the world to pacify or please the unsaved. In fact, he's been placed here to deliberately irritate the unsaved. We have that in Matthew 10 which we may look at later. Now, let's look at the first three verses of Ephesians 2 as long as it's handy. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Before we were regenerated, before we were saved (verses 8&9), which was based upon grace or the grace of God, received by faith, we were dead in trespasses and sins. "Wherein, in time past," verse 2, (when you were dead), "you walked according to the course (Or menu, or lifestyle) of this world." Thus, you were accepted as one of them. You operated "according to the prince of the power of the air" which is his majesty, the devil, "the spirit of sin that worketh in the children of disobedience." Those who are not yet saved are referred to as "children of disobedience"-- they have not obeyed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 3--"Among whom also, we all had our conversation (or manner of life) in time past, in (as Peter put it, and now Paul puts it) in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature (naturally) the children of wrath, even as others." Now, this is the way the unsaved live. This is the way we used to live, but as the result of having become God's workmanship in Christ Jesus, we now have been launched in a different direction, and God's objectives are different for us. Let's turn to Romans 8, if you would please. What is God seeking to do with us in that, now, as new creations, we are no longer of the world, though we are still in the world? What is God's objective with us as the result of making us citizens of heaven, and now telling us we're strangers, and foreigners and pilgrims passing through a world that is hostile towards us, as it was towards Christ? Why doesn't He take us home to be with Him immediately? Why does He leave us here? He wants to accomplish something with us while we're still here. Not only does He want to use us to lead others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, He seeks to perfect us, and to conform us into His image, yea, even into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is His great objective for you and for me. So we have, in verses 28 and 29 of Romans 8, God's objective. And verse 28 makes sense when put with verse 29 because then we catch the objective that God has through all the things that come our way. Verse 28-- "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." Now, to be called according to His purpose means to be fitted into God's plan. That's his purpose. He seeks to fulfill His plan through us. Thus, every true born-again child of God is in the family of God, and, thus, is in the sphere of God's love. So this promise is applicable even is the believer is not enjoying the love of God.

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He's in the sphere of God's love. And, even though he's "kicking against the pricks" as it were, even though he's objecting to this experience, God says "All things are working together for good". He may not be looking at it as God looks at it, but it's true anyway. Thus, when Paul says in Philippians 4, "I have learned that in whatever state I'm in, therewith to be contented", believers oftentimes may not be contented, but all things are working together for good whether they're contented or not because God said so.

Think of the wear and tear that's alleviated if we would look at things the way that God looks at them, and accept God's objectives and purposes through these things in accomplishing with us those things that He desires to accomplish with us. So verse 29 says, "For whom He did foreknow, (the foreknown of God), He did predestinate (You've heard of destination, destiny, dawn of destiny, predestiny, predestination. And I might say on the onset that the term 'predestination' is only applicable and only applies to a child of God. You never take the word 'predestination' and apply it to an unsaved individual. The term is never used in conjunction with God predetermining the salvation (first tense) of anyone. So the Apostle Paul is not using this word in reference to God predetermining the point in time when a person becomes a child of God. That's not what he's talking about at all. Notice what he says: "For whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Oh, he's talking to those who are in the sphere of (verse 28) of God's love. He's talking to those who are in the center of God's purpose or plan. Thus, God has determined with his own children that He's going to make them just like Jesus Christ. Now He knows, by virtue of His omniscience and power, exactly what you're going to be like at the end of the assembly line, so He says in verse 30—"Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also (past tense) glorified. Thus, in the mind of God, you are a finished product at the end of the assembly line, in God's plan. Using a painter or one who may do sculpture work as an illustration: Some people have the ability to be able to look, let's say at run-down house, or building, or piece of furniture, and immediately visualize what that would look like if they were able to remodel it, rebuild it, refurnish it, or whatever. Not everybody can do that. Oftentimes when people they just say "Ah, that's it," and they see no potential. A sculpture can look at a piece of marble, a piece of stone, a piece of rock and what you and I would normally see, he would not see—he would see a figure in that, and would be able to take a hammer and a wedge, and then a chisel, and then, I suppose, whatever other tools he might take, until he's down to a file, a sanding compound, a rubbing compound, as he would finish off a beautiful piece of sculpture work which he saw in his mind before it was ever finished. When he embarked upon that particular project, he saw it as already done. Those who watched him, in the meantime, kind of wondered, "Will anything ever come out of this?" But he knew what the finished product would be. The same could be true of a painting painted by a painter. In the midst of all, you couldn't imagine what that's going to be like, but he saw the whole thing completed. I'm sure that as we look at each other, or even at ourselves, we wonder if God knows what He's doing, or if He'll ever get the job done, or if the product will ever become what He desires it to become, but we can be thankful for this—that we're in the hands of one who is a perfect sculptor. He knows what the finished product will be, and He will make us, and conform us, into the image of Christ if He has to kill us to do it. He'll get the job done. That can encourage a pastor as he prays for the people and has a mental review of the saints and wonders if anything will ever be accomplished for the Lord's sake by the saints in the church. But, technically, though I should be concerned about the sheep, and though I should seek to provide for the sheep that which would help them to become what God wants them to become, I do not have the ability to jump inside and turn all systems on "Go". Each believer has free volition.

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And, as the unbeliever must make a volition decision to accept Christ as Saviour, so the believer must make from his own volition a decision to serve Jesus Christ or not. But, God's plan, God's purposes are not thwarted even when the believer fails. We suffer loss, but God, in His foreknowledge, understands that failure, and has already taken into consideration and, consequently, His plan goes right on. He also knows when you will confess your sins, get right with Him, and desire to allow the Spirit of God to again control you, and to use you for His own purpose and plan. THAT'S included in the plan. This is the reason why when you use I John 1:9 in confessing your sin, and thus, removing the obstacles which were overriding God's purpose and plan for you, you are immediately reinstated into a relationship or fellowship with God which allows the Spirit of God to again fulfill His perfect will in and through you, and the plan continues to fulfill His will. As we think of suffering, let's turn to Hebrews 5. We'll be jumping around this morning so I hope that you don't mind the added work. Now, the Lord Jesus, when He came to earth, had a specific task to fulfill. God always has a plan, always has a purpose behind everything. God is no fool. He is the perfect planner. He is the one who can execute the plan perfectly. He is the one who wrote the Word of God, and tells us through the Word of God where it's all going to end up. All lines or trains end up at Grand Central Station--that's the book of Revelation. So, we can read the book of Revelation, and we can say, "My, how wise is God!...to be able to predict in His plan that all these things will happen and yet use every bit of it to fulfill His perfect will. Amazing! Absolutely amazing!" That's means when the unsaved person stands and curses God out, God will use the wrath of man to bring praise and glory to His name. How can God do that? Well, the Bible says He will, and He does. Thus, when the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon the earth, He came for a specific purpose and that was to provide redemption for fallen man, and as He moved towards the Cross and the final purpose for which He came in His humanity, there were many things He had to learn in coming to the point where, when He would be placed or confronted

consequence

see the 4

with the Cross and your sins and mine, He would not flinch back, but would move right on with the perfect plan that He was to fulfill in coming. How was He taught this obedience? Verse 7 of Hebrews 5--"Who in the days of Christ's flesh, when he had offered up prayer and supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. And though he were a son, yet, learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." I repeat--"He had the obedience by the things which he suffered." What's the purpose of suffering? We know that the purpose of suffering in conjunction with the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, not His diety, but his humanity, was to learn obedience. The same principle is true with you and me as we'll notice in II Corinthians 12. Paul speaks of a "thorn in the flesh given unto him lest he should be exalted above measure; thus, pride, being the sin that ever stalks the child of God. Paul says, "I will glory in my infirmities", because the purpose of this suffering is to humble me and make me dependent upon Him so that I might obey His wishes, and not mine. God uses suffering for the purpose of teaching us obedience. The Lord Jesus was taught that very way. As we think of that suffering, let's go back to John 15, and we will look at suffering which is promised-- It was promised by the Lord Jesus, and by virtue of the fact that you're saved. The Lord Jesus did not have back problems; He didn't have heart trouble; He didn't have the gout; He was the perfect, spotless Lamb of God. We were born as descendants of Adam, and as the result of that, every human being is born with inbuilt blowouts. Though you may have a hernia when you're 40, I think a doctor would say that you were born with the weakness. It merely surfaced at this time in your life under stress and strain. But this weakness was inborn; you were prepared to blow out right there. But that which the Lord Jesus is speaking of here has nothing to do with the gout or a hernia. He's talking about a different dimension of suffering here, so He says in verse 18, in this great upper room discourse, speaking only and exclusively to His own, and in regards to fruitfulness

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or production, which He says in verse 16 "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained (or appointed) you that you go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain, and that whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that you love one another." Now--"if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you love the world, the world will love it's own. But, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you." Why does the world hate you as a believer? Well, we have an answer here--Because it hated Christ. That's why it hates you. Is that normal? That's normal. Is that scriptural? That's scriptural. If the world hated Jesus Christ, then, according to Colossians 1:24, Paul says you are a continuation, or you carry on the sufferings that Christ had when He was here. Thus, as God had a purpose for His Son, Jesus Christ, He has a purpose and objective for you, and though Jesus Christ provided redemption and reconciliation for man, God now seeks to use redeemed ones to present the message so that others can be redeemed and reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. However, as the result of being born again, God's objectives for you, and your objectives for yourself (if consistent with God's Word) is different than the unsaveds objective or the objectives of the unsaved world. Their objectives center around themselves, and on the broad road to hell, their occupied with details of life. Their evaluation of success is totally different than what the Bible says is success. Their objective is to avoid anything that would disrupt their schedule, hinder their personal plans, upset their apple cart. They would say, in effect, "It's too cold up here. I'm going to Florida to get out of this frigid weather." Now, I'm not against going to Florida, but I'm against an attitude that may prompt that decision. If God has a job for you when it's 40 degrees below zero, a true vacation is resting in the perfect plan and purpose and will of God. That's a vacation! If you're in Florida, and God wants to use you up here, you'll be miserable down there..... the old Jonah trick--who decided to take a vacation at the other end of the Meditteranean Sea. He had everything but a

vacation. Why? Because it was out of the will of God. He decided that he could take care of himself better than God could take care of him. If you're in the will of God, better to be where it's forty below than eighty above out of the will of God. But, the unsaved can only run their life that way. They seek to avoid all things that are uncomfortable, or unpleasant. That's all they know, so they swap jobs if it's unpleasant. They swap wives if it's unpleasant. They'll swap anything they've got if they think it'll cater to their flesh and fulfill their own personal plans and objectives. As we think of the business world, success is invariably evaluated by the amount of business, of course, the product, and of course, the number of sales. As the business grows and developed, and as revenue comes in, the world says, in effect, "This is a successful businessman." How do you evaluate your life? Do you know the Pharisees, in fact, the three friends of Job approached him the same way. There was a principle in the Old Testament that indicated the fact that, as a believer, and as Israel as whole, obeyed God, they would be blessed materially. But you'll notice what Jesus said here-- that's not true. It's just the reverse today--just the reverse. The Pharisees, of course, following that principle through, felt that in the measure that they could manifest openly material wealth, they would be declaring openly the very blessing of God. Job was blessed materially, but I want you to know that when Job was brought into suffering, and he lost all his wealth, when he lost all of his family except his wife (the one he should of lost, in this case), when he lost his own physical health and had skin cancer and couldn't move, God was accomplishing a purpose through him and was revealing Himself to Job in a way that He never would of understood though he offered faithfully sacrifices upon an alter for his family, and his wayward children. He had his devotions. God wanted to make Himself known to Job in a way that he couldn't have understood God just by having devotions. That took suffering.

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Side 2

....under Job to show Job that God was faithful even when everything was
hopeless and helpless. Thus, we as believers, duplicate what the unbelievers
do—we build props, and we lean on those props, and we count on those props
that we think we must lean on. God says. "You do not need any props. All you
need is me," and so God begins to pull out those props in an effort to develop
this believer in causing this child of His to depend more fully and whole-
heartedly upon God's ability to take care of him. "God don't do that....
don't do that, God.....I don't know what I'll do....that's my last prop."
That's the normal reaction of the believer when God begins to pull out the
props and seeks to show him, the believer, that He indeed is adequate. Well,
verse 19—"If you were of the world, the world would love his own. And
because you are not of the world, and I have chosen you out of the world,
therefore, the world hates you. You see, the unsaved individual that you work
with knows nothing of God. They know nothing of the Word of God. They're
living for themselves. It's doggy-dog, do it him before he does it to you.
They practice "the end justifies the means" at every corner of the road, and
success is predicated upon accomplishing their objectives no matter how they
get it. Thus, principles are forfeited on every straightaway. And you get
saved! And you begin to apply the Word of God's principles to your life,
recognizing the fact that success is not obtaining something. Success is just
being what God wants you to be, not having what you want to get. That's
revolutionary to the unsaved. Now all of a sudden you're merely occupied with
being something, not getting or having something. They can't understand that.
So, if they need welding rods, screws, bolts, tires, cats, generators, they
steal them. It doesn't make any difference to them--take it! They don't monkey
around with rubber bands off the boss' desk. If you're going to take some-
thing, you might as well take something worthwhile. They're not concerned about
ethics, morals, principles. Success is having, getting, any way you can get it--
get it! And if you got it, you're a success. Now bring all of the fellas over

and say, "Look what I got." Three generators in the garage. What are you going to do with them. "Well, I don't know but I got 'em, and I wanted someone else to enjoy 'em with me 'cuz I got tired of just looking at them myself." For you see, everything you get, you must get for others to become jealous over, to covet-- that's why you get it. That's why the family gets a new car and pretty soon your other half brother or whole brother gets a car--Why, he doesn't want you to get one over on him. He's gonna' get one too. There's more competition within your own flesh and skin, and with your own relation than any place else. Now, I'm not kidding. You see, the more you know people that are unsaved, and the ones in your own family are the closest, the greater the competition. You don't compete with somebody you don't know. You don't normally drive in Chicago or Minneapolis where there are many Cadillacs, and Lincoln Continentals, and (I'll deteriorate some more) Chrysler New Yorkers. When a person buys an automobile, he doesn't ride downtown just to find someone else with a Cadillac, and then park beside him so he knows, "I've got one too." No, the great thrill comes when you drive up to your friend's home, your relations, your neighbors, people who know you-- that's where you park her out in front. That's where the competition is. The competition isn't in New York. You don't buy a new Cadillac because someone in New York has one; you buy one for the neighbor to see. That's the way they live, and the way they operate. And, so, as the result of you getting saved, God now has another objective for you, and by you willing to run the race according to the rules in fulfilling God's purpose, you become an irritant to the unsaved. This disturbs them emotionally. "What's the matter. Are you some goody two-shoes, some Holier-than-Thou? How come you can't drink with us anymore? Huh? Can't you get drunk anymore? Huh?" "No, I'd just rather not, but you can. Go ahead. I don't care. Fine. Go ahead, stay out all night. Stay out six months. It doesn't matter to me." "Oh, you won't come with us though, huh? Where ya' going--that there Beacon Bible Church?" And thus, consequently, they vent their emotions by speaking evil of you, by discrediting you, by blaspheming you, by tearing you apart. That's all they've got. You can succumb to that kind of criticism. You can say in effect, "I will not live like God wants me to live.

I refuse to pay the price that God wants me to pay. I refuse to become what God wants me to become. I refuse to allow him to put me on the block as He as the sculptor begins to mold and make me, and break me, and to chip away so He can smooth me off with 00 sand paper and really make something out of me. No, I don't want that. The price is too great. I won't! I want to be accepted with the unsaved, ungodly, self-centered, lustful world, and I will evaluate success as they evaluate success—having, and get what you can get while the gettin's good." When a believer's out-of-fellowship, he operates exactly like an unbeliever, uses the same yardstick, and evaluates life exactly the same way. "Get! Get! Greed!" In fact, when the believer gets back in the swing of things, he doesn't have the scruples that an unsaved person has. They will indulge in the lust of the flesh and oft times make the unbeliever look sick. They'll pass them up on the next straightaway. Verse 20—"Remember that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord', If they persecuted me, then they will also persecute you. If they have kept my sayings, they'll keep yours also." You tell a person about Jesus Christ and they laugh in your face, they'd of laugh at Him. If they persecute you, they would have persecuted Him. So who do you think you are to go scot-free? Why should they persecute your lover and you not be persecuted? Why do you want to be unidentified with Jesus Christ, and unidentified with the sufferings that you have been commanded and commissioned to become involved with? Let's turn, if you would please, to Philipians I. I'll tell you what--we'll save for tonight physical suffering. Let's turn to I Corinthians first, before we go to Philipians. I was going to use, in regards to physical suffering, three illustrations which are somewhat lengthy, which we really haven't gotten into except Job in a measure, so we'll save that for tonight, and we'll just spend some more time on the sufferings that are involved in serving the Lord Jesus Christ, so, you can come tonight for the rest of the message. ~~Where~~ ^{Why} are we here?—I Corinthians... Now, the Apostle Paul knew what it meant to suffer. In fact, while we're thinking of that

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and as we think of suffering and Paul's rebuke, keep your finger here and let's go back to Acts 26, I believe. If I remember correctly, Paul's own * testimonial includes the fact God told him right off the bat when he was saved on the road to Damascus, that he was saved for the purpose of suffering. That principle is true with each believer. Well, let's see if I can find it here. In verse 13 of chapter 26, he said, "At midday, oh king, I saw a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speak unto me, saying in the Hebrew tongue, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me, it is hard for thee to prick against the pricks.' And I said, 'Who art thou Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest, but rise and stand upon thy feet for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose-- to make thee a minister, and to be a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and those things which I will appear unto thee." That's why he got the thorn in the flesh--because he'd learned too much. In that the tendency is to let it go to your head, the Lord had to keep him humble. But notice, that he was given a ministry, and that ministry involved being a witness. 'Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles whom now I send thee.' God promised deliverance because he was going to be in trouble. 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me.' Whereof, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." I thought for sure that right here was the place where he was going to remention the fact that he was saved to suffer, but I goofed, so I'll go back. Paul was saved in Acts 9, so let's go back there and see if I can pick it up. This is what I want. I thought he restated in Acts 26. Now, when he was saved or converted on the road to Damascus, he went on in to Damascus and then, he was to be met. Verse 10--There was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, and to him said the Lord in a vision, 'Ananias.' And he said, "Behold I am here Lord." And the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the street which

is called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying (he's praying!?) He has seen a vision, a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. (Paul was blinded through that light. When people say they see a light at the foot of the bed, Paul actually saw the Lord and was commissioned by the Lord personally. This is one of the requirements of a true apostle— to be commissioned by the Lord personally. There is no such thing as apostleship today. If one stands in the presence of God today, they will either be maimed or killed. No sinful body can stand in the presence of a holy God, that's why they must have changed or glorified bodies to stand in His presence. We can't do it. So these people that see lights at the foot of the bed just had too much to drink or eat a few hours before there was a short in their electrical system, but that's not Jesus Christ.) Verse 13—"And then, Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to the saints at Jerusalem, and here he hath authority from the chief priest to bind all that call upon thy name." He's here to corral all the Christians and slap them in the "klink" if not kill them. "But the Lord said unto him, 'Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me.'" Now that's true of you and me. We're chosen vessels unto Him. He's the potter; we're the vessel. We are all chosen in Him, which we just read in Romans 8:29,30. "...unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." And that was the order I might say. "And I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Did you know that when you got saved? That you got saved and were given the privilege to suffer for Jesus Christ? Did you know that? God is going to reward you in the measure that you are put out for Him. "If we suffer with him, we'll reign with him," Paul tells Timothy in II Timo 2:12. And in 3:12, he says, "All them that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Thus, to allow the Spirit of God to control us, means we're asking for it in a hostile world, and we're going to have the privilege of suffering for Him. Well, nobody told you that when you got saved. They probably told you, as many do, "God will pay all your bills." And they take the Old Testament

have to suffer

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approach, "You'll never be broke. You'll never have to be sick physically again. God will turn everything into a utopia for you." Now, He will spiritually, but you're going to have to enjoy it by faith, not flesh, and you're going to have to believe that suffering for Jesus Christ is of more value and more worth eternally than anything you may acquire or achieve materially down here. That's exactly the way you're going to have to look at it. That's why Jesus said when the one fellow said, "I'll follow you." He said, "Now lookit", the birds have nests, the foxes have holes. I don't even know where I'm going to sleep tonight. You want to follow me?" Another one says, "Well, let me go first and bury my dear father." He said, "Let the dead bury the dead. You come and follow me. You don't have to go to a funeral. Too late now, let it go." "Well, that's my own father. "Forget it! What's more important--Me or your dead father?" Now, the point wasn't that nobody can go to a funeral. The point was--if Jesus Christ said, "Follow me," I don't care whose funeral it is, you follow Him if it leads you in a direction contrary to that. I doubt if that will ever happen, but that's the principle. That's the principle! Do you get the principle? With you it'll probably never be a funeral. You probably wouldn't want to go anyway. With you it'll be something else like a slick, or a carburetor, or a hot rod, or a girl, or a boy, or a house, or a buck, or something else, but it's the principle we're after. All right, now, as we think of this suffering, let's look back to I Corinthians 4. The Corinthians, ~~because they were carnal~~, (Chapter 3:1) had in their carnality devised a system of serving the Lord which didn't put them in a position where they were maligned, spoken ill of, despised, and their skin got along pretty good. ~~They devised a system.~~ In fact, we're living in a day where most believers because of their tendency to move in this direction (the Church is in worse shape now than when it began), and in that there is deterioration all around us in denominations and in Bible churches (fundamental, evangelical, or otherwise), the mark of success is to be able to live the Christian life, and actually preach from th

value of suffering

owed to suffer

Bible without rubbing anyone the wrong way. Then you're a good preacher. If a preacher just tells it like it is, then, "Well, I don't know if I like this. He's crude. He even named names like Paul did, and he got killed for that. He called a Jew a Jew. He called the law the law. He said, 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the...' Oh! Don't say that Paul! Don't say 'Demas'! Say 'There was a person who, I think, was a person, but I'm not sure he was a person. He could have been a man, but maybe he was a isis. And I think he was carnal. I'm not sure, but I think he was carnal, and I wouldn't want to name any names because then you'd know he was carnal, and someone would accuse me of naming a name, so I'm devising a system of preaching whereby no one is offended, but no one knows what I'm talking about. No one can define anything because they don't know what it is.'" For example, we have what's called "a system of neo-evangelicalism" which incorporates this very principle I'm after right now. This new system of evangelicalism, headed up by Billy Graham...Oop! Shut my mouth....who says, in effect his objective is not to lead souls to Christ, but to unite all 'Christians' in a great ecumenical movement. That's blasphemy! That's anti-Bible! In fact, he has a new book out on the Holy Spirit. I hope you don't waste your money. If you don't come back here next Sunday. There's other churches in the area that love him. Go to a Pentecostal church because the Pentecostals used to look at him as standoffish, fundamentalist. Of course, we knew for the last 20 years he wasn't that. He turned coattail long ago, but, you see, the average person doesn't catch, or average sheep in the average congregation where the Gospel is preached, they don't catch on until 20 years later. That's the reason when 20 years ago I was saying "Look out for Billy Graham, Youth-for-Christ, and all the rest of them," there were people at church who thought, "Oh boy, he shouldn't say that," and now these same people who left the church because they said I was too strong, now are saying Billy Graham is wrong. You're 20 years too late! I wouldn't even open up your mouth now--the war's over! That's like fighting the Civil War. That's

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like a Christian coming up and saying," Did you know that we had a civil war once
: Where've you been? You retired? That's like a Christian fighting liberalism or
the National Council of Churches. That's ridiculous! That's like going to a
grave where a person has been dead for a hundred years, digging out the bones,
and stomping on them. "Boy, I'm really beating up the liberals." Well, that
war's been over for 250 years. What are you talking about? Did you realize that
every generation of believers, the devil takes a new approach in his wiles, and
in his devious attacks and you are not fighting the same battle that Luther
fought, that Calvin fought, that Darby fought, that C.H.M. fought, (that's for y
brethren. That's MacIntosh), that Woodfield fought, that Abeliene fought, that
Dr. DeHaan fought, and all the other men that you can remember. Today nobody's
fighting anything. They don't even know where the war's at, so, the best they
can do is dig up some old bones of a arthretic soldier who fought in the Civil
War, and say, "We're against him!" So sometimes you hear these fundamentalists
who say, "We're against the National Coun.." Ah, National Council of Churches, BUN
They're no problem. Would to God they would be a problem, we'd know where we st
They're no problem at all. Their whole objective is to promote revolution. Of
course, that's one of the illuminotic blocks that always goes with conspiracy.
The National Council is in and is supported and will go, there's no doubt about
that. The only thing is that Billy Graham now is working with and in perfect
operation with the National Council of Churches, so in the future, that name
will become more prominent. You know why? Believers will unite with them. And
in the light of the fact that the believer is the only one who has anything--the
liberal doesn't have anything to give, all they want to do is walk around town
collecting money. That's their biggest ministry. They give nothing; they take.
Now think of a liberal Methodist church (we'll just use--Oh! Shut my mouth!)
what'd they ever give you! They just took money from you. That's all they can
is take money. They don't have anything to give anybody. Nothing. They just
sit there and go to hell. They have nothing to give. So, consequently, the

liberal rides on the back of truth to accomplish his objectives just as the devil does. He invented that system because error has nothing to offer. Nothing They have absolutely nothing. The old nameline denominations like the congregational church, Presbyterian, U.S.A, the Methodist.... Shut my mouth! Am I ever naming names. OH! OH! OH! I'm sure half of you won't even be here tonight with all the names I named. You dirty bugger! But, you see, now you know what I'm talking about, and what Yale, Harvard, Princeton, the Ivy League schools put out missionaries to preach the Gospel of Christ, now it puts out Communists. I shouldn't say "Communist", that's a dirty word--those who believe the Marxist philosophy, which all unbelievers believe in. It appeals to the unsaved mind. That's why the whole world's becoming Communistic with a dictator, or socialistic, because socialism and communism are identical philosophies. The only difference is that Communism is honest enough to use a gun; Socialism is tricky enough to use legislation, so the big boys say, "We're going to get 'em through legislation. We'll make 'em socialistic through legislation." Is it happening? Well, read your paper once every six months and you will see IT'S HAPPENING! Why does that appeal? Because the natural tendency for the unsaved individual is to think the way that you can usher in a utopia is through a socialistic system which says, in effect, "Be like a Christian and share everything, only we're going to make you." It doesn't stem from a heart of love, it stems from legislation. That makes it far more vicious than if you didn't get 'em, but the average person can't see that. They can't see that! That comes from the pit of hell-- to legislate principles of righteousness as though you can legislate love or equal rights. That's ridiculous! That comes straight from hell! The devil invented it. The devil says to the world, "We're going to make you like Christians without Christ." That's exactly what his objective is. You must know the devil's objective and you must know the Lord's objective for you, but the objective is motivation. But, the unsaved live in the light of time, the world in which you live; and consequently, they're trying to make heaven down here. God offers you heaven up there! He wants to change y

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citizenship. This is the message we have for the unsaved, but they can't see that. They can't see that. Consequently, we have what's called "neo-evangelicalism" which is a new system of evangelizing whereby you don't actually talk to the person about Jesus Christ, explain to him what it means to be justified by grace through faith, apart from sacramental works (which was the problem in the 16th century, which is still carried over today) because then you would offend So, we make believe that we're all saved, and we'll have an evangelistic meeting with all the churches participating except the synagogue. (So then the rabbi get mad like he did in ^{Key} 73. He said, "Every religious organization in the country is uniting and you left us out. Apparently, your whole objective is to evangelize us." I felt like writing a letter and saying, "No, we didn't join; they're going to evangelize us too, along with you Jews." Ridiculous! If everybody joins because we're all missionaries, who's there left to save? Apparently just those who don't join. But, the great objective, which I just read here the other day, of the new leader of the National Council of Churches is to unite all believers in one body. Isn't that ridiculous? You see, we just read where God creates us anew. He places us into Christ, into the Church which is His Body. That's His job, not our job! We can't do what only God can do. Our job is to preach the Gospel. He isn't preaching the Gospel; he's uniting all the religion in the world into one body. Why?--so we can all have socialism. That's why. God says, "If you preach the Gospel, I will unite them to me, and your citizenship will be in heaven, and I will give you my Spirit, and I will perform in and through you that objective, and at the last roundup, all believers will be there and not one believer will be missing, and we'll all be one in experience as well as in position." So this isn't something the church can do. This is ridiculous when men seek to do God's work and fail to fulfill the first responsibility, which is to give out the Gospel, but who gives out the Gospel? Now really, who gives out the Gospel? I listen to the radio, but I never hear the Gospel. They always say, "Send \$100, \$50, \$500, for this Gospel ministry." I've never heard the Gosp

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in 20 years on that program. They never preach the Gospel. What's this about the Gospel. You ask somebody, "What's the Gospel?" "Go to church."
"That's the Gospel?" "Get baptized." "That's the Gospel?" Half these people don't even know what the Gospel is. Now, if you want to take a survey of religious folk, then just put a little tablet in your pocket, and say, "Will you tell me what the Gospel is?" and just write "Ho-hum," or "Yawn." That's the most you can get out of people. They don't know what the Gospel is. Well, the reason why people aren't preaching the Gospel today, the reason why Christians aren't preaching the Gospel today, is because they don't want to pay the price. That's it right there. They're afraid because there's an offence with the Gospel and no one wants to be caught up in that offence. That's the problem right there. They're all afraid of what people might think^{!!!} of them, and they're more interested in what people think of them than what these people think about Jesus Christ, which is far more important than what people think of me, but Christians can't see that. That's why they're always devising new methods to witness for Christ when they are no witness at all. Not at all! They just cooperate, that's all, and help the enemy. Well; verse 8 of I Corinthians 4: And he says to these Corinthians who were very successful. (They equated Christian success with monetary worth.) He says, "Now you're full, you're rich, you're reigning as a king without us. 'You're acting like the millenium's here and it's not here yet.' I would to God you did reign, that we might reign with you. 'But you're reigning out of time. You've got the wrong time on the calendar. We're only supposed to reign when the Millenium's here, and you're reigning now!' What's he mean by that? Verse 9-- "For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last as it were appointed to death." You mean when you get saved you're appointed to die? Paul says, "I was." "For we're made a spectacle (theatron, from which we get our word 'theatrical') unto the world." We're just like we're in a theater before the world. "...and to angels, and to men." Now, this is true of you and me as well as Paul. When you got saved, you were put front and center. You see, everything that the world desires to have--You know, the dreams of the teenagers to be a

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movie star, or a great athlete, or put in the middle of the arena, or "I wish I could run the dash in this many moments," or "I wish I could catch a pass in the end zone, and just win by one point, and hear the cheerleaders with the...." You Got It!!! Once you get saved, you're in the arena. Once you get saved, you're on stage. Once you get saved, you have an audience of angels watching you all the time. You are to perform! Get in the movies, BUNK! You know, once you get saved and begin to learn the Word of God, you see how Mickey Mouse the world is --it's absolutely crazy. You got something greater than that silly, snotty junk that they come on with. It's ridiculous! They design these television shows for a demented individual. You've got to be only half there to enjoy them. How nuts can you get? Verse 10: Paul says, "We're fools for Christ." Now, when we think of fools.... You know, it's better to appear to be unsuccessful to the world while in reality, you are living for something that is truly successful, than to appear to be successful to the world while you're living for something that is totally unsuccessful or lasting. When a believer decides to adopt the standards of the world, so that they are not considered a fool by them, but are considered successful, they're actually living for something that'll never last. It's unsuccessful. To live for something that's truly successful, is to appear to be unsuccessful. That's just the way it works. That's why an unsaved person cannot understand a believer that's living for the Lord. Maybe they can't understand those who aren't either, I don't know. Verse 10: "We're fools for Christ's sake, but you're wise in Christ. We're weak, but you're strong. You're honorable, (everybody thinks you're nice in town) we're despised in town. Where do you live? How come you get along so well? How come you're not despised? Now this is Bible, I didn't invent this. I'm saying that this goes along with Christianity. I'm saying that, if a person is living for Jesus Christ, you're living in a hostile world, and the world doesn't think like you think, and that bugs them. That irritates them, and they'll vent their emotional irritation by ripping you apart. The only reason you are not ripped apart is because they

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don't know that you are a Christian. That's the only reason. In the measure that you stick your neck out for Jesus Christ, this is guaranteed. This is Bible. Now I didn't invent it. I didn't write it. If you don't believe it, then tear it up and put it in your barrel stove when you get home. I didn't write the Bible, don't get mad at me. Verse 11: "Even unto this present hour, we both hunger, thirst, are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labor working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer; being defamed, we intreat." Can you intreat someone while they are defaming you? Can you as an ambassador stand before criticism and refuse to take it personally, recognizing the fact that you are not involved with individuals, but you're fighting against spiritual wickedness in high, or heavenly, places, and you'll go right ahead and graciously live a life that presents the Gospel in the face of one who resents you, who seeks to revile, or speak against you? It doesn't make any difference. That doesn't make any difference. You were in the same place before you got saved. You did the same thing. You thought the same way. Well, verse 13: "Being defamed, we intreat, we are made the filth of the world and are the offscouring of all things even unto this day." Would you like to be looked at that way by the world? Well, don't do anything for Jesus Christ and you won't. I'm giving you the solution. You oughta' be glad you came here, I'm giving you what not to do. So as you leave this place, put a muzzle on. Don't say a thing about Jesus Christ. Name the muzzle, "The Christ Muzzle," and every time you walk out of the house, put the muzzle on. Say, "I'll talk about anything but Jesus Christ. I'm not mentioning Jesus Christ. Where's my muzzle, honey? I've gotta' put that on." And she'll give you a band-aid or some tape or something, so you won't have to say anything about Jesus Christ, because as soon as you do, you're going to be the offscouring of all things, you're going to be the filth of the world, and you don't want to be the filth of the world. You want to be an M&K man. You want people to look up at you. Well, our time is gone. Well, we'll pick it

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up here tonight, and we'll look at some more of Paul's suffering and take it in to physical suffering and what God's objectives are through that suffering.

Let's bow our heads in prayer.