

**Sermon Notes of  
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on October 3, 2021:**

**"Perfection through Suffering  
(Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12; Isaiah 53)"**

**[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us the paradox of how our spiritual perfection comes about through suffering.]**

Introduction:

- So, how many of you this morning rolled out of bed and said, “Dear Father, what are some of the ways I can suffer today?”
- (Audience laughter.)
- Yes, that thought would be a little strange.
- Pastor Craig’s job today is to challenge out thinking on that.
  
- Now, we’re going to be looking at two passages from Hebrews.
- Hebrews is presumed to have been written somewhere around the 60’s AD.
- And we’re not really sure who the author is – scholars assume that it wasn’t Paul, but perhaps one of the early church leaders.
- It could have been Priscilla, or Apollos, but it really doesn’t matter.
- If God didn’t reveal who the author was, it’s not all that important.
  
- It’s been presumed that the letter of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians at that time.
- They were being persecuted and suffering under the hands of both Jews and Romans.
- And so, the whole emphasis of the Hebrews is to point out the supremacy of Jesus Christ and why He is supreme and why they shouldn’t slide back into Moses worship, essentially.
- As a result of their persecution they felt drawn back to their Old Covenant ways.
- So, it was a time of suffering for them.
  
- Now, what are some of the ways we suffer today?
- Audience response: the pandemic, sickness, financial difficulties, depression, loss of loved ones through death.
- Now, here is what Pastor Craig will call a quintessential paradox in scripture.
  
- “How many of us want to have the way of our being transformed into the truth of our being?”
- Who would like to be transformed into what God wants us to become?
- Now here’s the challenge – do you know how that transformation into perfection happens?
  
- It’s through suffering.
- Therein is our challenge. It takes a mind shift because we need to take a different look at this when we are in the midst of suffering.

- When Pastor Craig was on the phone talking to our dear sister Elizabeth Yanez, who is suffering from a lot of pain, she broke into tears and asked him, why was she going through so much pain and how can she be relieved of it.
- Pastor Craig senses that when we fall into pain and fall into suffering, we want to reach out to God because we think He doesn't know what we're going through and that He should quickly take it away.
- Now, Pastor Craig is going to push that envelop a little bit.
- He doesn't believe that God is overly concerned about our physical situation and physical circumstances as much as He is about our heart, our spirit and how much we reach out to Him and approach this transformation in a way He wants us to.
- How many remember that the apostle Paul had an eye sight issue and scripture tells us that he prayed three times about it – but he probably prayed a lot more times than that.
- And what was God's response to him?
- "My grace is sufficient for you and in your weakness, my power can be shown."
- That was God's answer to a man who was changing the world because Paul was on God's mission.
- And if anyone deserved additional help and support, it should have been the apostle Paul.
- It's interesting that Paul didn't challenge God but accepted His response to him.
- So, herein lies our challenge – now God wired us to preserve self-preservation whereby we feel pain, which is an alarm system to help us minimize wrong doing.
- Now, we go through this paradoxical process of suffering and pain and grief that changes us into a type of people that God has called us to become.
- In fact, this is the type of person that God's Son Jesus was.
- Now let's look at these two passages in Hebrews.

**Hebrews 1:1 (NASB), God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,**

- Now, when God spoke through the prophets, it was big thing for Israel.
- But, now God is speaking through his very Son and so we have a revelation and a message from Jesus, Himself, who we'll see had a lot of credentials.

**2b) whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world. 3) And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.**

- So, everything that exists including us, in our point of suffering and pain, Jesus is holding together by the word of His power.

**When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4) having become so much better than the angels, to the extent that He has inherited a more excellent name than they.**

- Why would angels be brought up here?

- Well, angels were a big deal on the Old Covenant.
- In the Old Testament, when God appeared, it was usually through angels.
- And so, angels were held in high esteem.
- The author of Hebrews is telling us that now, it's not about angels, it's about Jesus, who should be the center of our focus.

**Hebrews 2:5, For He did not subject to angels the world to come, about which we are speaking. 6) But someone has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that You think of him? Or a son of man, that You are concerned about him?"**

- Let's think about this in the context of suffering.
- Do we think that when we are suffering or in pain that God has abandoned us?
- No, God is intently thinking about us and carrying us through it.
- The challenge is that God doesn't take our pain and suffering away, necessarily.
- And so what we receive is peace and joy and a sense of presence, but we're not taken out of it.
- So, we need to get use to it, somehow.
- So, we are always on God's mind – He never ever rejects us; He never ever forgets us nor leaves us.

**7) You have made him for a little while lower than angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor; 8) You have put everything in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.**

**9) But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of His suffering death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.**

- When we go through suffering and pain do we realize that was what Jesus did for all of us – he went through suffering and pain on the cross.
- Now, we may have chosen a different way or process to go through the transformation process.
- From the time we were justified and forgiven and became believers, the rest of our life is all about this transformation process, which takes us from imperfection to perfection.
- And our transformation process is carried out on the altar of pain and suffering.
- Now, when we understand that as we're in the midst of that, it helps us to realize that we're not alone because this is God's design.

**10) For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the originator of their salvation through sufferings.**

- Please note that this verse doesn't say that we're brought to perfection through happiness and joy, but rather through sufferings.

**11) For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for this reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, 12) saying, "I will**

**proclaim Your name to My brothers, In the midst of the assembly I will sing Your praise.”**

- So, when we are at that point of suffering and pain, we need to rethink about this in order to get through this paradox that we’re involved in.
- Now, Jesus, who went through suffer on our behalf, calls us brothers and sisters, calls us family.
- So, in the midst of our suffering, Jesus calls us family, because of His love for us.
  
- When we’re on that bed of pain or sitting in that chair of pain, God is right there with us.
- We need to realize that it’s God’s joy and peace that helps us get through that transformation.
- When we do that, we will focus less on the pain and more on what this is designed to accomplish.
  
- Now, how many of us recall another name given for Jesus in Isaiah 53?
- It’s “the suffering servant.”
- So, if Jesus, our brother, who holds all things together, died for us and called the suffering servant, should it be strange that we might also be called suffering servants?

The suffering Servant:

**Isaiah 53: 1 (NASB), Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2) For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of dry ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we would look at Him, nor an appearance that we would take pleasure in Him.**

- This is talking about Jesus.

**3) He was despised and abandoned by men, a man of great pain and familiar with sickness; and like one from whom people hide their faces, He was despised, and we had no regard for Him. 4) However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore, And our pains that He carried; yet we ourselves assumed that He had been afflicted, struck down by God, and humiliated.**

- This is talking about the un-truth of the penal substitution doctrine.

**5) But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed.**

**6) All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the wrongdoing of us all to fall on Him.**

**7) He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers. So He did not open His mouth.**

**8) By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off from the land of the living for the wrongdoing of my people, to whom the blow was due?**

**9) And His grave was assigned with wicked men. Yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.**

**10) But the Lord desired to crush Him, causing Him grief; If He renders Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.**

**11) As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, for He will bear their wrongdoings.**

**12) Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the plunder with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was counted with wrongdoers. Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the wrongdoers.**

- What's so amazing about these verses is that the pain and suffering that Jesus went through was done for us.
- And it was our wrong doing and our pain and suffering that Jesus took on.
- So, what can we do?
- We know that there is a paradox here and we know, like the apostle Paul, that God doesn't necessarily remove us from our pain and suffering.
  
- But we need to have some practical way to cope with this and to take us through this transformation, so that when suffering and pain comes, we can approach it positively.
- We also need to realize that there is a positive outcome for all of this.
- So, Pastor Craig's simple solution is to think about a BLT (bacon, lettuce, and tomato) sandwich that most of us enjoy.
- But, in reality BLT doesn't stand for bacon, lettuce, tomato, but rather it stands for breathe, label and thanksgiving.
- (Tomorrow, Pastor Craig turns 60 years old and is uncomfortable about it.)
  
- Now when we go through pain and suffering, our mind want's answers and starts to run amok when we can't find any.
- And the right brain gets out of kilter, and it's the left's brain's job to figure out what's going on.
- So, there's this chaos that's going on in our mind.
- Now, the best thing we can do to stop this chaos is to label it, as what the problem or situation is.
  
- And then, there's thanksgiving – many studies have shown that it's almost impossible for our minds to be depressed and to feel anguished when we're in a state of gratitude and in an attitude of thanksgiving.
- And so, we start to be thankful for the things we have.
- Thank God for giving you another day and giving you life, instead of death.
  
- It's important to find some Psalms of thanksgiving ahead of time that resonates with you.
- And when you're going through pain and suffering, you can pick up your Bible and start to read through these Psalms of thanksgiving which will dramatically help you.
- So, ultimately, the ways to get through this transformation process is through the power and help of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

### Communion by Fred Stevens:

- In Luke 22, the disciples asked Jesus how He wanted to do the Passover.
- And he answered them that He desired to keep this Passover with them.
- And He gave them instructions so they could get it ready.
- Prayer over the elements:

*Father and Lord, thank you very much for these elements in the ceremony we do. And how they represent so many things on so many levels and there are so many lessons to learn.*

*And help us to just come before you now, at your table, and learn from what you have for us. Thank you for the message Pastor Craig brought us. And thank you for this opportunity to put all these things together and think about them, and to allow for where we are, in your sight, and where we're going in our lives before you. In Jesus name, Amen.*

- So, as these elements are being passed around, let's think about this evening that the disciples had with Jesus.
- Jesus mentions the wine first, then the bread and finally mentions the wine again.
- Now, when you have a nice Passover meal, you have the wine ready at the beginning of the meal.
- Jesus tells them that everybody should drink from this cup, because He wasn't going to drink any more of it until the kingdom of God.
- Now, after intense suffer and death, 3 days later Jesus was in the kingdom of God.
- And then Jesus gives thanks for the bread, then breaks it and tells everyone to take a piece and eat it.
- What Jesus is presenting and what we understand in the symbolism is that Jesus is presenting himself for all of them and for all of us.
- Jesus said, "Receive this and remember me, and whenever you eat, remember how I gave my body to feed and sustain you.
- And remember, whenever you drink, that I gave my blood to redeem you."
- Interestingly, the disciple started getting into this discussion about who's greater.
- Then Jesus told them to think about going to a fine dinner and who's greater, the special guest or the servant?
- Then Jesus tells them and us that he came as a servant and came to suffer, which demonstrated that God is completely committed.
- And Jesus told us that this bread and wine should remind us of His commitment to us.
- Jesus gave His bodily self, He gave His blood, which is His life, to demonstrate that He and the Father love us in complete commitment.
- Jesus says to us, "Take and remember me, remember my commitment to all of you."
- So, as Jesus commanded, let's take that bread and remember His commitment.
- And when we take the cup, Jesus said, "Remember me" for He gave his all.
- And so, may this ceremony not only focus us on His commitment, but may it energize our commitment to Him.