

- I hope everyone had a great week. And if you didn't, then I hope God showed you something through what you experienced or went through, whatever it was, and if you don't like that statement, then maybe after today's teaching, you might feel a little bit differently about what I just said.
 - Because when you do have a stressful day, or week, or month, or (some might say) a stressful year, my prayer is that you look at those moments through the correct lenses.
 - Which begins by knowing and understanding that God is doing something with your circumstances, and that something has but one purpose and or goal (if you are a believer).
 - And that is, "Your "Spiritual Development"
 - Your "Spiritual Development" for God's Glory!
- Throughout the years, when people experience different hardships of any kind, it could be death, stress, anxiety, and or fear, other people will often say, "Well, I'm sorry you are going through all that, but remember all of this has happened for a reason!"
 - We just don't know what it is.
 - But one day it will all make sense.
 - When someone would say that many times, I would often think to myself, Does that statement actually make someone feel better?
 - Because if I am being truthful, I really don't think it does
 - As a matter of fact, in many cases, I think it might make them feel worse!
- I mean, seriously, think about what I am saying. When someone is going through a really difficult time and we say – "Well, I'm sorry you are going through this, but God has a reason, or you know, everything happens for a reason", most of the time, I can feel that person saying to themselves, Oh yeah, what good reason would God possibly have for my husband dying or my wife dying or my child dying!
 - Especially if the person you are talking to is a quieter, less vocal person.
 - When hearing that statement, they may slightly smile and say, "Yeah, I know", but more times than not, they are still thinking to themselves, "Okay, whatever. I have no idea why you would say such a thing because I personally see no good reason or benefit when a person passes away."
 - The same applies to sickness, cancer, or whatever it may be.
 - Ultimately, that person's response is often the same (Maybe not externally, but certainly internally!)
 - Please tell me what purpose, meaning, or benefit has come from me or my loved one's sickness!
 - Which, logically speaking, makes sense.
 - What meaning is there in chemotherapy, in radiation, or whatever other invasive treatments the medical community has come up with?
- Unfortunately, that statement, "Everything happens for a reason", many times, is often the only thing most believers can think of to stay in the moment.

- The thing is that there are at least two problems with those words.
- First, everyone hearing it knows the person saying it can't think of anything else to say (whether they *really can* or can't)
 - Therefore, they know the person saying it doesn't really believe what they are saying, regardless of whether the person saying it truly does believe it or not.
- Second, as believers, we should know better because the scriptures clearly paint for us a picture of hardship, beatings, beheadings, scourging, fear, anxiety, and, of course, finally, the most important tragedy of all.
 - "Crucifixion"
 - Which our Savior endured!
- And by the way, crucifixion was the most horrific form of death ever invented up until that point in history.
- If I am being truly honest, it is probably still the most horrific form of death ever invented.
- And so, in each one of those situations, the purpose and intent of their hardship/tragedy is clear.
 - They served to ultimately increase or magnify "The Glory of God".
- Now, obviously, I am mainly speaking about believers, but that same statement could also apply to non-believers as well, as God uses men of any kind to accomplish His Will.
 - We can clearly see that displayed in Old Testament, where the Lord used an unbelieving King or Pharaoh to punish His own people.
 - Which served to (once again), "To bring honor and Glory to God!"
- But hold on, just a minute, preacher. Do you mean to tell me that my mother's death brought God Glory, or my wife? Or my husband's death brought God Glory? Or my child's sickness brought God Glory?
 - Guys, as disturbing as that may seem, let me be clear: *"I am not making this news; I am simply reporting it."*
 - And that news comes squarely from the pages of God's Holy Manuscript.
 - It is absolutely true.
 - Many times, God will bring glory to Himself through tragedy.
 - Another way to say it is that God will often push men back towards Himself through the pain.
 - Which means, God develops us through grief. Paul said it this way:

2 Cor. 4:13 But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE," we also believe, therefore we also speak, 2 Cor. 4:14 knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. 2 Cor. 4:15 For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to

more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2 Cor. 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

2 Cor. 4:18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which (are seen) are temporal, but the things which (are not seen) are eternal.

- The concept that Paul is putting forth here in 2 Corinthians 4 is a simple one to understand. Yet it is a very hard one to comprehend!
 - Now, let me explain it in a way that might help you to understand better.
 - Today is July 20th, 2025, and I am 52 years old.
 - According to the CDC, the average male life expectancy is 77.5 years and the average female is 81.
 - So, what that means is that if the Lord sees fit for me to tarry until age 77.5, I have (roughly) 25.5 years left on this planet.
 - That's if I don't get sick or die before then
 - And so, if I know this to be true, then guess what?
 - My life should reflect that very fact.
 - If it does, then it will manifest itself in the way I view the world around me, which is temporary at best.
 - But that takes me back to my previous statement, where I said that 2 Cor. 4:16-18 are a simple set of verses to understand, but hard to comprehend.
 - Listen to it one more time,

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2 Cor. 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

2 Cor. 4:18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which (are seen) are temporal, but the things which (are not) seen are eternal.

- So, Paul calls the hardships we experience in life a “Light Affliction”
 - Now you might say, light affliction! Are you kidding me!
 - You think having a stroke is a light affliction.
 - Cancer is a light affliction.

- Death and depression are light afflictions.
- If that's the case, then I would hate to see a hard affliction!
 - And to be honest, I agree, at least from the world's point of view (But not from a believer's point of view).
- Having said that, that is the way most Christians act!
- Seriously, they do.
- Believers often lose their minds when tragedy strikes, especially death!
 - And let me give you an example of what I mean:
 - I often hear Christians say, why did this happen or that happen?
 - More importantly, they say, why did it happen to me!
 - I mean, seriously, I love God. I go to church. I tithe. Why me, Lord?
 - The question isn't, Why me, Lord? It's why not me!
- Believers are not immune to trial and tribulation.
 - As a matter of fact, after learning what we've learned today, you can see why it's not only certain that believers will experience hardships of many kinds, but it's also imperative for our Spiritual Growth!
 - Now, the crux of 2 Cor. 4:13-18 can be summed up when you garner a complete understanding of verse 17.

2 Cor. 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

- Once again,

2 Cor. 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

- The Greek says it this way, *"The for momentary lightness – affliction of us, far surpassing to excessiveness an eternal weight of glory is producing for us"*
 - Translation – your affliction has purpose and meaning, and that purpose and meaning finds its focus squarely on Heaven!
 - In other words, all the pain and suffering that believers experience here on earth pales in comparison to the glory that will be revealed when we cross over from this life to the next!
 - One more time, because I don't want to blow right by this.
 - All the pain, all the suffering, the sickness, the death pales in comparison to the glory that awaits us in Heaven.
 - Another way to say it is, however bad it may get here on earth, the greatest of

Heaven will far outweigh it!

- Maybe better said, more pain here equals more Glory there!
- Now, today is the crescendo, ending our series on prayer. Therefore, you might be thinking, why am I hammering down on the topic of suffering?
 - What's that got to do with our study of prayer?
 - It has a lot to do with it, because obviously, suffering is what produces more prayers (in most people's lives) than anything else.
 - Suffering is also what produces the most confusion surrounding the topic of prayer
 - And why?
 - Primarily because we don't understand (from a scriptural standpoint) how the Bible views suffering.
 - Suffering is something God uses as an instrument.
 - Just like a carpenter uses a hammer.
 - Or a surgeon uses a scalpel.
 - Or a mechanic uses a wrench.
 - And not to mention, suffering is the result of a fallen world.
 - And we know all of this to be the case because of what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:16:

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

- Our outer man is represented by our flesh, and Paul says it's decaying, breaking down, slowly wasting away, and disintegrating.
 - Whereas our inner man, our spiritual man, is being renewed day by day.
 - As the outer man is decaying and breaking down, God is using suffering or the process of suffering to draw us closer to Him.
 - And that process is what causes our Spirit to be renewed.
 - It's "cause-and-effect" folks.
 - No suffering = no renewing & no eternal weight of Glory.
- So, when tragedy strikes and suffering ensues (and it will), and we enter into prayer, asking God, please prevent whatever it is from happening to us, or even asking Him to prevent it or remove it from someone else, and He doesn't do it, just know that it's okay because that suffering is doing something.
 - "It is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison"
 - Which means, if God doesn't prevent it or remove it, then He's chosen not to do so because the suffering you are going through has not finished its work in you, and the same applies for the person you might be praying for!

- And of course, I could not make that statement without referring to James 1:2-4, where James wrote the following:

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

James 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

James 1:4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- You want to talk about some powerful insight into the topic of suffering.
 - Which obviously parleys into prayer.
 - James gives it to us straight.
 - And so, for that reason, among others, we should never question God, and we certainly shouldn't become angry with Him when He doesn't answer our prayers the way we want Him to
 - Instead of being confused when someone is experiencing various trials of many kinds, and saying to that person, "Well, you know, everything happens for a reason!"
- From now on, when someone or someone they love is going through a really hard time, you know "The why" behind the statement, "Everything happens for a reason!"
 - The reason is that God is doing something with that person!
 - I'll digress on this topic.
 - I'm just bringing it up because of all the frustration, disheartenment, and confusion surrounding the topic.
 - All that confusion finds much of its origin in and through our prayer life.
- What I mean is, when we or our loved ones suffer, and we pray and ask God to remove that suffering, and He doesn't do it, we automatically become confused and bewildered, wondering why?
 - And so, even though everyone knows suffering is part of life, what they don't seem to know is why.
 - I've told you why. It's because we live in a fallen world
 - And God uses this fallen world to produce an eternal weight of Glory in us.
 - That's it. That's why!
 - And He does it the way He does it because He knows us better than we know ourselves, and He knows what it takes to produce the kind of result He desires from us, as we are His children.
 - And let me say this...Many times, people say, Why didn't God use some other instrument for our development?
 - The answer is – If there was another way, I assure you, He would do it!
 - My statement is also solidified in Jesus' own prayer when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, leading up to His own crucifixion.

Matt. 26:36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

Matt. 26:37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.

Matt. 26:38 Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

Matt. 26:39 And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”

- Many people throughout the ages have asked the question, why did Jesus pray such a prayer if He already knew what was going to happen and why it was happening?
 - It’s because, while He lived here on this earth, He was fully man and fully God.
 - Which meant that just like you and I He experienced and felt what we feel as humans.
 - Meaning, He experienced pain, suffering, anxiety, stress, and grief
 - And so, even though He knew what He had to do, even though He knew God ordained what was going to happen to Him, He had a momentary lapse of weakness in and through His humanity.
 - Which is what led Him to say, “My father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me
 - Yet not as I will, but as You will.”
 - And by the way, just as I said that there was no other way, if there was, He would have chosen it!
 - And so, everyone must hear me loud and clear.
 - We are all going to pass away from something.
 - Which means that we must place this life and the next in their rightful position.
 - This life is temporary.
 - And the next one is permanent!
- Moving on, as we finish our teaching this morning, I would like to summarize what we’ve learned about prayer over the past several weeks.
 - Specifically, as it relates to the purpose and categories of prayer!
- First, we learned about a prayer of 1. Adoration
 - Adoration is simply praising God for who He is.
 - He is the Lord of all and as such, He is worthy of all our praise!
 - Psalm 99:5 encourages us to exalt the Lord because He is holy. Recognizing the Lord’s power, mercy, and love.
 - So, when we pray, let’s begin with praising God for who He is!

- Next on the list 2. Lamenting
 - God wants us to bring our fears, doubts, and despair and place them squarely on His shoulders,
 - As a matter of fact, in 1 Peter 5:7 we are told to cast all our anxieties on Him because He cares for us.
 - And we see countless examples of lamenting in the Bible, where faithful followers of God wrestled with doubts, difficulties, and even depression.
 - Lamenting through prayer is important, and as I told you over the past few weeks, it's so important that we have an entire book of the Bible named after it. it's called Lamentations!
- Next up is 3. Thanksgiving
 - Thanksgiving is the next type of prayer.
 - And much like adoration, thanksgiving is praising God for what He has done.
 - God has done so much for each of us, not the least of which was sending Christ to save us from our sins.
 - Remember when you pray, to think about God's movement in your life and recognize Him for that, by giving thanks.
 - And just an Fyi, when we do this, it helps us build an attitude of gratitude in our daily life.
- 4. Petition
 - A petition is what many people imagine when they think about prayer.
 - It means asking God for something, whether for yourself or someone else, and God certainly wants us to do this!
 - As a matter of fact, Philippians 4:6 tells us to let our requests be known to God.
 - But prayer is not just about asking God to do things for us – it's just one of many ways that He wants us to communicate with Him.
- Next is the prayer of 5. Deliverance
 - Prayers of deliverance are like prayers of petition.
 - As they are requests made to God to save us or others from challenging or dangerous situations.
 - They also acknowledge that we can do nothing apart from God and that *He has* the power to save.
 - These prayers are all over the Bible, especially in King David's Psalms.
- 6. Contrition
 - Contrition is the feeling of remorse and the desire to repent of sin. You are probably familiar with prayers like this, when we ask God for forgiveness for things we have done.
 - They are essential prayers that allow us to confess our wrongdoing and reconnect with our forgiving Heavenly Father.

- Psalm 51 tells us that when we mess up, God desires “a broken and contrite heart” from us. How blessed is he whose wrongdoing is forgiven.
- And then last on the list is a prayer of 7. Guidance
 - Like prayers for deliverance, these conversations with God allow us to acknowledge God’s sovereignty.
 - As we express and understand that He knows best and that we trust him to direct our lives when we ask Him for guidance.
 - Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us that we should not lean on our own understanding but instead trust in the Lord with all our heart.
- For a better understanding and insight into each type of prayer, please refer to the previous two weeks’ teachings.
 - As I go in depth into those teachings, giving you scriptural examples which back up each type of prayer I just mentioned.
 - And so there you have it, a first run attempt over the past 6 weeks, giving you better insight and understanding surrounding the topic of prayer
 - And so today, as we close and finish our study of prayer, I want to do something that I think would be fitting.
 - I want to give anyone who may desire the opportunity to either:
 - A – Come down front and allow me to pray with you
 - It could be for some need, or maybe concerning matters of salvation, or anything else you would like me to pray for you about.
 - Or B – You can simply come down front and pray on your own
 - Either one is fine. I think it would be kind of silly to do a series on prayer but not finish with a time of prayer.
 - You can also sit right where you are and pray in silence to yourself.