

# Hebrews 5 (Part 1) :1-10 • Obedience Through Suffering

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All right, we're in Hebrews chapter five. Open your Bibles there please. We're going to continue our study in Hebrews. We are starting this chapter today. We're going to read the first ten verses of chapter five, so follow along in your Bible as I read these. It goes like this,

*<sup>1</sup>For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup>He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. <sup>3</sup>Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. <sup>4</sup>And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.*

*<sup>5</sup>So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; <sup>6</sup>as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."*

*<sup>7</sup>In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. <sup>8</sup>Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. <sup>9</sup>And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, <sup>10</sup>being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

Stop there, please. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we dig into these first ten verses of chapter five, we pray for the ministry of your Holy Spirit to help us because these are some challenging verses to understand. But we confess that our understanding is from You.

And so, Lord, we just want to be open today to hear Your voice, to receive from you today, all that You desire to speak to us and to be able to apply, Lord, this Word to our lives. We look to you, Father, as the teacher in this place. We are the learners who sit at your feet. Fill us up we pray, in Jesus name, amen. Amen. Amen.

Okay, we're going to be talking here as we see in these verses about the priesthood. But I always feel like I kind of have to qualify that a little bit as we get into it because the priesthood has kind of been messed with in people's understandings, particularly those of you who may have come out of a Roman Catholic background. And I know that several of you have.

Perhaps you were taught about the priesthood in a particular way. Priests were the way Roman Catholicism kind of framed them. And that's has been your understanding largely. And you got groups like the Mormons, and so forth that have a completely different slant on priests and the priesthood. And it's all gotten pretty muddy to be completely honest with you over the years.

And so, we find sometimes as we're going through the Scripture, we have to do a little weeding in the garden to bring some clarity to some of this. You need to understand that when the author of this letter speaks of the priesthood, he's of course going to relate that priesthood, which is revealed for us in the Old Testament, under the Mosaic Covenant. He's going to liken it to the priesthood of Jesus.

In fact, that's the point of what he's writing about, was so that we would see the clarity of who Jesus is as our high priest and so forth, and how we would be able to understand that new relationship of Jesus Christ to that role, His role as priest. As Gentiles, the whole priest thing is, we don't think as much about priests. The fact of the matter is as Gentile Christians we know from the Bible that we're all priests.

The Bible literally refers to us as the priesthood of God. It's not kind of this special elite group that's gone through this special training. We're all priests in a very specific sense of the word, but that's not what's in view right here in the first part of Hebrews five. We're talking about the priesthood of Jesus, and that's key for our understanding, okay? In Judaism, of course, this is, this was a very important argument. Remember, as I've said many times, the author of this letter is writing to Jews, Jewish Christians. And so, he's relating things to them in such a way that they're going to be able to really grasp this understanding.

Because, in Judaism the role of the priest was critical. So critical that without him, you're kind of lost. The priest was huge because you see, if you're going to approach God, you do it through the priest. You want to bring a gift for God, wonderful, you give that gift to God. It might be a grain offering, it might be a drink offering.

Whatever you got, you go through the priest, you give the priest that offering. He does the offering on your behalf. You have a sin issue; you need to make a sacrifice related to some sin you committed. You go through the priest; you bring the proper sacrificial animal. The priest is the one that sacrifices that animal, sprinkles the blood for you. Right?

And then on the day of Atonement, when was kind of the general cleansing of the nation of Israel, you didn't go before the Lord, the high priest went before the Lord. He went into the Holy of Holies. He sprinkled the blood of the sacrificial animal on the mercy seat of God. You didn't. You received the benefit, but he was your intermediary. He was the one who went.

You can see this is pretty huge, right? If your relationship with God is predicated upon this person who stands here in between you and God, then I don't want that person to go anywhere. That person's pretty important to me. So as the author is talking about this, and he's arguing for the importance of the priesthood, he's of course connecting that to the new covenant. And under the new covenant, the fact that Jesus is now our high priest.

And that's what he's going to talk about here. So, he begins in these first four verses of the chapter to kind of outline the requirements of the high priest under the mosaic covenant to relate that to Jesus. Remember, it doesn't perfectly relate because Jesus kind of breaks the rules related to the high priesthood, as it existed under the Mosaic covenant. So, but we'll see what the connections are.

Verse one, he says, <sup>1</sup>*“for every high priest chosen from among men, and of course they had to be chosen from among men,”* you can't have an angel standing in for you because he can't represent you. He's not one of you. That's why the high priest had to be a man. And of course our high priest under the new covenant also had to be incarnate as a man so that he could stand in for you.

He says, *“every high priest chosen from among men is appointed.”* That's a key word. It can also be translated, ordained. Some of your Bibles, if you have a different translation, actually use the word, ordained. He is ordained to act, he says, on behalf of men in relation to God. And this is of course, that key role that we've already been talking about. That fact that the high priest stands in a place where he comes to God on your behalf.

And at the end of verse one, he mentions the other key role of the high priest in that is to offer gifts and sacrifices, we've already, kind of inferred what those are. A gift is anything you offer to the Lord like a grain offering or a drink

offering or something like that, a fellowship offering. But a sacrifice is different in that it is a blood offering that is offered for sins committed. All right? So, it is through him to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins, and then verse two goes on with another important requirement.

It says, <sup>2</sup>“*he can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward since he himself is beset with weakness.*” And this is one of those interesting connections to the high priesthood under the mosaic law to Jesus. And we'll talk about what that connection is. But it says that under the Mosaic law, he was a man who could easily empathize with the needs that the people brought when they'd come with a sin offering.

He didn't look down on people and go, how could you? Do you know, that's the worst thing we can ever say to somebody when they confess a sin to us, however horrific that sin may be to say to them, “how could you?” What we ought to say to people is, I know how you could, because I get it. I'm beset with the same weaknesses. I'm beset with the same issues and problems, right?

And so, the high priest had this instant empathy with the people that he was going before God to represent, because he was one of them. Right? Now, that's the interesting connection to Jesus. Jesus also has empathy because He knows what we go through. But there's one big notable difference between Jesus and the high priest of the Mosaic Covenant.

They were sinners, just like the people they represented. Jesus, who can understand everything you've gone through, has never sinned, without sin. Remember we saw this in the last chapter. Let's remind ourselves on the screen here from Hebrews chapter four, verse 15:

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**Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)**

*For we do not have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet with (Yet, and that's that critical component) yet without sin.*

He never fell to that temptation. But that doesn't matter. He still understands what's involved, and He understands the dynamics of what it is to be drawn and tempted to sin. So, this point that is being made by the author of this letter. That the high priest can sympathize because he's he understands, he gets it.

That should be automatic, shouldn't it? It ought to be automatic in the way we deal with people too, like I was saying. When you're dealing with people, when they talk to you about their lives, their issues, their failures, first thing we should say to him is, I understand. Maybe I don't understand exactly what you are dealing with from the standpoint of that particular specific, but I understand sin real well, okay?

I understand addictions. I may not be addicted to the same things that you've been addicted to. I understand addictions. Yeah, I get that. I know what it is to feel so weak that I just can't say no. I know what that's like. And that should be the way that any person responds to another.

Isn't it interesting, when Jesus was dealing with the religious leaders of His day during His public ministry, one of the things He constantly called them out about was the fact that they did not empathize with the common people, but they actually put themselves up and above those people thinking that they were somehow more righteous than the common folk.

Jesus blew everybody's mind when He said righteousness, yeah, righteousness is important, but your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and the Scribes. People must have absolutely just said, oh, good grief, how in the world? That whole, that whole thing that they had in their mind that they were superior to other people. It was just fiction.

But they'd lost sight of empathy, which the high priest had to have, but many of them lost sight of it. Remember, Jesus even went to the trouble of telling a whole parable about the loss of empathy, the loss of understanding, I'll put it up on the screen here from Luke chapter 18. It says:

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**Luke 18:9-14 (ESV)**

*He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like (that other scumbag over there, you know those) other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this (scuzzy) tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' (Look what he goes on to say) But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but (he) beat his breast, saying, (Oh) 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (Jesus says) I tell you, this man went down to his*

*house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

See, that's the attitude Jesus knew was going on among the religious leaders of Israel. They lost it. They lost sight of the fact that they were sinners just like everybody else. We can't do that. And because Jesus doesn't lose sight of what you and I go through, as He fulfills His high priestly ministry on our behalf. So, the high priest had to be a human being who understood human failure. Look at verse three in your Bible. Look with me there, it says,

<sup>3</sup>*“Because of this (and the, this, there refers to his humanity) he, (the priest, the high priest), is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.”*

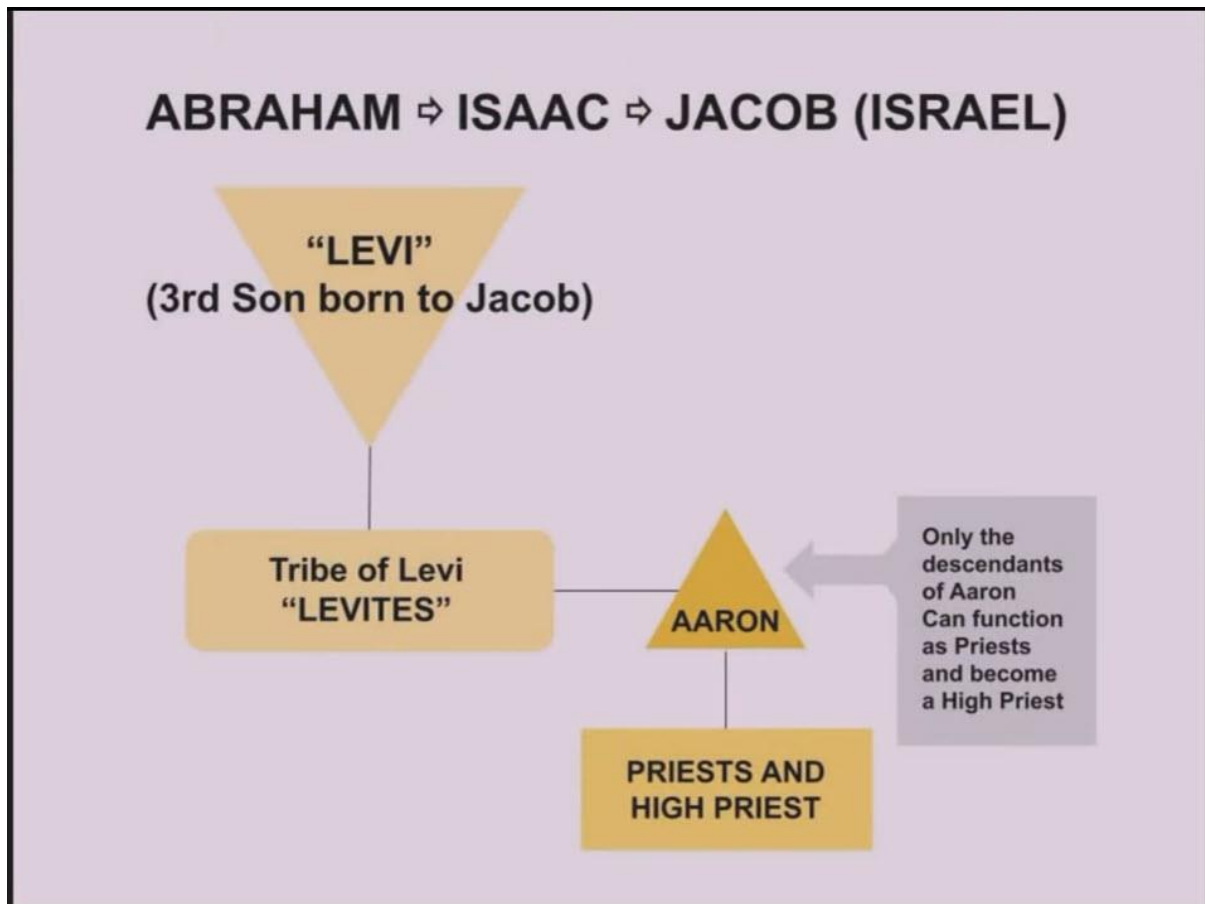
And again, that's that reminder for the high priest that he's just one of the folk. Because when he'd go into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he couldn't go in on behalf of the people first. First, he had to take care of his own sin. First, he had to take the blood of a sacrifice into the Holy of Holies, offer it there and say, Lord, please forgive me.

And then he'd leave the Holy of Holies, get the blood of this sacrifice that was made for the nation. Then he was able to go in to the Holy of Holies a second time on that day and make atonement for the nation of Israel, but only after he had cleansed his own sin, you see. Once again, you've got that reminder that, that. ability to empathize with the sinful hearts of others.

Then verse four, look with me there.

<sup>4</sup>*“And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.”* And this is the last requirement for the high priest under the law of Moses. You'll remember that you had to be a descendant of the line of Aaron. And what that means is if somebody, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, or the tribe of Simeon, or maybe somebody from the tribe of Judah even said, you know dad I think I'm going to make a career out of the high priesthood. His dad would say, I'm sorry, son you can't. Well, why not? You weren't born into the right family line.

Only those descendants of Aaron could be priests and ultimately high priest. Let me show you how it works. Put it up on the screen here in kind of a little flow chart.



You got up at the very top Abraham, who we consider kind of to be the father of the Jews who had a son named Isaac, right? And then Isaac had, with his wife, two boys, Jacob and Esau. Jacob became the one through whom the Covenant went, and Jacob was later renamed Israel by the Lord after he wrestled with God. Now, Jacob then had 12 sons, the third of whom was Levi. I was joking with Sue, and I know it took her a while to get it, I said his Star Trek name is three of 12. But see, I know some of you don't get that and that's okay because you don't watch Star Trek and so forget it. It's an inside joke.

Anyway, so you've got the, you've got Levi and everyone who came from the lineage of Levi is considered a Levite, right? You have to be born as a descendant of Levi. However, splintered off from the Levites we have the man, Aaron. And of course, you'll remember Aaron was a brother of Moses. Aaron was the very first high priest ordained by God, and God said that only his sons and their children, and their children after them could be priests. And so only the descendants of Aaron can function as priests and ultimately, potentially become a high priest.

So, you had to be in the family line of Levi, which means, it wasn't a career path thing, deal, choice, whatever, it was just, you were born into it. So, what's the

similarity to Jesus? Well, you'll remember that Jesus wasn't from the tribe of Levi. He was from the tribe of Judah. So He breaks the rules as it relates to the priesthood in the New Testament or under the new Covenant.

But if you look with me in verse five, there is a similarity between the sons of Levi and the priesthood of Jesus, because he says, <sup>5</sup>"So also, *Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed, or again, if you will, ordained by Him who said to Him, you are my Son today. I have begotten you*".

You'll remember that's a quote from Psalm two, and we went over it many, many times in the previous chapters here in Hebrews. But he goes on in verse six in your Bible to say, <sup>6</sup>"as he says, also in another place, *you are a priest forever After the order of Melchizedek.*" All right, now I need to explain this.

Now he is quoting from Psalm 1:10 and Psalm 1:10 is considered to be a Messianic Psalm. What we mean by that is, it is related to the Messiah. In other words, it speaks prophetically of the Messiah, His coming, His nature, His ministry. Any Psalm that relates to Messiah specifically is referred to as a Messianic Psalm. I'll show you a couple of verses from that Psalm specifically where it says:

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### **Psalm 110:1,4 (ESV)**

*The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* (And then it says) *The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You (speaking of the coming of Messiah) are a priest forever* (This is not a temporary role. The priest Center of the Mosaic Law were priests as long as they were alive, and the high priest held that position until he died. But he says to the to Jesus the Lord God, the Father says) *are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."*

And with these words, the author of Hebrews begins to explain how Jesus qualifies as a high priest under the new covenant. You might say, well, he didn't qualify under the old covenant, and that's true. He didn't. But we're not under the old covenant. We're under the new covenant.

Remember, we in communion, as we lifted up the cup, Jesus said, this is the blood of the new covenant. It's not the old one. And so, what he is saying, what he, the author, is saying to us is, that 1000 years before Jesus was incarnate on the earth God spoke through David prophetically and foretold that Messiah



would be a priest. He would not just be Savior, but he would be a priest. And he would be a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

And you're kind of like, what is Melchizedek all about? Well, we're going to talk a lot about Melchizedek when we get into the seventh chapter of Hebrews, and I'm going to leave most of it until then, but I'll just tell you that Melchizedek was a man who was called a priest of the Lord most High.

Here's the deal though. Melchizedek was a man who wasn't even Jewish. He was a contemporary of Abraham. He lived the same time as Abraham, and so the Jews hadn't even, started at this point, essentially. Abraham is the father of the Jews. So Melchizedek is a priest, that obviously wasn't from the tribe of Levi, the tribe of Levi didn't exist. So he breaks the rules. He broke the rules.

Jesus is a priest forever after the order of one who broke the rules. So, Jesus and God is telling you a thousand years before He's even, that Christ is born as a human on the earth, that this one is coming and he's going to break the rules, because he's going to be a priest in the order of one who broke the rules. He was a priest before there was a priesthood.

How was he? How in the world could you have a priest before there's a priesthood? I don't know. God made him a priest. That's all we know. We know very little about the man Melchizedek. Some people think that it was a preconfiguration, not just a preconfiguration. Some people think that Melchizedek was Christ prior to his incarnation. I do not. I don't.

Because Jesus came after the order of Melchizedek. If He was also Melchizedek, he would be after the order of Himself, which is crazy. I mean, it no longer makes sense. So anyway, that's a small issue. We're going to get into a lot more of that in chapter seven, but the point that the author is making in bringing up Melchizedek is to simply underscore a new priesthood.

A new priesthood, one that doesn't conform to all the requirements of the old covenant but can be seen in some of the types and shadows of the old covenant. In other words, Jesus is a new high priest. God is doing a new thing through Jesus, making him a high priest. Verse seven in your Bible.

*7" In the days of his flesh, (and that just means in the days of his earthly ministry), Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death. And he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."*

Now I have to stop you here after these two verses because these are important for us to understand. When it talks about Jesus praying with loud cries and tears, I'll just tell you that most people refer or relate this to His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. I don't know that it was limited to that by any means. But the idea that Jesus prayed with loud cries and tears seems to communicate to you and I, that he struggled with the whole issue of obedience as it relates to facing the difficulties that came with His ministry and His calling.

I mean, if you saw somebody who was praying with loud cries and tears, what would you think? Would you think they're having a good day? I mean, the people who are having a good day are usually over here and they're talking and they're like laughing and smiling and stuff, but we got a room over here that's filled with people, with loud cries and tears going on. And we know that instinctively we know that these people are struggling.

How does that make you feel? Does that mess with your mind at all when you think of Jesus struggling? He struggled. He prayed with loud cries and tears. Wow. It's crazy. But it also reminds you and I that He understands our difficulties, the difficulties that we face, the challenges that we face in our own struggle for obedience to obey the Lord by putting our faith in Him. We struggle, don't we? I do. I'll just, okay, true confession time. I struggle sometimes to obey the Lord by putting my faith in Him. Because I go through things that are painful or hard, even tragic. And the temptation is huge.

And then we come to verse eight, which is, one of the most profoundly challenging verses perhaps in the Bible, which says, <sup>8</sup>“*Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*” And the wording there just kind of catches us.

And we are, we're wondering good grief. Here we are though faced with the mystery of the incarnation. The fact that Jesus Christ learned obedience through suffering. I mean, part of us is kind of like, how could Jesus learn anything, let alone obedience? But that's what we read here. But the fact is, and this is important, people. The fact is, our Lord's entrance into the human race by becoming a human being, you have to know, presented Him with experiences that are common to you and me, but they would be completely unknown to the God who created all things and has no needs.

And who is all powerful, who is entirely self-sufficient, needs no one and nothing. And that God who is perfect and has no need, enters into the human race through Jesus Christ, and suddenly He's exposed to all of these, all of this suffering. And it says that He learned obedience. Now, what does that mean?

Because you've got to be careful here. Please understand, Jesus didn't go from disobedience to obedience. That's what we do. That's not what He did.

This passage isn't saying that Jesus learned to obey. It's telling us, that He learned what was involved in obedience. He learned what experiences went along with obedience. He learned what it is to obey. And that brought about a completion in who He was, who He is. And that's what verse nine goes on to say. Look with me in verse nine,

<sup>9</sup> *And being made perfect* (Now don't stumble over the word perfect. It means complete and being made complete. In that sense of His understanding, right? and his experience of obedience through suffering, it says) *he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,* <sup>10</sup>*being designated by God, a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*”

And this final section, these final couple of verses here of what we're looking at this morning, offer some very important insights about suffering in our lives too. And that's, I think, what we need to see here. Because we know when we read that suffering was used to instruct the perfect Son of God as to obedience, we have to kind of ask ourselves, well, what about me? I mean, what is suffering in my life? Because I'll be honest with you, I don't like suffering. You know what? I'll be even more honest than that. I hate suffering. I hate it, and I don't think I'm probably alone in that respect.

But if I'm going to be honest with you, I'm probably going to have to admit to you that suffering in my life, however much or little I've done, has been used by God for good. I wish it weren't so sometimes, What I mean is I wish I didn't have to learn that way. I've seen something as a pastor too. I've seen that when people take their suffering, and when they offer it up to God, when they surrender it to Him, to his Lordship, He has this incredible way of using it to transform our lives.

Now, that doesn't happen to everybody. It happens to those who offer their suffering up to the Lord as a sacrifice. Whatever that suffering may be, whatever challenge, whatever difficulty you may be going through right now, it may not even be you. You may have somebody in your family that's going through a hard season and you're just you're struggling and suffering watching them suffer.

Whatever it may be. When we, as believers, take our suffering and offer it to God and surrender it to Him, that He turns that suffering into a powerful tool to transform our lives and shape us into the image of his Son. It's crazy.

Let me show you kind of an interesting cross. Now, before I do this. Suffering is an interesting kind of a dynamic and we've talked about this before, that it is a very common thing for Christians to go through suffering. And I'm talking about born again believers. To go through suffering and to believe that they're being punished by God. That's very common. I have to continually remind people you are not being punished by God.

You may be disciplined. The Lord may be, could possibly be disciplining you. That's what God does in the lives of His children. He's not going to punish you, and you know why? He already punished His Son on your behalf. That punishment is over. He will discipline you. And that discipline can feel very much like punishment, but it's not.

And it's important that we make that technical distinction between punishment and discipline. Okay? It's called discipline when it comes to believers. You with me? So, let's get the word punishment out of our vocabulary as it relates to what God might be doing in your life. Agreed? Now, let me show you an interesting kind of cross section of verses here. Starting in Job Chapter five. Boy, Job has a little something to say on suffering. It says:

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**Job 5:17 (ESV)**

*"Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproveth; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty."*

(Proverbs 5:12 says)

**Proverbs 5:12 (ESV)**

*...you say, "How I hated discipline, (see that's me) and my heart despised reproof!"*

**Proverbs 3:11 (ESV)**

*My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, (in your life)*

And here's why. We get this beautiful passage. We have to skip ahead in Hebrews to do it, but it says:

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### **Hebrews 12:6-7a, 11 (ESV)**

*...the Lord disciplines the one he loves, (He will) chastises every son whom he receives. (and he reminds us here). It is for discipline (that training) that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons (God is treating you as children. He says). For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, (and we all say amen to that) but later (he says, notice this) it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

And those last words are so key, aren't they? It yields peaceful fruit of righteousness for everyone. No, it doesn't. For those who've been trained by it. Right? What that means is you can go through difficulty in life. You can go through painful experiences in life, and you cannot be trained by it.

Have you ever met an old, crotchety, bitter person who've lived a long time, and they can't say anything except something ugly? And the reason is because they've gone through difficult things and they never, they either didn't know God or didn't bring it to God, and so they became angry, and their anger just seethed for a while, and it became bitterness. And now they can't open their mouth without spewing poison, toxic poison. We've probably all met someone like that. It's sad. But for you, and for me, when we take the difficulties that we've gone through and are going through and we say, Lord, I offer this to you, use it in my life to bring about the purpose of Your will.

Because you know what? Other than that, it's just a big fat stinker. But when I give it to you, there's hope in my heart that you're going to use this for some good purpose, and you're going to bring about in me a greater reflection of who your Son is. And that's what I want. That's what I want.

Because Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered, we also need to learn obedience through our suffering. We don't get a pass. Jesus didn't get a pass. We don't get a pass. Suffering is school. Some of you are in school right now. So be it. But I remind you of these things today because it kind of flies in the face of what some are saying.

There are Bible teachers, preachers, whatever out there who claim that it is never God's plan to teach His children through pain and suffering. They won't necessarily deny that you can learn through pain and suffering, but they'll say, but that's not God's plan. That's not God's will for you that you would learn through difficulty and suffering. You should never have to learn that way. You should always be able to just to read it in the Word and learn what you need to learn and then you're done.

And my response to that is very simple. Jesus learned obedience by what He suffered. That's my response. So, if you think that I can surpass Jesus, you've got another thing coming. He learned obedience by what He suffered. We never read in the pages of the Bible that somehow, we are exempt from suffering. Believe me, I wish it was there. I really do.

I mean, good grief, when in my early Christian years I was exposed to the prosperity doctrine, and I knew that it was hooey right from the beginning, but I also wanted it to be true. I don't like being sick. I don't particularly, I mean, who hasn't dreamt of winning the lottery? And all the other things that, the world kind of offers. And boy, if you can squeeze that into the Gospel and make it a promise. HA, sign me up! I'm here! I'm here, right? I thought it over carefully, I did. It is like, I like this idea. There's only one problem. It's not in the Bible. That was a problem.

So, we don't get a pass, but the problem is we still somehow think that people who are going through suffering are somehow, I don't know, we just want to say God bless you. But in kind of a demeaning sort of a way, you know how they do it in the South, "bless his heart." Basically, that means you're an idiot.

When somebody's going through a time of suffering, it's not because you have a weak faith, or God despises you, it's because we all go through suffering from time to time. We're all going through discipline from time to time. Let me show you what the Bible really says about suffering. Starting in Acts chapter 14. I like this out of the NIV:

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**Acts 14:21-22 (NIV84)**

*"They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. (And here's what they would say to people) "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.*

I know. That's not the verse you put up in your fridge, is it? That's not that promise in God's Word that you're just going to claim today. I'm just going to claim that we have to go through a lot of suffering to enter the kingdom of God. Yes. No. It's like, I don't want that, but it's what the Bible says.

We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. So, don't look at the hardships you're going through and go, what in the world is this?

Some people are like that. They're like, look at me like Pastor Paul, you need to explain this to me because this is not what I signed up for. I get it. I get it.

Romans chapter eight, verse 18, we all love this verse:

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**Romans 8:18 (ESV)**

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the, with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

And not just to us, but in us. I love that verse, and I'll tell you why. It reminds us that where we have our eyes set, that's what's going to be our biggest influence. Do you know that the vast majority of Christians, when they suffer, what are they looking at? They're suffering. It's natural. When I'm suffering, I look at my suffering and I actually become very fixated on it, having kind of a myopic view of my suffering. And then and that's the way people come to me too.

Pastor Paul. I'm suffering. Can you see it? It's right there. So, and that's what happens when you fixate on your suffering. Do you know what Paul is doing? By the way, the Apostle Paul suffered. Big time. Suffered in ways that, that we will never suffer. Eventually, church history tells us, they took off his head.

So, the man suffered, but he didn't sit and look at his suffering. What did he have his gaze fixed on? See, while other people are going my suffering, he's going, yeah, but you know what? It didn't compare with that. That's what he was doing. He had his eyes this way.

And so, when the topic of suffering came up and it came up in his life a lot, he was able to say, yeah, but you know what? It doesn't hold a candle to that. Doesn't hold a candle to what waits for us in heaven. The glory that will be revealed in us. But for those who do suffer, and I know there are some among us today, we refer to that reminder that we saw in last week's study of Hebrews chapter four that says:

(slide)

**Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)**

*Let us then with confidence drawn near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace (and that word, grace, in that context means, strength) to help in time of need.*

I get a lot of emails and contacts from people and they're going through difficult times, and they come to me for advice and counsel. And the best counsel that I can give anybody is, go to the throne of Grace. I can't give you what you need. I can't give you the mercy and the grace, the strength that you need in your time of difficulty. But He can. In fact, He is sufficient. He will suffice. He will satisfy you in ways no human being on earth can.

And I'm not saying we shouldn't go to other people for prayer, for encouragement. I don't mind offering that kind of encouragement at all. And I'm not saying that people shouldn't come to someone and ask. But I've stopped believing that somehow, I have in Paul, the answer to their problems, because I don't.

But I know the One who does, and I know that He gives an invitation to come with confidence to the throne of grace, where they will find help. You will find help at the throne of Grace. So, go to God. Go to the Lord. He'll help you. He'll see you through, amen.